

March 23, 2022

Region of York  
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RE: Region of York Development Charges public meeting

Dear Chair, Members of Council and Staff,

Like many people today in the GTA I am very concerned about two things: access to affordable, livable, healthy housing and the loss of greenspaces, including agricultural lands, to roads and subdivisions. As a councillor in a lower tier municipality, I know that I make decisions which influence these two issues when we make land designation decisions and when we pass development charge bylaws. Today the focus is on the latter decision by you, our Regional Council.

Very early in my career as an elected official I heard a lecture by the urban planner, Pamela Blais. I remember comments about the inequity in property taxes and how that distortion influences decisions. For example: a property owner with 120 foot frontage does not have a tax rate higher than a property owner with a 30 foot frontage. Doesn't it take longer to clear the snow in front of that 120 foot property? And, think about the extra footage of pipes crossing 120 ft from one driveway where the municipal service pipes go up to the house to the next one. I think the concept is very relevant to development charges. What the price tag is to build a new unit of housing should relate to what it costs the municipality to service that unit.

I have looked at the background study presented to the Committee of the Whole on March 3rd. Before commenting on the content I do want to acknowledge what a beautiful, simple report it is. I understand it and I feel like I'm being given the important information. I have 4 points to make.

1. There appears to be **no** distinction between the DC for a unit on a greenfield site and the DC for a unit classified as an intensification unit. If my understanding is correct, I think this is wrong. Building in greenfield sites will always cost more to service than units in the built-up area. The DC should be higher for the greenfield.
2. The report identifies an intent to "facilitate a mix and a range of housing options." DC's should do that. If I understood correctly a semi-detached will be charged same as a single detached and hence each of the 2 units will have 50% of DC. Semi-detacheds are unique and should be encouraged in this manner.
3. Having two different rates for large and small houses is also a good idea. But I question if the bar for being considered "small" is too low. I had anticipated it being 1,000 sq ft; you are proposing it to be 700 sq. ft. From my quick research I found that tiny house concept applies to <1,000 sq. ft. So I think this should be reconsidered.
4. I think the proposed two exemptions of DC's when adding units to buildings which are already residential is a good change. It's a small, gentle way to intensify.

My final comments are about the growth projections which drive the study. As you are well aware, York Region is not seeing the growth forecasted. Our growth in population and employment from 2012 to 2019 is respectively 44% and 7% LESS than forecasted. As the Growth Plan's forecasts continue to be more aggressive than the Ministry of Finance, why believe that future forecasts will be better? Building out municipal services and transit infrastructure to meet the Growth Plan forecasts is an enormous financial risk. Consequences of growth not being realized is that the residents and businesses of the day pay higher taxes and/or the municipality is unable to support desired expansion & improvement of services; and, unless there is high levels of intensification, which is currently not proposed across the region, land is designated for development which is not needed.

To my mind this last risk reinforces my point that greenfield developments should have higher DC's; greenfield development should not be encouraged with DC's which do not reflect the true, full cost of servicing.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

Debbie Schaefer  
Township of King Councillor