

March 23, 2022

Region of York  
17250 Yonge St,  
Newmarket, ON  
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RE: Region of York Development Charges public meeting

Dear Chair, Members of Council and staff,

You have a major challenge ahead - accommodating a doubling of York Region's population while providing more affordable housing for today's and tomorrow's residents, protecting Lake Simcoe and York Region's Natural Heritage, and reducing GHG emissions. This will not come cheap.

Development charges must be used as they are intended, to recover the cost of growth. I argue that all of the above are costs of growth. While recognizing that not all costs can be covered by Development Charges, York Region must position itself to meet the objectives of its Official Plan, which include the points above generally.

I encourage the Region of York to adjust development charges, make them location specific to encourage affordable housing types, infill, missing middle housing and supportive housing. Development charges for low density housing on greenfield sites should increase to cover the full costs of growth. We need to recognize that market distortions, low interest rates and flawed provincial policy contribute to drive unaffordable housing and the extension of costly infrastructure. If the Region fails to recoup the cost of large infrastructure projects this debt falls to taxpayers.

Since the 2006 Growth Plan was introduced the Region of York has failed to meet growth forecasts. The current projections to 2051 for York Region are considerably higher than the Ministry of Finance growth forecasts. Building out sewer, water, road and transit infrastructure to meet the Growth Plan forecasts is an enormous financial risk that could potentially bankrupt the municipality.

As part of an official plan review process, the Region of York should evaluate growth scenarios (e.g., based on intensification, greenfield densities, housing type and land requirements) to assess, infrastructure requirements and fiscal implications (capital costs, long-term operational/ maintenance costs, replacement costs, and revenues). This cost of growth analysis on the various intensification scenarios should be provided to Council before approving the revised Official Plan. Indeed, in the first letter from the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition regarding the MCR, in June 2021, we asked:

In the presentation of growth options, how will residents assess the effect of the options? How can this level of planning be understandable to the residents? How will each growth option that York Region presents benefit the community and the environment, both in existing communities and in new greenfield communities? We recommend using questions such as these to make the options make sense to non-planners. Will the growth option:

- Increase or decrease access to public transit?
- Increase or decrease the proportion of affordable housing?
- Increase or decrease public greenspace on a per capita basis?



- Increase or decrease the extent of agricultural land?
- Increase or decrease the extent of natural areas (forests, wetlands, valleys, grasslands)?
- Increase or decrease property taxes?
- Increase proportional salt from roads polluting our waterways?
- Increase or decrease personal vehicle GHG emissions from Simcoe County?

If transparency is important for York Region's elected officials, the presentation of the Official Plan and the Development Cost Charges Bylaw would both include a lens such as this, to make the implications of decisions clear to residents.

Indeed, planner Brent Toderian in a recent presentation in Pickering notes that the mark of whether a municipality is in fact doing good public consultation, is how often and how honestly the municipal or regional government lays out the implications of various planning choices for its residents, and allows for difficult conversations to occur. This has been done haphazardly at best to date in York Region.

We urge York Region to set DC's high to cover the costs of growth and to build a better quality of life for its residents and the environment upon which we depend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Claire Malcolmson".

Claire Malcolmson

Executive Director, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition