

DEPUTATION REQUEST

REGIONAL COUNCIL

OCTOBER 21, 2021

Subject: 2051 Forecast & Land Needs Assessment

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:

To speak in opposition to the recommended phased 50-55% Intensification and to urge adoption of a 60% intensification.

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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YORK REGION FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

SERVING THE FARM COMMUNITY SINCE 1940

October 20, 2021

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

Attention: Chair Emmerson and Regional Council

Dear Sirs/Madams:

**Re: Alternate 2051 Forecast & Land Needs Assessment Scenarios
Special Council Meeting October 21, 2021 Agenda Items F.1. & H.1 to H.4.**

As you are aware, 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 Municipal Comprehensive Review and the Land Needs Assessment to 2051. This letter is specifically related to the Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios and related proposed Motions (Agenda Items F.1. and H.1 to H.4.).

The YRFA cannot support staff's recommended 50-55% intensification scenario for the updated Regional Official Plan and urge Council to advance a 60% intensification target and a designated Greenfield area density of 60-65 residents and jobs per hectare. In doing so, the largest amount of Prime Agricultural land would be appropriately protected and the Region's efforts to secure a resilient food supply network would be advanced.

In Agenda Item F.1, staff has brought forward a recommendation for 50-55% intensification. This recommendation has serious implications and would be detrimental to the protection of agricultural land and the protection of local food supply. The staff report states that the recommended scenario "reduces the overall quantum of Whitebelt land required and therefore preservation of more agricultural lands" (Page 13). This may be the case; however, it does not protect agricultural land to the greatest extent possible. The staff recommended scenario would result in the loss of 3,400 hectares (8,400 acres) or 80% of the remaining Whitebelt within the Region. A 60% intensification scenario would still accommodate growth while also balancing this with the protection of agricultural lands. A 60% intensification target would only require 700 hectares (1,700 acres) of Whitebelt lands.

We note staff's statement about ensuring that growth proceeds in a manner that is aligned with infrastructure and is financially sustainable. We would add, however, that while agriculture may not be what is considered a stereotypical form of infrastructure, it should be given a

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similar level of importance given that a secure food supply network can only be achieved through the maintenance of local agricultural production which inherently requires the protection of agricultural lands.

The Whitebelt lands are Prime Agricultural lands outside of the settlement boundary and not within the Greenbelt. The Provincial Policy Statement directs development away from Prime Agricultural land to the greatest extent possible. It seems that to many, farming has become seen as an interim use. Agricultural production is not an interim use pending development. Agricultural land not only secures a local food supply, the necessity of which has become even more important during the pandemic, but also mitigates the effects of climate change by providing carbon sequestration, water filtration and recharge, and buffering between urban areas and natural heritage features. We are in a climate emergency and may very soon be in a food emergency. It is imperative that protection of our valuable agricultural land is given the importance that it deserves. A long term approach to planning and growth must also consider how existing and future residents will be fed. Expansion of settlement areas into Whitebelt lands must be at best prevented and at worst slowed down in order to ensure that proper protections are in place for agriculture and the local food supply network.

The staff report states that the “recommended growth scenario achieves the right balance to address stakeholder comments and Growth Plan objectives”. It goes on to refer to market feasibility for each growth scenario, alignment with the provision of infrastructure, ability for each growth scenario to address local Council requests for more and less Whitebelt growth and requests from the agricultural community and the public to consider impacts of growth on Prime Agricultural lands, climate change, etc. The recommendation being brought forward does not strike an appropriate balance of these objectives.

It is unfortunate that local municipal Councils appear to have concerned themselves only with the population and employment forecast numbers and required transportation and servicing infrastructure projects and have given no thought to the protection of local food supply for existing and future residents. Given this situation, the onus falls on the Region to ensure that the food supply network is protected and this requires that the greatest amount of agricultural land is protected. York Region considers itself a leader in many areas. Now is the time that the Region must step up and lead in the protection of agricultural land and the protection of local food supply.

Yours truly,

Kim Empringham,
Secretary/Treasurer/Director
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