

June 23, 2021

York Region Council,

Please find attached for the public record my deputation as given to York Region Council at the June 10, Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda Item H.2.4 (Attachment 1).

The following is a summary of what York Region staff heard when conducting public consultation¹. This would appear to differ with the many communications received for this agenda item from land owners (private interests/businesses, not residents who live on or near these lands) who are advocating for different zoning or to be included in the urban boundary expansion.

What we heard:

- Transit is the top Regional service that residents indicate they will rely on most in the future and York Region should continue to invest in public transit
- Residents want compact, walkable communities that offer employment opportunities, community facilities, local services, stores and places for social connection
- Affordable housing is one of the most important components of building complete communities, however, many of us are facing housing market challenges
- Residents want our communities to reduce emissions and are aware of the impacts of climate change in York Region
- Residents want to protect our forests, parks, trails, agricultural lands and green spaces
- Residents want a variety of Employment Opportunities within their community

There is a contradiction with what land owners want to develop versus proposed land uses/designation, the direction received by the Province that's driving urban expansion versus public priorities and vision for our future communities.

I would like to express concern regarding the Mayor of East Gwillimbury's motion. While I understand the lower tier is entitled to be consulted and provide feedback the purpose and intent of this motion appears to be an attempt to hide the fact that East Gwillimbury Council is advocating for an irresponsible urban boundary expansion Especially considering the province's

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https://www.york.ca/wps/portal/yorkhome/yorkregion/yr/municipalcomprehensivereview!/ut/p/z1/jZBNT4QwEE_B_iweOS2e7HzTeGoxbwA0mxoi9mLlppQm0TWEh-uttVi8myjq3mbyZeTOlowpxlyatxKitEV3IX_n-LaOHjLEc8nJLUqBQ0hwnBEiRoJcLAH8EBcT_078A8OXx-bUF4QLsj-lRIe7E2K60aSyq-rPRJ-1Ed7K987KVZtCT9HLSG5O_DIV4-2erVPIgZUEsvvkCxdH2BrS3RWgwN_AsrjgbP31Y2rqDQmGXjZBwsdnH8rtOLrhNolI5nmOlBWqk3HwjeC3ItYOI6p-ksj1z9XHQ_OUrXj9PtObT8_oXKo!/dz/d5/L2dBIS9nQSEh/#.YNMv12hKiUk

recent announcement that the UYSS EA decision is on hold. It is unclear to me why East Gwillimbury should have a separate recommendation when the MCR process applies to all York Region municipalities. This motion should be generic to all or not supported.

- 4. That the consultation process continue and that any elements of this report relating to East Gwillimbury's growth be deferred until completion of the ongoing consultation process to ensure the inclusion of the Town's remaining Whitebelt lands as Urban Settlement Area through this MCR process, as endorsed by the Town of East Gwillimbury Council.*

Continually there are controversial developments before you because the applicants are asking for exemptions to approved Official Plans, zoning to build on prime farmland, protected greenspaces, to build higher, to build in areas that do not currently have, or are yet to have, adequate transportation, water and waste water infrastructure. Municipalities and residents are at the mercy of developers and LPAT decisions. **If developers want to build developments faster then they should work within the confines of the Planning Act and approved Official Plans, not blame the process or NIMBYism.**

How can you ask the public to support such a large expansion on sensitive land when we can't even protect and guide development as was intended and approved in our current Official Plans and efforts to improve the built environment of our existing communities to accommodate proposed density increases appears minimal?

When Council doesn't support staff and chooses support private landowners interests, above public interests it undermines staff's ability to do their job and politicizes the decision-making process. It is ad-hoc decision-making that undermines and contributes the Region of York's and lower tier municipalities inability to achieve numerous policies and objectives, in particular those relating to Climate Change.

Recently, the Mayor of Vaughan equated the wellbeing of the City with economic growth. **This is a great plan to promote economic growth but it's a terrible plan if you are trying to achieve complete communities, deal with traffic congestion, preserve farmland, achieve environmental protection and address the climate crisis in any meaningful way.**

Thank you,
Irene Ford
Vaughan Resident, Ward 2

Attachment 1: Deputation Given to York Region Council June 10, 2021, Agenda Item H.2.4 Regional Official Plan Update Policy Directions Report

I am concerned about the current direction provided from the Province for Official Plan Updates and the lack of scrutiny from York Region Council. To rush this process during a pandemic when local councils have been unable to engage with the public is not right. There is so much uncertainty from Covid, our working and living habitats have changed we do not yet know if these impacts are temporary or permanent. It is also being rushed in the midst of a Climate Emergency.

The Region's Official Plan will be approved by the current Provincial government if it proceeds as scheduled. Today on your agenda you have two communications from Minister Clark one states the province will not be approving the UYSS EA and seeking advice from an expert panel². The other demands the Region complete and submit their 2051 Official Plan update by July, 2022³. How can the Region plan 30 years into the future, for such extensive growth when there is no known solution or timeline for waste water capacity? It does not seem possible or reasonable. For those opposed to the proposed Bradford Bypass and GTA West Corridor highways this announcement seems hypocritical⁴.

