

From: Jim Robb [mailto:jimrobb@frw.ca]

Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2009 3:02 PM

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Subject: RE: Regional OPA and Growth Plans

Importance: High

Dear York Region Chair and Regional Councillors:

Please accept this Email as my request to make a PowerPoint presentation to York Region Council on Thursday November 19, 2009, regarding York Region's Official Plan Amendment(s) and associated growth proposals.

At a recent meeting of Markham Ratepayer groups, residents were unanimously opposed to York Region's draft Official Plan and associated proposals for a 50% increase in Markham's population by 2031 (151,000 more people) and a 7.3 square kilometre (7.3 million square metre) increase in sprawl onto Markham's irreplaceable farmland and greenspace.

To protect Markham's quality of life, environment, foodlands, communities and property values , I strongly urge York Region Council to:

- 1. Refrain from passing the amended Regional Official Plan and associated growth plans until further public consultation has occurred to better protect Markham's residents and future;**
- 2. Work with other levels of government to limit Markham's population growth to less than 25% over the next 22 years and avoid exceeding environmental, social, administrative and infrastructure carrying capacities;**
- 3. Support a 10 year moratorium on Urban Expansions to protect Markham's rural heritage, foodland and greenspace;**
- 4. Expand the Greenbelt to protect 75% of Markham's "whitebelt" lands as a permanent Foodbelt and Natural Heritage System;**
- 5. Fully support the creation of a 40,000 acre Rouge National Park;**
- 6. Protect residential communities from over-intensification by enacting height restrictions (e.g. 6 storeys) near existing residential communities and by directing intense development to transit, transportation, employment and mixed-use nodes.**

I look forward to addressing York Region Council on November 19, 2009.

There could be considerable voter push-back and growing public opposition to York Region's OPA and growth plans, if the above public concerns and recommendations are ignored.

Sincerely,

Jim Robb, for the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition

647-891-9550

Jim Robb

Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition Volunteer
 General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed
 1 Braeburn Blvd., Scarborough, ON, M1J 2P9

December 2, 2009

The Regional Municipality of York,
 Planning and Development Services Department
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 Tel: (905) 895-1231, Fax: (905) 895-3482
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**Re: York Official Plan Amendment: Planning for Tomorrow
 Submission to York Region Planning Committee**

Dear Chairman Fisch and York Region Council:

Over the last few weeks, Markham ratepayer and environmental groups have worked together to increase public awareness and involvement in the crucial planning for Markham's future and York Region's Growth Plan. Ratepayer and environmental groups have printed and distributed 8,000 flyers and funded two newspaper advertisements to encourage public attendance at Markham Council's December 1, 2009 Meeting. This community-based work is designed to help Markham Council protect Markham's Foodbelt, heritage, quality of life and sustainability.

Between August 1990 and 1996, I served as a Vice Chair with the Ontario Environmental Assessment Board and I was later cross-appointed as an adjudicator with the Niagara Escarpment Hearings Office, the Environmental Appeal Board and the Mining and Lands Commission. In these roles, I presided over complex environmental and planning hearings involving policy and law. My many decisions withstood the tests of legal challenge and Cabinet review.

After reviewing York Region Growth Plan documents, recent TRCA scientific findings on the Rouge River Watershed, and Reports by Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, I firmly believe that York Region's current Growth Plan is unscientific, unsustainable and contrary to Provincial Policy Statements under the *Planning Act* for the protection of water quality, public health and safety, and prime farmland. Below please find my review of the science and policies.

Between 2002 and 2005, the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition, worked with community and environmental groups and forward-thinking political leaders (Hon. David Crombie, Hon. Janet Ecker, Hon. Dalton McGuinty), to persuade the provincial government to create the 3000 ha Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve in Pickering and eastern Markham, despite intense municipal and developer opposition.

This local example demonstrates that Markham and York Region Councils have the opportunity to work with ratepayer and environmental groups and the Province to create a Markham Foodbelt between Major Mackenzie Drive and the ORM. York Region can help Markham to protect its remaining rural heritage and foodlands by expanding the Greenbelt between Major Mackenzie Drive and the ORM.

To do so, York Region Council will need to:

1. Ask the Province for an extension to the Planning process to give Markham time for better public consultation and planning;
2. Work with Markham, Toronto and the Province to transfer some of the proposed growth in Markham to an adjacent area like Toronto;
3. Remove any urban expansion marks (asterisk) on the draft Regional Official Plan Map(s) north of Major Mackenzie Drive and any draft Regional Plan objectives, policies, maps or schedules which would allow this urban expansion in Markham;
4. Work with Markham to put forward a Greenbelt expansion request to create a permanent Foodbelt and Natural Heritage System between Major Mackenzie Drive and the ORM.

