

September 14, 2021

Attention York Regional Councillors and Chair Emmerson,

Re: Vote “No” to Settlement Boundary Expansion - Use Growth to Complete Our Existing Communities

I am writing as a resident of York Region to ask you to vote “no” on Items F.1 (1) and (2) which appear on the agenda for this Thursday’s York Region Council Special Meeting. York Region Council should reject the 50-55% intensification scenario, and the other options evaluated in the September 16th document “Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation”, and instead direct staff to prepare a growth concept which accommodates the next 30 years of York Region’s new homes and workplaces within its existing Settlement Area Boundaries.

Expanding York Region’s Settlement Area Boundary even further would be an unmitigated disaster for our natural heritage and our farmland, and for our fight against climate change, but it would also be a slow-motion disaster for the 1.11 million people who live in York Region’s existing neighborhoods. Ontario York Region cannot afford to squander the next 30 years of workplaces and homes on speculator-owned green fields, because they are needed to complete and retrofit our existing car-dependent neighborhoods.

Firstly, it is important to understand that recommended option, and all the options considered in this Report, would **more than triple the rate** at which its countryside is destroyed. While York Region used up roughly 6400 acres between 2001 and 2019 (255 acres per year), the new plan would see the region burn through roughly **25,000 more acres by 2051**. (791.5 acres per year). That is because the proposed 5000 acre expansion would be added to a tremendous supply of excess land which has previously been added to the settlement area boundary, and which remains unused.

The 30-year sprawl free-for-all being presented for your approval on September 16th would be a disaster for York Region’s environment. In addition to paving some of the last non urbanized headwaters of the Rouge and Don Rivers, this plan would see a huge number of people and a huge area of impermeable asphalt and concrete forced into the sensitive Lake Simcoe watershed, which simply doesn’t have the capacity for more sewage or runoff. The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, Save the Maskinonge, Environmental Defence, Pact-POW and the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition have all already made it clear, in their joint letter of January 19th, that no further settlement expansion to Upper York Region can be pursued because there is inadequate sewage capacity there, and presently no environmentally sustainable means of introducing that capacity. This is not just a practical and environmental objection, but also a legal one, because the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan prohibits any Settlement Area Boundary expansion in the Lake Simcoe Watershed prior to the completion and approval of an Environmental Assessment for the additional sewage capacity. Not only has the Upper York Sewage Solution not been approved, but a new provincial regulation prohibits its approval.

The proposed Settlement Area Boundary Expansion, and any substantial Settlement Area Boundary Expansion, would squander the progress York Region has made towards smarter

growth over the past 20 years. It would divert the next 30 years of new homes and workplaces in York Region away from the existing built-up area, where they are desperately needed to give existing neighborhoods the density (roughly 100 people and jobs per hectare) and fine-grained mix of uses that we know are needed to make active transportation a practical option for most people. The climate change significance of this failure is obvious, as there is no route to meeting our Climate Change targets without tackling our dependence on private automobiles. However, leaving York Region's existing neighborhood in their incomplete, car-dependent state is also a betrayal of existing residents. According to a 2021 poll by Innovative Research Group, 64% of York Region's current residents say that they would "much prefer" to live in a neighborhood where they "didn't need to use a car to do [their] shopping, recreation, entertainment, or commutes to work or school." Only 15% disagreed. However, with neighborhoods in their current state, an equally large majority say they "simply can't get by without a car".

Despite the attempts of land speculators and their allies in Queen's Park to manipulate and railroad the process, the Land Needs Assessment Methodology and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe leave open a clear legal route for York Region to choose Smart Growth over sprawl. With the right tweaks to existing zoning, there is more than enough capacity to accommodate projected demand for all housing types, including single family and semi-detached homes, within our existing boundaries, and within existing neighborhoods. I am asking you to do what's right for York's environment, and for present and future residents, by choosing not to expand the Settlement Area Boundary.

Bernice Royce