

October 5, 2020

To: Members of York Region Council

Re: Item H 2.2. Potential for Employment lands along 400 series highways report

Dear Mayors and Regional Councillors,

I need to acknowledge that I am a member of King Township Council and that, as noted in this report to York Region Council, my Council approved a report from our Planning Department in Sept. 26, 2016 with recommendations as to the feedback from our municipality to the Province for proposed amendments to various Provincial Land Use Plans including the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In that report the issue of use of lands adjacent to goods movement infrastructure and protecting such lands for economic growth was identified; and specifically there was a recommendation for the Province that the Greenbelt Plan should provide for development of these land if need is demonstrated beyond 2031. (At end of my letter there is a complete extract of this section of the report.)

At the time of this report I did not agree with this specific recommendation. And I still do not. Hence my letter today to York Region Council and my request to York Region Council to insert the words “outside the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine area)” in the first recommendation of recommended requests to the Province.

In May 2017 the Province renewed its commitment to “providing clarity and certainty about urban structure, where and how future growth should be accommodated and what must be protected for current and future generations. The Greenbelt Plan, together with the ORMCP and the NEP, identified where urbanization should not occur in order to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and ecological and hydrological features, areas and function occurring on this landscape.”¹

In May 2018 Premier Ford, while campaigning to become Premier, identified clearly that his platform would maintain the Greenbelt in its entirety. January 2019 Premier Ford and Minister Clark announced that schedule 10 would be dropped from Bill 66 given the negative impact on the lands protected by the Greenbelt.

And now we have York Region asking for permission to develop on lands protected, to date, on the Greenbelt.

This is shocking, unnecessary and with long term consequences not assessed.

- York Region citizens have worked so hard over the decades for exactly what the Greenbelt does: protects land for its agricultural, ecological and hydrological value.
- York Region has undeveloped land zoned for development; Township of King has such land too. And there is effort underway for conversion of employment lands to residential. In net: there is no need for additional land.

¹ Greenbelt Plan (2017) page 1

- Opening land, previously protected, removes all pressure off the current and future generations of municipal decision makers and developers to develop the lands available today. And, of course, rationalizing the appropriateness and necessity today will enable the next round of decisions to take out more from the Greenbelt.
- It is not simply a decision to approve a specific industrial or commercial development in protected lands. It is opening the door to comparable development or residential development adjacent to it. And this must be acknowledged for what it is: sprawl.

I urge Mr. Chair and Council Members to refrain from asking the Province to open up the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt is providing value which cannot be replaced.

I urge Mr. Chair and Council to not approve the first recommendation as written but to amend it as I have requested.

Sincerely,

Debbie Schaefer

King Township Councillor

Extract from Sept. 26, 2016 King Township Planning Department Report P-2016-31R RE: 2016 Draft Policy Amendments; Coordinated Provincial Plan Review; Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

King Township's Economic Development Strategy previously identified the protection of strategic employment lands along the 400 series highway network, and more specifically at the Highway 400 and King Road interchange to help King to contribute to York Region's long-term employment targets. The Township requested that the Province consider how lands adjacent to goods movement Infrastructure could be best protected and utilized in light of opportunity for economic growth. As noted above, the proposed Growth Plan would require prime employment areas to be identified in the upper-tier official plan and protected over the long-term.

The Province has not considered the removal of strategic employment lands from the Greenbelt as part of this review. The Township's employment land forecast to 2031 does not identify a need for additional employment lands. However, King Township previously recommended that the Greenbelt Plan provide for the development of strategic employment lands adjacent to 400 series highways should the need be demonstrated beyond 2031 to the satisfaction of the Minister, and upon recommendation of the local and regional municipality. This comment is