By rising to this challenge, York Region and Markham will affirm their leadership and dedication to sustainability and create a proud legacy which wins the respect of current and future generations. If you fail to rise to this challenge, you will be letting down past, present and future generations of Markham and York Region residents. Attached please find a slide show supporting a moratorium on urban expansion and the creation of Markham's Foodbelt.

Markham has sufficient land already designated within the urban area to accommodate projected growth for more than 10 years. If York's future growth allocation to Markham is reduced and/or if Markham's existing urban land is used more efficiently, there will be sufficient opportunities for growth without paving Markham's prime foodland.

According to respected Markham resident, Peter Miasek: "a growing body of studies show that, due to baby boomer demographics and housing preferences, the stock of detached homes will be adequate. So going with a 10 year moratorium on urban expansions while we confirm these trends is a sensible alternative with little risk."

Scientific and Policy Matters which Support a Moratorium on Urban Expansions

Growth Targets were established without Good Scientific Studies & Public Consultation

In his 2006/07 Annual Report, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner notes:

"The province established population projections for some communities subject to the Growth Plan, before assessing the related water and wastewater infrastructure needs, their associated costs and environmental impacts. **This puts the cart before the horse.**
....many parts of Southern Ontario have reached their capacity to accommodate additional infrastructure, housing and human populations."

York's Growth Plan and Urban Expansion - Contrary to PPS 2.2.1 on the Protection of Water

Provincial Policy Statement 2.2.1 states:

Planning authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by:

- a) using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for planning;*
- b) minimizing potential negative impacts, including cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts*

Despite this provincial policy, the Provincial Growth allocations to York Region were established prior to the completion of the Rouge Watershed Strategy and Report Card in 2007.

The TRCA's Rouge River Watershed Strategy Scenario Modeling and Analyses Report concludes:

**“meeting water quality targets will become an increasingly distant goal
as the footprint of development expands”**

Section 4.2.9 Summary and Conclusions

As the urban envelope expands, E. Coli and chloride levels exceed provincial standards

Section 4.2, Figures 4.2-6 and 2.8

“Several studies suggest that the maximum impervious cover that a watershed can withstand before experiencing **severe hydrologic changes and consequent geomorphic and ecological impacts is approximately 10%**. “The **Main Rouge subwatershed** has been subject to significant urbanization with an approximate **total impervious cover of 18% as of 2002.**”

Rouge River Report Card (2007) Key Findings - Surface Water

**“middle tributaries (Markham communities) would be subject to major hydrological impacts”
if the urban envelope is expanded**

S. 4.1.49 - Rouge River Watershed Strategy and Implementation Plan
Scenario Modeling and Analysis Report

York's Growth Plan - Contrary to Public Support for Local Foodland Protection

According to the Key Findings of Markham's Agricultural Assessment (2009)

- The land base in the rural area of Markham is comprised of prime agricultural land as defined in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) with the majority of the land qualifying as Class 1. Class 1 land is a limited, non renewable resource in Canada comprising only .5% of the Canadian land mass.

- Markham enjoys a climate that supports higher productivity and longer growing seasons which when combined with the soil resource, allows a flexible and diverse production profile. Commodities such as fruit and vegetables, which are difficult to grow in less temperate areas, grow well in Markham.
- The number of farms and area of farmland is declining more rapidly in Markham than in adjacent municipalities, the Region of York as a whole or the Golden Horseshoe. Between 2001 and 2006, the amount of farmland in Markham declined by 43% as compared to York Region at 5% and Ontario at 1.5%.

Provincial Policy Statement 2.3.1 states: *Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.*

With the growing public support for local food production and the importance of local food security in a time of climate change, **it makes no sense to pave-over some of the finest foodland in Canada in one of our best climate zones.**

Provincial Policy Statement 1.3.9 does allow the designation of a settlement area within an agricultural area where it has been demonstrated that a) sufficient opportunities for growth are not available through intensification, redevelopment and designated growth areas to accommodate the projected needs over the identified planning horizon; and b) “the infrastructure and public service facilities which are planned or available are suitable for the development over the long term and **protect public health and safety**”.

