

From: Cheryl Lewandowski

Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 12:33 PM

To: Emmerson, Wayne <Wayne.Emmerson@york.ca>; Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>; tom <tom@mrakas.ca>; dave.barrow <dave.barrow@richmondhill.ca>; joe.dipaola <joe.dipaola@richmondhill.ca>; carmine.perrelli <carmine.perrelli@richmondhill.ca>

Cc: steve.clark@pc.ola.org

Subject: Green Belt Re: Item H 2.2. Potential for Employment lands along 400 series highways report

Dear Mayors and Regional Councillors,

I am a resident of Oak Ridges and a small business owner in Aurora. By allowing any development on the Green Belt, the precedent is set to allow it to be destroyed by a thousand cuts. The Ford government promised that the Green Belt was off limits. The below letter clearly identifies concerns. Instead of looking at options to destroy our wildlife and farmland, politicians should be looking at ways to enhance our wild zones and provide connectivity to them, allowing animals safe passage across roadways. This was considered on Bayview Avenue close to the Oak Ridges Community Centre where animals have a safe passage under the road. Over recent years, York Region's fertile farmland has been devastated and rezoned for residential development.

Consider this, since the last mass extinction the biodiversity on this planet has evolved to enable us to exist. It provides its inhabitants with air, water and food. Currently, only 4% of the planet's animal biomass, from mice to elephants, can be attributed to wild animals. The remainder serves the needs of people. In 1937, the earth's remaining wilderness was 66%. It is currently at 35%. How have people destroyed so much in such a short time? We are undergoing a 6th mass extinction, ravaging or disrupting the very elements that allow us to survive. We rely on our politicians to make the right decisions for the public good. Will you be a part of the solution to enable humanity a viable existence on a finite planet? You are aware that sprawl will only exacerbate degradation from increasing CO2 levels to threatening local food security and decreasing local biodiversity. Besides being environmentally responsible, it is also fiscally responsible not to allow sprawl to occur. You know that higher density reduces costs for infrastructure. I support the following letter which you may have seen from other concerned citizens.

I am shocked that after all of this time York Regional Council is considering asking the province to remove farmland and natural areas from the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Area, and to extend or build water and sewer pipes from Lake Ontario to facilitate sprawl in the Greenbelt. As a result I am requesting that you vote against items 1 and 2 on your agenda.

Item 1. Council reiterate its request to the Province to develop a process allowing municipalities to access strategically located employment lands inside the Greenbelt Plan area, if deemed necessary through a Municipal Comprehensive Review.

A 2017 York Region report identified 2,588 ha of vacant employment lands available for development. As the annual uptake of employment land is 7 ha to 19 ha annually there is no shortage of employment lands for the next several decades.

As identified in the report, Planning for future employment land needs is changing. Today, more jobs are located in urban areas than ever before and locating employment lands within our towns and cities encourages more people to walk, take transit or cycle to work rather than drive, reducing gridlock, emissions and improving quality of life. In the City of Toronto the highest concentration of employment is in areas where people have easy access to transit and alternative ways of getting to work.

Climate change requires us to make planning decisions that reduce our dependence on automobile use. Integrating employment with transit and active transportation helps us build communities where we can work, live and play.

Item 2. Council reiterate its request to the Province to permit the extension of Great Lake based servicing as an option to service settlement areas within the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan areas.

I respectfully request that Council vote not to make this request. Expanding Great Lake based water and sewer services undermines the permanent protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt and facilitates costly sprawl into the countryside, it is also unnecessary. A 2016 York Region Housing Supply report indicated that the region had a 21 to 23 year supply of land designated for housing and further that 91% of ground- related units within registered, or draft, approved applications have been provided with servicing. During the MCR process the Region should look to complete developments within existing urban land before extending the water and sewage pipes to service new land for housing in existing farm and natural areas.

The Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Growth Plans were put in place to limit urban expansion into the countryside, protect the ecological function of groundwater on the moraine and encourage complete compact communities. The Plans identify where development should not occur to direct growth to our existing urban areas. In York Region, our population growth rate is slowing, our households are getting smaller and our existing urban areas are not yet fully occupied or built out. There is more than enough land to build the housing we need to 2031 and it will last to 2041 if we build the smaller, more affordable housing units to support accessible, age-friendly communities. Major growth centres in York Region are moving forward with transit supportive development. I urge the Region to proceed with the MCR process by directing the majority of growth to the serviced urban growth centres with existing higher order transit rather than expanding the YDSS into the Greenbelt.

In 2000, Members of York Region Council fought the battle against the “big pipes” plan to encourage costly sprawl. At that time, we learned big pipes not only create huge debt for the Region but they facilitate sprawling growth that leads to gridlock. Twenty years ago we challenged sprawl, today we are also battling climate change. It is more important than ever to protect forests, farmland and groundwater sources for our future prosperity. Studies identified in the Environmental Commissioner’s 2019 report indicate a strong negative relationship between sprawling urban areas with per capita transport energy use. With the current provincial prioritization of housing over environmental concerns, like climate change, extending Great Lakes based servicing into the protected countryside may serve to increase climate related emissions from transportation.

I urge Council to support efficient growth by building up in our existing urban areas, utilize efficient sewer servicing and stop putting our farmland and natural areas at risk.

I urge Members of Council to vote no to both of these items.

Best Regards,
Cheryl Lewandowski
Richmond Hill

cc. Minister Steve Clark, MMAH