



July 20, 2020

York Region Council & Regional Staff

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RE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO PROVINCIAL GROWTH PLAN

PROJECTING GROWTH TO 2051 is extremely foolhardy given that the province is using unfounded population forecasts. York Region is attracting far fewer residents than anticipated for growth to 2041 but proposed changes to the Growth Plan would allow municipalities to use even higher, tenuous population projections to guide future planning. This is very rash as there is already an over designation of land for future housing and employment without the unnecessary need of converting more farmlands, woodlands and wetlands into unrequired developments.

EMPLOYMENT/RETAIL LAND NEEDS MUST BE RECONSIDERED

Build it and they may NOT come. Covid19 has changed employment space needs appreciably as it is estimated that fully 2/3 of employees will now permanently work remotely. Retail malls may also not be as utilized given that consumers are accessing online shopping for a good deal of their needs with companies now favouring and developing a greater online presence.

CONSERVING FARMLAND & GREEN SPACES

When we were denied masks during the current pandemic, It was full steam ahead to initiate local manufacturing. This pandemic has also magnified the importance of local food security. If we are being denied face masks, what will happen when climate change and drought reduce agricultural capacity in the US? We could just as easily be denied food. Therefore it is essential that our farmland be conserved for growing healthy local food to meet the needs of our communities & not redesignated for more suburban sprawl, a model of the 1950s that should have been shelved decades ago. New high density and affordable developments that lack conservation spaces will adversely affect the health and well-being of communities as is presently happening during Covid19. Apartments with no balconies; developments with no green space for walking & recreation will add immeasurably to mental & physical stress, urban heat island temperature increases & climate change.

OAK RIDGES MORaine & WATERSHED PROTECTION

One of the Oak Ridges Moraine's most important functions is that it acts as a water recharge and discharge system. Paving it over with high density development applications such as on Yonge south of Bloomington need to be considered in the context of past mistakes. After sewers were installed in the 1980s in Oak Ridges running east/west along North Lake Road toward Yonge, the gravel sewer bed wicked away the recharge water of the Humber Watershed that fed Lake Wilcox. This caused a dreadful decline in water quality of the lake. Pets and people who used the lake became ill, my children included. Channels had to be built to try to restore the recharge function to the lake. A lake lung was installed to try to clean up toxic blue green algae to no avail. It actually made it worse.

The 16th Avenue sewer affected over 100 wells in Stouffville up to 15kms away. Major dewatering was required due to construction delays caused by deficient initial environmental assessments. Water that should be recharging the Rouge Watershed is to this day being wicked into the Pickering sewer system and the Rouge Watershed is still being adversely impacted. Yet there is a request to convert land on the Oak Ridges Moraine to employment & settlement on Leslie St. right at the Rouge Headwaters. Paving over Moraine watersheds will contribute to more flooding and deprive us of clean drinking water on which millions of Ontarians depend.

Nutrient loading in the Lake Simcoe & TRCA watersheds can be better addressed by investing in improved farming practices such as transitioning to organic/regenerative systems rather than only in monitoring.

In closing, YREA believes that we need local enlightened leadership if we are to protect the environment and provide truly holistic, livable communities. It can be done.

Sincerely

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director
York Region Environmental Alliance

Partnering for a greener planet

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