York Growth Plan – Contrary to the Protection of Public Health and Safety

York Region’s proposed expansion of the urban envelope in Markham is contrary to public health and safety. Scientific research and monitoring shows that urban expansion would lead to increased E. coli bacteria and pollution in our water and increased flooding and erosion damage in vulnerable downstream Markham communities. For example, the TRCA’s 2007 Rouge Watershed Report Card and Rouge Watershed Strategy Scenario Modeling and Analysis Report, state:

“Modeling indicates that the **middle tributaries** would be subject to **major hydrological impacts** under OP build-out and full build-out conditions” ... **Page 4.1.49**

.... “future urbanization will increase the magnitude and duration of erosive flows in receiving watercourses despite the use of current extended detention criteria to control runoff from more frequent events”. **Page 4.1-43**

“Given the HSP-F modeling results and the findings of other researchers, there is some doubt as to the whether stormwater management ponds based on synthetic design storms are sufficient to fully mitigate the effects of urban development on flooding under real world rainfall (and snow) conditions.”

“flood-vulnerable roads (129) and flood vulnerable areas (533 properties and/or buildings) remain in the Rouge River watershed, as shown in Table 5-3 and Figure 5-10.

The majority of these are located within the Town of Markham, along the Main Rouge River The relatively flat topography and the lack of valley definition of the Rouge River and its tributaries as the river flows east-west through Markham make this area particularly vulnerable to flooding.”

“Over 500 flood vulnerable areas within Markham would be expected to be inundated during the Regional Storm (Hurricane Hazel) and a number of roads and homes are predicted to flood in flows as low as the 2-year flood event.”

Rouge River State of the Watershed Report (2007) Page 5-25

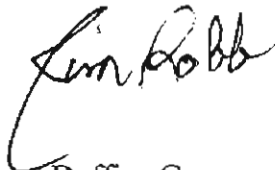
Many scientists are observing and predicting a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of severe storm events and flooding due to global warming. Within this context and with the existing scientific information, the currently envisioned expansion of Markham's urban area is unscientific. It lacks the due diligence required to avoid increased damage to public health and safety, and private and public properties, within Markham's many flood vulnerable areas.

Conclusion:

I trust that the strong public support for the protection of Markham's heritage, foodland and quality of life will empower York Region and Markham Councils to work with residents and environmental groups and the Province of Ontario to wisely address the concerns and recommendations outlined in this submission.

Sincerely,

Jim Robb



for the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition
1 Braeburn Blvd., Scarborough, ON, M1J 2P9
Phone: 647-891-9550
Email: jimrobb@frw.ca or jim.robb@rogers.com

Grow the Greenbelt
Protect Markham's Foodbelt
and Quality of Life, Stop Sprawl



What future will we choose?



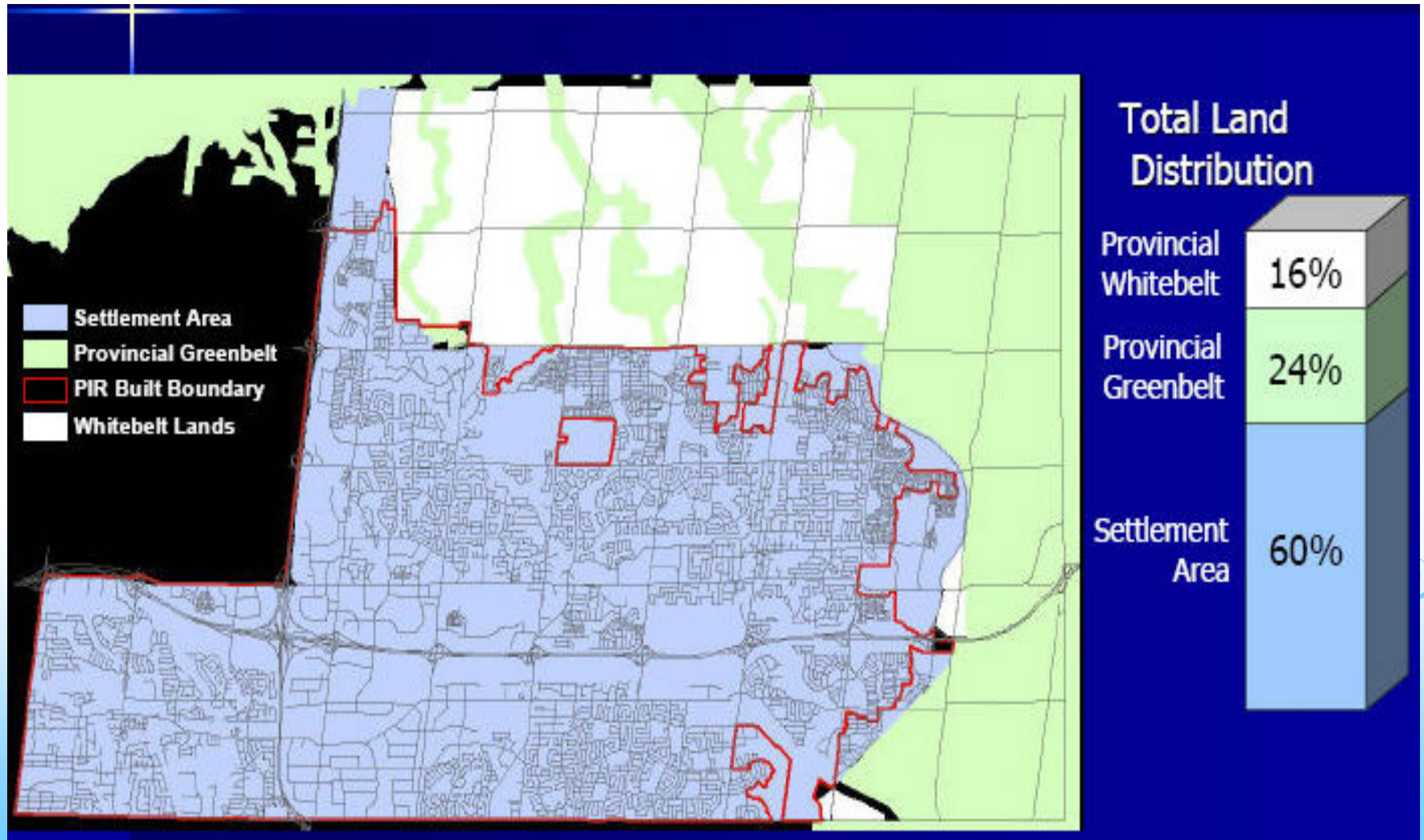
Canada's Finest Foodland Soils Piled for Disposal in Markham



