

October 5, 2020

To: Members of York Region Council

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

Dear Mayors and Regional Councillors,

I am requesting that Council amend the recommendation in item H 2.2. I ask that you insert the words (outside the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine area) in item 1 of your request to the province and remove item 2 entirely.

Item 1. Council reiterate its request to the Province to develop a process allowing municipalities to access strategically located employment lands (outside of 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. 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 generations.

As identified in the report, Planning for the Next GGH, our employment needs are changing. Today, more jobs are located in urban areas than ever before. Locating employment lands within our towns and cities encourages more people to walk, take transit or cycle to work rather than drive, reducing gridlock. 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 remove Item 2 in this report. Expanding Great Lake based servicing 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 91% of ground-related units within registered or draft approved applications have been allocated servicing. During the MCR process the Region should look to obtain efficiencies with existing land before extending the YDSS to service new land for housing.

The two Conservation Plans and the Growth Plan 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 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 pipe's 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 Commissioners 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.

Further, extending the big pipe into the Greenbelt increases the speculative land value of the Greenbelt, making it harder for farmers to keep farming and perhaps most significantly it erroneously suggests to developers that the Greenbelt is open for development.

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 in favour of removing item 2 from this report and amend item 1 as noted above.

Sincerely,

Susan Lloyd Swail, MES Pl. RPP
Nobleton, ON

cc. Minister Steve Clark, MMAH

References:

[Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth, MMAH, 2015](#)

[Blais, Pamela and Neptis Foundation. Planning the Next GGH, 2018](#)

[York Region Housing Supply report, 2016](#)

[A Happy, Healthy, Prosperous Ontario, 2019](#)