

From: Alexis Edghill Whalen
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 11:54 AM
To: Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>
Subject: Item F.1 - Pause for 10 years

Re: F.1 Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation

Dear Chair, Mayors, and Regional Councillors,

My request is simple: pause any discussion of boundary expansions for 10 years.

Background facts:

- The climate crisis is real and we need to cut emissions in half by 2030.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will have an impact on consumer behaviour and demographic trends.
- “Affordable housing” is most achievable if built on existing infrastructure networks and within a reasonable distance of transit and services.
- Agriculture contributes to our economy through goods and ecosystem services. Prime agricultural areas are not “lands-in-waiting” for development.
- There is an ample supply of land already designated for at least 10 years of growth.

Why would I ask you to pause discussions of the boundary expansion for 10 years? Because it is reasonable to assume that within a 10-year time frame:

- 1) We will have implemented national, provincial and regional carbon budgets that clearly determine how and where we can expend carbon emissions;
- 2) We will know if we are well on our way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, or urgently needing to try new solutions;
- 3) We will better understand the impact of the pandemic and the climate crisis on demographic trends;
- 4) We will have quantified the opportunity of agriculture and the medium of soil to sequester carbon; and,
- 5) We will have a much better handle of the role and responsibility of our region in the climate crisis and the scope of change needed.

Essentially, in 10 years we will have a clearer sense of opportunity cost, the option value (economic and ecological), of rezoning these hectares for urbanization. Why give away 30 years of control and regional power today when it’s not absolutely necessary?

Will consuming these vast natural areas have zero impact on our ability to mitigate climate change? Will it actually increase housing affordability? Will it have a measurable impact on our food security? Do you have the definitive answers to these questions? My guess is not yet. So, what is the harm in waiting 10 critical years to gain more knowledge?

It is fully within your reach to keep the boundary intact, at least for now. You can continue to build in designated growth areas. You can invite gentle infill into our urban core and rejuvenate areas that today struggle without sustainable density for transit or services. You can educate citizens on the benefits of diverse gentle housing forms within their neighbourhoods. You can direct growth to urban sites where today's single-story commercial buildings with vast parking lots sit underutilized and poised to become mixed-use/residential.

I would also encourage you to bring forward a policy that rewards farmland owners who offer longer-term agricultural leases to agricultural tenants. This would further the interim economic output of prime farmland and maximize the climate mitigation opportunity. Leverage the natural assets within your reach.

In closing, please take 10 years to examine all angles. If after this pause, the answer is “we need more land”, then so be it. In the meantime, my family and I are counting on you to be very protective of our dwindling fertile fields. The urban boundary does not need to be moved by 2022.

Sincerely,

Alexis Edghill Whalen

Markham