Markham Trees in Wood-chip Piles only 5% forest cover remains



Only 16% of Markham Remains Protect Markham's Irreplaceable Foodbelt



Proposed 50% Growth for Markham is Unsustainable

Forecasted Town Growth

Regional Forecasts for the Town of Markham

	2006	2031	Increase 2006-31
Population	272,500	423,500	151,000
Households	77,200	139,300	62,100
Employment	144,800	248,500	103,700

Backward Planning & Rapid Growth

Threaten our Food Security, Health & Quality of Life

- The province established population projections for some communities subject to the Growth Plan, *before assessing* the related water and wastewater infrastructure needs, their associated costs and **environmental impacts**.

This puts the cart before the horse.

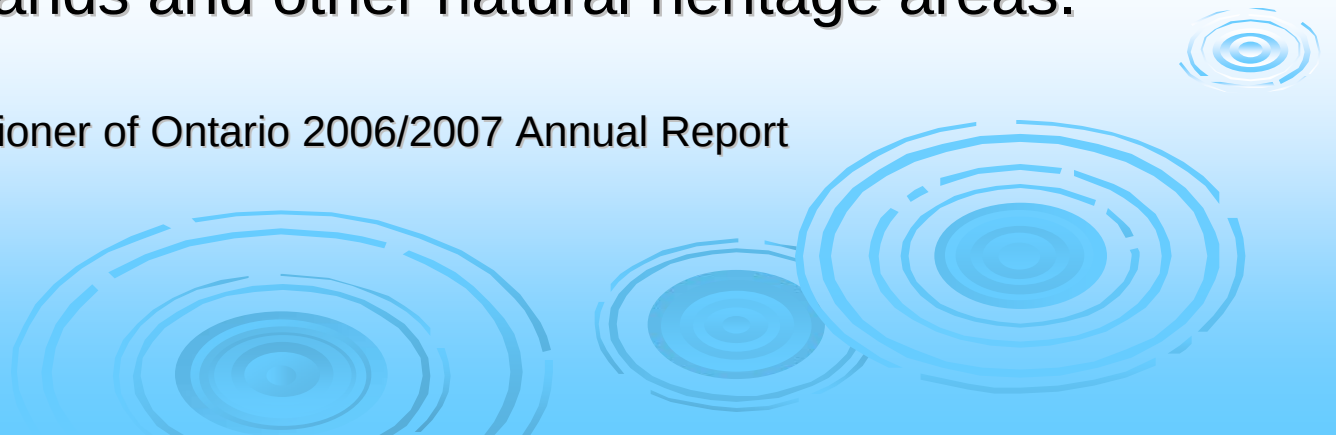
- Ontario Environmental Commissioner 2006/07 Report



50% Growth is Unsustainable

- the landscapes of many parts of Southern Ontario have **reached their capacity to accommodate additional infrastructure, housing and human populations.**
- Current land development pressures are **gobbling up valuable greenspace and agricultural lands.**
- Infrastructure corridors for highways and utilities are bisecting wetlands and other natural heritage areas.

