

DEPUTATION REQUEST

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

JUNE 10, 2021

Subject: Regional Official Plan Policy Directions Report

Spokesperson: Kim Empringham

Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable): York Region Federation of Agriculture

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

Speaking to express concerns with proposed mapping attachments to item H.2.4

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1-877-464-9675 x. 71320

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YORK REGION FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

SERVING THE FARM COMMUNITY SINCE 1940

June 9, 2021

Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Attention: Chair Emmerson and Regional Council

Dear Sir/Madam:

**Re: Regional Official Plan Update
Policy Directions Report (June 10, 2021 - Agenda Item H.2.4)**

I represent the York Region Federation of Agriculture. YRFA is a non-profit organization that represents its 650 registered farm business members in York Region on matters that affect their farms as well as decisions that will affect agriculture in the future.

YRFA has been monitoring the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review process and the related update reports submitted for Council's consideration; the latest of which being on the June 10th, 2021 agenda. YRFA specifically draws attention to Map 1A of Attachment 2 to this report. We recognize that this mapping is considered "Draft for Consultation", however, we are surprised that it indicates some blanket down-designation of Prime Agricultural lands. In specific, it identifies lands which are proposed to be redesignated from Agriculture Area to Rural Area. We note that such proposed redesignation has not been completely vetted. We are concerned that there is no discussion about this blanket redesignation within the Analysis section of this report. We are aware that an application has been submitted for a Regional Official Plan Amendment relating to some of these lands and that the December 3, 2020 Policy Directions Report states that,

"..staff are proposing Rural or equivalent designation with permitted uses in line with and conforming to those permitted within the protected countryside of the Greenbelt Plan."

This type of down-designation should not be considered lightly and must be subject to complete and detailed analysis and consultation with appropriate public and agencies.

BUY THE FOOD ONTARIO GROWS

We are concerned that this has not taken place and that this “draft” mapping could be construed as being the position of staff and Region Council in absence of such vetting.

The Provincial Policy Statement specifically refers to the protection of Prime Agricultural Areas for long-term use for agriculture. We note that the PPS specifically speaks to the designation of prime agricultural areas and retaining such designations to ensure that agricultural activities are sustained. The vision of the Greenbelt Plan is to protect quality agricultural areas, provide flexibility for appropriate farm uses, and strengthen the agricultural system by considering the impacts of development on agricultural areas and planning for local food and near-urban agricultural uses. The proposed down-designation would not reflect any of these objectives.

To truly support and promote agriculture, it must go beyond just words in policies and translate into action taken to protect the agricultural land base into the future. Blanket redesignation of Prime Agricultural areas is precedent setting and would result in the depletion of the significant natural resource afforded to us in the form of rich agricultural soils.

It is a stated objective in the current York Region Official Plan to protect Agricultural and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Areas for the future to ensure a sustainable agricultural industry. The York Region Edge Planning Background Report speaks to the importance of farmland not only for the production of food and its direct economic benefits but also its benefits to surrounding urban residents in the form of such things as water filtration, carbon sequestration, pollination, and on-site farmers markets. We continue to take the position that to truly protect for agriculture into the future, the designation of prime agricultural areas needs to remain.

Yours truly,

Kim Empringham, Secretary/Treasurer/Director,
York Region Federation of Agriculture
12900 Kennedy Road,
Stouffville, Ontario
L4A 4A8
york@ofa.on.ca