

March 17 2021

To: The York Region Council

Re: Agenda Item F.4 and the Letter to the Premier, March 19, 2021 Special Meeting

I am a resident of Vaughan and I would like to input on the proposed Letter to the Premier and Items F.4. I am very concerned about the lack of respect shown for the large number of well-informed citizens who are working hard to:

- seek public consultation and appropriate environmental assessments to protect critical land,
- protect the ecosystems that sustain all of us.
- ensure adequate local food sources that we are so fortunate to have in York Region and
- preserve the fundamentals of democracy that are being eroded in a rush to 'reduce red tape' and speed up development.

### **The world has changed – York Region needs to be ahead of the change**

The response from citizens is not a 'knee-jerk' reaction. We are citizens who understand the world has changed and we all need to change and re-think how we plan communities and live to ensure a sustainable future. Covid-19, which is inextricably linked to climate change, is just one example as more corporations have seen the value of remote work and closed offices reducing the need to commute. Families no longer look to live in suburban sprawl but would prefer to live in towns with good public transit or are leaving to small rural communities in Ontario and other provinces. Demographics also shows the emptying of suburban areas as Baby Boomer age out of family homes and require public transit as they give up driving.

### **Climate science and environmental agreements requires immediate reduction of Co2 Emissions**

The World Health Organization, United Nations, World Bank Group, governments, well-respected environmental organizations, climate scientists, economists, visionary businesses and citizens from around the world and locally are saying we must change the way we used to do things and do it quickly. There are no borders in the climate crisis and every community, province and country must be accountable and work together to try and address the impact of climate change. Construction only increases Co2 emissions.

**I ask that the Council of York Region take time and reconsider doing 'business as usual' based on old assumptions about how communities should prepare and plan for the future. A sustainable future must reduce Co2 emissions and protect critical natural resources and farmland.**

As a citizen of Vaughan, I ask that York Region Council:

- **reverse endorsement for the GTA West Corridor Project**
- **reverse endorsement of the Bradford Pass Project**
- **support the request for a Federal Impact Assessment for both projects**

With due respect, I would like to comment on the following Staff Report:

**Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services,  
GTA West Transportation Corridor Project,  
Regional Response to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada**

**Response to: Recommendations**

*I ask that the Region of York reconsider the recommendations and premises they are based on in light of changes that have occurred since this topic was first brought forward. Much has changed even over the past two weeks.*

**Response to: Summary - Key Points**

*References are based on past history and this is not a valid rationale to continue down the same path. Though it is hard to switch gears on a project staff and council may have invested time in, it is critical sign of leadership to be aware of change and adapt.*

*Many Municipalities and Regions have since changed their position and have withdrawn their endorsement of the GTA West Corridor including the City of Vaughan.*

*Many of the same Municipalities have also requested a **Federal Impact Assessment** and the Federal Government also extended the deadline for requests*

*Provincial legislation has changed such that environmental, social, economic or health needs and consultation of all community stakeholders is not in place and matters are being brought before the courts.*

*The Region, local municipalities and community stakeholders would benefit by a better process even if it takes longer.*

**Response to: Background (The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada has invited affected municipalities to provide input**

*The reason citizens, environmental organizations and municipalities are requesting that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change exercise their discretion to require a federal impact assessment process for this project, is because it would have adverse direct or incidental effects and because of public concerns related to those effects that are being ignored by local and provincial governments.*

**Response to: Analysis**

*As mentioned before, history and time spent on a project does not justify continuation, nor should it support new legislation that forces a project through and takes away public consultation and environmental assessments.*

*The York Region Official Plan 2010 is based on now outdated information so should not be a basis for decision-making especially when future planning has already started.*

*Staff says the Plan “provides directions and policies that guide economic, environmental*

*and community planning decisions” and I would suggest it should be the environment and community that guides direction and policies and the economy.*

**Response to: Council recently received communications and deputations from residents raising concerns about the GTA West Project**

*I ask that the staff and Council show that they respect and value the voice of their constituents and due process and also request a Federal Impact Assessment.*

**Response to: Financial**

*There may not be financial implications resulting from the staff report but there are huge financial implications related to what it proposes and then added financial implications related to the environmental impact if it is should go forward*

**Response to: Local Impact**

*The GTA West Transportation Corridor negatively impacts local residents and many businesses already in the area as well as the environment, urban rivers and the Greenbelt. If the Region needs a transportation corridor to move goods for large businesses, request that the province reduce tolls on the 407 which is currently under-utilized.*

**Response to: Conclusion**

*I hope that Council will speak out and refuse to endorse this staff report and the recommendation.*

***Over the past couple of weeks much has changed, It is clear that based on legislative changes and directives to conservation authorities to handover protected wetlands, that the current provincial Environmental Assessment process does not address issues raised by the Region, local municipalities and community stakeholders.***

Respectfully submitted

Leslie Atkinson