

Letter re: H.2.1: Update on Residential Sustainable Development Incentive Programs

Dear York Region Council,

The York Region Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner and Commissioner of Public Works Update on Residential Sustainable Development Incentive Programs” states:

“Sustainable growth management is necessary in achieving targets set out in the Regional Official Plan and Regional Climate Change Action Plan. Building sustainably is a key component in achieving targets set out in Regional Official Plan and Regional Climate Change Action Plan. Council’s direction to coordinate and align efforts to address climate change is complemented through sustainable building practices. **Staff will consolidate findings of programs review to share with local municipal staff that highlights current sustainable development best practices. Staff will continue to explore other incentives options, pilot projects and educational opportunities to continue to promote sustainable residential development.**”

I strongly urge York Region staff and council to incorporate into building practices in York Region all of the following:

- 1) Co-written by Natural Resources Canada and Builders for Climate Action, [Achieving Real Net-Zero Emission Homes](#) identifies the building sector as “one of the major contributors to GHG emissions in Canada”. The document points out that while it is crucial that builders lower the **Operational Carbon Emissions** by making buildings energy efficient, it is at least as important to lower **Material Carbon Emissions** (also called **Embodied Carbon**), i.e. carbon emitted via extraction, manufacturing, transportation, use and disposal of building materials: *“The Material Carbon Emissions from new Canadian homes each year is equivalent to the annual emissions from 3.1 million Canadian vehicles or 3.6 coal-fired power plants... material selection can impact the total emissions of a new home by as much as 842 kg CO2 e/m2 without changing the design or performance of the home.”*

According to Chris Magwood, one of the authors of the document cited above, it is easy to find a material’s **Embodied Carbon** rating, also called a **Global Warming Potential (GWP)**. This rating is determined by a set of international rules and is usually carried out by a third party. The rating is stated in a company’s **Environmental Product Declaration**. In addition to the document cited above, more information can be found at [embodied carbon](#).

- 2) [City of Waterloo: Build it Right the First Time](#)
- 3) [the West 5 Smart Grid Project](#)

Of course, York Region and all governments should be insisting that new homes and other buildings be designed using the most up-to-date sustainability practices and materials, as described in the documents linked above. But the adoption of new more sustainable building practices will in no way compensate for poor planning. No matter how energy-efficient York Region's new government buildings and future neighbourhoods are, that doesn't make it okay to pave over wetlands, forests and farmland, and it won't begin to compensate for the increase in car-dependency that the current sprawl-approach to planning will promote.

I hope to see York Region become one of the leaders in sustainable planning and sustainable building as per the exemplars listed in this letter.

Sincerely,

Susan Sheard

Willow Beach