

Deputation on “Draft Regional Official Plan Consultation Update and Statutory Public Meeting

York Region Special Committee of the Whole Agenda Item F.2.1

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Strong Phasing Policies Needed

Last year, many residents, including Resident Associations, urged York Region Council to adopt a 60% intensification strategy, rather than 50 or 55%, with the opportunity to review again at the next Municipal Comprehensive Review in about 5-10 years. This would have been a low-risk approach that avoided over committing land to community development in the light of dubious population forecasts, retained more land in an agricultural state for now, simplified infrastructure prioritization to a smaller area, and enabled orderly growth. Unfortunately, Council chose the blended 50/55% intensification path, meaning 3000 hectares of urban boundary expansion for community and employment use are identified, rather than less than 2000 hectares.

So the Region will now have to resort to other policies to manage orderly, cost-effective growth - namely strong Phasing Policies. In my view, the first draft of the ROP had some excellent concepts, including:

- Require comprehensive plans for entire new community area in each municipality
- Local Official Plans to have phasing plans
- Approval of secondary plans for new communities contingent on
 - Infrastructure capital committed in first 5 years of the Regional capital plan
 - Region achieving average of 50% intensification in previous 5 years
 - Region reaching a population of 1.5 million
 - Development of complete communities, including libraries, schools, jobs, housing mix

These policies have been strengthened and weakened in this latest draft:

- Require comprehensive plans for all new community areas in each municipality (decreased scope from first draft)
- Local Official Plans to have phasing plans in accordance with logical and orderly progression of development contiguous to existing developed areas (improved policy)
- Approval of secondary plans for new communities contingent on
 - Infrastructure capital committed in 10-year capital plan (versus 5 years previous)
 - Local municipalities achieving their intensification target in previous 5 years (revision from regional target)
 - No minimum regional population requirement (versus 1.5 million previous)
 - Development of complete communities, including libraries, schools, jobs, housing mix (no change)

I am not sufficiently knowledgeable to comment whether these proposed phasing policies will be workable and effective. I am relying on staff's expert opinion that they are workable and align growth and priority infrastructure while maintaining financial sustainability. It is crucially important that they do work and are not weakened by numerous site-specific amendments. Groups like the ones I belong to will be keeping a close watch on compliance and amendments.