

June 15, 2022

Dear Mayors and Members of York Region Council,

Re: Item H.2.1 - 2022 York Region Official Plan Adoption

It is extremely disappointing that York Region Council is proposing to initiate an expansion of urban lands into the Oak Ridges Moraine. I trust that no council member is intending to satisfy their conscience on this issue by saying that it is up to the Province to make the decision and it is the Province who will be accountable for this very unwise proposal. Yes, “the buck stops” at the Province but it started at Whitchurch-Stouffville and York Region Council.

The proposed intrusion into the ORM is particularly disturbing for two reasons. First, when the DGA for Whitchurch-Stouffville is only 55 the likelihood that public transit will be feasible in a financially sustainable manner is jeopardized; such is critical as it is an important factor in the total cost equation of housing affordability. Second, there is no need for initiating the request as there is adequate lands in York Region already designated for development.

Throughout the MCR process intensification has frequently been raised with many stakeholders identifying that proposed targets are not high enough. To quote the 2022 proposed YR OP: “intensification is how we maximize efficiencies in infrastructure delivery, human services and transit ridership.” Given this I cannot understand how an OP through to 2051 can have the very urban lower tiers municipalities of Vaughan and Markham with targets <60%. And Whitchurch-Stouffville’s target of 25% which assumes expansion into the ORM is very questionable in terms of maximizing efficiency.

As I have communicated in previous deputations, I am satisfied that regional staff is not designating lands when the feasibility, both technically and financial, for new infrastructure to deliver municipal services is not certain. As I read the section entitled “future urban area” I wonder why something comparable could not have been developed so that actual decisions on land designations were not made beyond what is needed to meet 2041 growth to avoid planning for growth 30 years out which has so much risk. Once designated irreplaceable assets (our undeveloped, natural space and where we grow our food) is gone.

Respectfully,

Debbie Schaefer, resident in King Township and King Township Councillor