

May 18, 2022

York Region Council  
17250 Yonge Street,  
Newmarket, ON

Re: Municipal Comprehensive Review

Dear Chair and Members of Regional Council,

Council has a huge responsibility. It is essential that you get this plan right. The cost of your decision will be borne by future generations. Bad provincial policy begets bad municipal policy. Who benefits from expanded urban boundaries, more pipes, and highways? We've seen the ads from the gravel industry, homebuilders, we know who will benefit. The question is how does this plan impact taxpayers, local business, and farmers in particular. How will it help low-income households struggling to pay for gas to get to work and put food on the table? How will this plan reduce climate emissions and support Greenbelt protection? This is not a balanced plan due to flawed provincial growth policy. Is York Region Council going to agree to this plan or stand up for a balanced approach to growth and development that invests in existing communities first and protects the Greenbelt?

Based on past forecasts we know that York Region has failed to meet population forecasts of the past. Evidence suggests that a lack of housing choice, particularly low-cost housing choices in the region is the main reason for the shortfall. Provincial policy that requires a higher percentage of expensive single-family homes than the market can bear is setting the region up for falling behind in future forecasts.

Most of the housing in the region is large single-family homes. These homes are the most expensive type of housing. Few people can afford a single-family home today. Ground related housing is the most expensive and the most unsustainable type of housing. In addition, as the boomers die over the next 30 years there will be an estimated 700,000 single-family homes coming back onto the market in the GTA- enough housing for over two million people. Is the plan before you creating a solution to housing needs or exacerbating the current challenge- a lack of low income and supportive housing?

Census data indicates that our future population growth is dependent on immigration. Census data also indicates that newcomers typically rent for the first five years. If the region wants to attract new growth you need to develop a program to prioritize rental housing options in the near term.

Canada has a goal of net zero communities by 2050. Future communities must reduce carbon emissions. The two highest sectors for GHG emissions in Ontario is transportation and buildings- sectors directly affected by regional planning decisions. Does the Region of York have a plan to meet the 2050 goal? How is the new Official Plan meeting this significant challenge? Expanding urban boundaries, paving over prime farmland to build new 400 series highways takes us in the wrong direction.

The province is micro-managing land use planning in Ontario which interferes with creating a sustainable future for York Region residents. I urge you to delay voting on this plan and instead work towards a balanced approach to growth, one that puts people and communities first.

Sincerely,

Susan Lloyd Swail