In Vaughan the land proposed for urban boundary expansion surrounds the proposed highway 413. Most, if not all, is owned by developers known for their powerful and at times inappropriate use of political influence⁵.

White belt lands are not lands destined for growth or sprawl it is land that's fate has not yet been decided; it is neither within the urban boundary nor designated Greenbelt most if not all is prime farmland. Ahead of any approved urban boundary expansion Block 42 landowners already have an ongoing LPAT downgrading natural heritage features⁶.

Block 41 landowners received special treatment through approval of a MZO request for residential development on non-Greenbelt land⁷. Block 41 landowners are seeking endorsement of a ROPA from Vaughan and York Region Councils to redesignate Greenbelt prime agricultural to rural⁸. Council is not stating they oppose parkland if they do not support this amendment, they are supporting staff to complete their ongoing Greenbelt fingers Official Plan policy direction review. It is not as simple as redesignating land within the Greenbelt as the consultant presented

² <https://yorkpublishing.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=23467>

³ <https://yorkpublishing.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=23450>

⁴ The Bradford Bypass EA was started in 1997 and approved in 2002. No concern has been expressed officially by the Region of York or the province about dated information. An Expert Advisory Report was completed for the GTA West Corridor. It concluded that Phase 1 of the EA was fundamentally flawed this report is ignored by the MTO and York Region Council.

⁵ <https://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2021/04/03/ford-friends-with-benefits-an-inside-look-at-the-money-power-and-influence-behind-the-push-to-build-highway-413.html>

⁶ <https://pub-vaughan.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=53323>

⁷ See Item 32: <https://pub-vaughan.escibemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=39457> and <https://pub-vaughan.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=39961>

⁸ <https://pub-vaughan.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73605>

to Vaughan Council⁹. Many questions remain unanswered. This is another form of special treatment, similar to MZOs, for this group of developers that circumvent due process on sensitive land that should have the highest protection in Ontario. This is a precedent setting decision there are other Greenbelt fingers in York Region and beyond.

There is another development application in Vaughan for a recreation development on one of the last full blocks of Greenbelt prime agricultural land in Vaughan. It is unclear if the rationale presented by the consultant is still valid or if the recreational use asked for is compliant with the Greenbelt plan¹⁰.

Even though the Province has clearly indicated that the Greenbelt is to be protected and expanded they are not living up to their promises.

If the Region's Official Plan is approved without question then Council will have enabled every inch of Vaughan, not protected by the Greenbelt, ORM or Conservation Authorities, to be developed and paved and 80% of the remaining white belt lands in Markham. East Gwillumbury local council is asked for all of their white belt land to be included in the urban boundary, significantly more than recommended by the Region. EG is the only local council, I am aware of, requesting land conversions on prime agricultural land on behalf of private land owners. Are residents asking for conversion of prime agricultural land in East Gwillumbury?

The level of greenfield development recommended on Class 1 soil, the best in Canada is irresponsible, short sighted and does not adequately demonstrate the 'need' to permanently remove these lands from agricultural production. Ontario is losing 175 acres of farmland per day. Soil is a non-renewable finite resource; local food production, near urban agricultural, smaller farm parcels will be increasingly important in the face of Climate Change. The price of food has and is rising. Regardless of ownership, or how the current lands are being farmed or not farmed it is our elected official responsibilities at all levels of government to create plans and policies that support, preserve and enhance local agriculture.

Much of the land proposed for expansion falls within TRCA's flood plain. York Region's supporting documents state stormwater evaluation will be completed at the secondary plan stage. I don't understand how stormwater cannot be part of the evaluation when urbanization, the level of impervious surfaces, has a direct correlation to increased flood risk. These lands are documented as being critical for endangered species habitat, habitat connectivity and biodiversity. Development of this land is completely inconsistent with Vaughan and other local councils declaring a Climate emergency and will further erode the Region's ability to be climate ready and resilient.

Vaughan staff identified that recently approved MZOs may destabilize planning areas by providing financial incentives for landowners to convert nearby employment lands to community lands and that the density increase proposed puts communities at risk of becoming underserved for parks, schools and infrastructure.

⁹ <https://pub-vaughan.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73612>

¹⁰ See Item 3(6): <https://pub-vaughan.escrimemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=2c68ecd5-3bb4-41fc-977b-f502c1d8d192&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>

Once this land is in the urban boundary it never comes out, you can have all the phasing policies you want it doesn't matter when there is a magic planning tool called a Minister Zoning Order or a planning tribunal structured to support development not communities, protection of natural asset management or incorporating climate change into land use planning decisions.

This urban boundary is forced to expand not because of population growth but because the Province is forcing municipal governments to plan thirty years into the future to 2051. Other municipalities have passed motions to express concern with growth projections, planning horizon, density targets and to ask the province for more time to enable proper public consultation. Other municipalities have directed staff to consider different density scenarios and a hard urban boundary. Please consider doing the same.

Thank you,
Irene Ford

Municipal Motions Supporting Hard Urban Boundaries

Hamilton Request to delay submission of growth plan: <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=264330> unanimous

Hamilton survey: <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=264331> 13/2 with 2 abstentions

Halton motion to delay: [Extend Official Plan](#)