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario 2006/2007 Annual Report



Serious Ratepayer Concerns about York's Growth Plans for Markham

- increased traffic, crowding of schools and hospitals;
- permanent loss of the finest foodland in Canada;
- increased pollution, flooding and property damage from upstream development;
- damage to community values and property values;
- over-intensification near existing communities.



Key Recommendations

- 1. Ask the Province for an extension to the Planning process to give Markham time for better public consultation and planning;
- 2. Work with Markham, Toronto and the Province to transfer some of the proposed growth in Markham to an adjacent area like Toronto;
- 3. Remove any urban expansion marks (asterisk) on the draft Regional Official Plan Map(s) north of Major Mackenzie Drive and any draft Regional Plan objectives, policies, maps or schedules which would allow this urban expansion in Markham;
- 4. Work with Markham to put forward a Greenbelt expansion request to create a permanent Foodbelt and Natural Heritage System between Major Mackenzie Drive and the ORM.



Markham's Prime Foodbelt Going, Going ...

Markham Farmland Loss 12,085 acres (2001 - 06)

Markham Farmland Loss 43% between (2001 - 06)

York Region Farmland Loss 5% between 2001 and 2006

Ontario Farmland Loss 1.5% between 2001 and 2006

Source: Markham 2009 Agricultural Assessment



[illegible]

Figure 3-3: Proposed and Draft Approved Plans of Subdivision

York Region's Growth Plan would pave another 7.27 km² of Markham's Prime Foodland

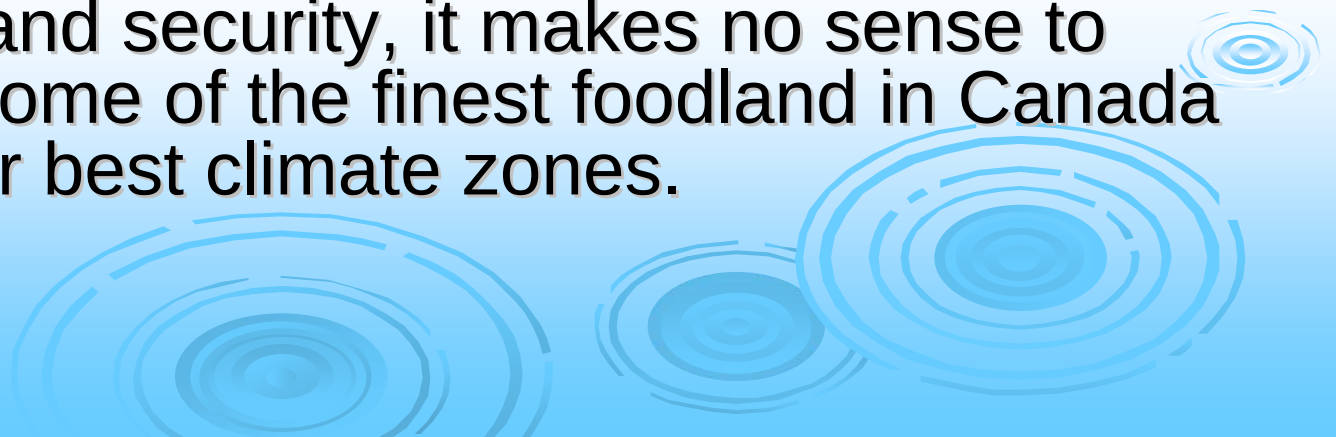
2031 Community Land Requirements in the Whitebelt by Local Municipality

	2031 Whitebelt Units	Density	2031 Area Requirement (ha)	Major Retail Area Requirement (ha)	2031 Total Area Requirement (ha)
East Gwillimbury	7,360	20	368	56	427
Markham	12,140	20	607	120	727
Vaughan	9,930	20	497	120	617
Total	29,430	20	1,472	296	1,771

Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department, 2008

Paving Prime Foodland is Wrong

- Markham has sufficient land already designated urban to accommodate growth for 10+ yrs.
- If Markham's existing urban land is used more efficiently, there will be opportunities for growth without paving Markham's prime foodland.
- With the growing public support for local food production and security, it makes no sense to pave-over some of the finest foodland in Canada in one of our best climate zones.



Expanding the Urban Envelope Allows Developers to “Drive” Planning

- Once the urban envelope is expanded, developers can “drive” the planning process through their deep-pocketed ability to beat municipalities with consultants and lawyers and OMB hearings.
- Once the urban envelope is expanded, developers can avoid the planning and development charges and steps necessary to protect community and ecosystem health and ensure development pays for itself.



Golden Horseshoe Consequences of 'Growth as Usual' by 2031

Potential Loss of Farmland

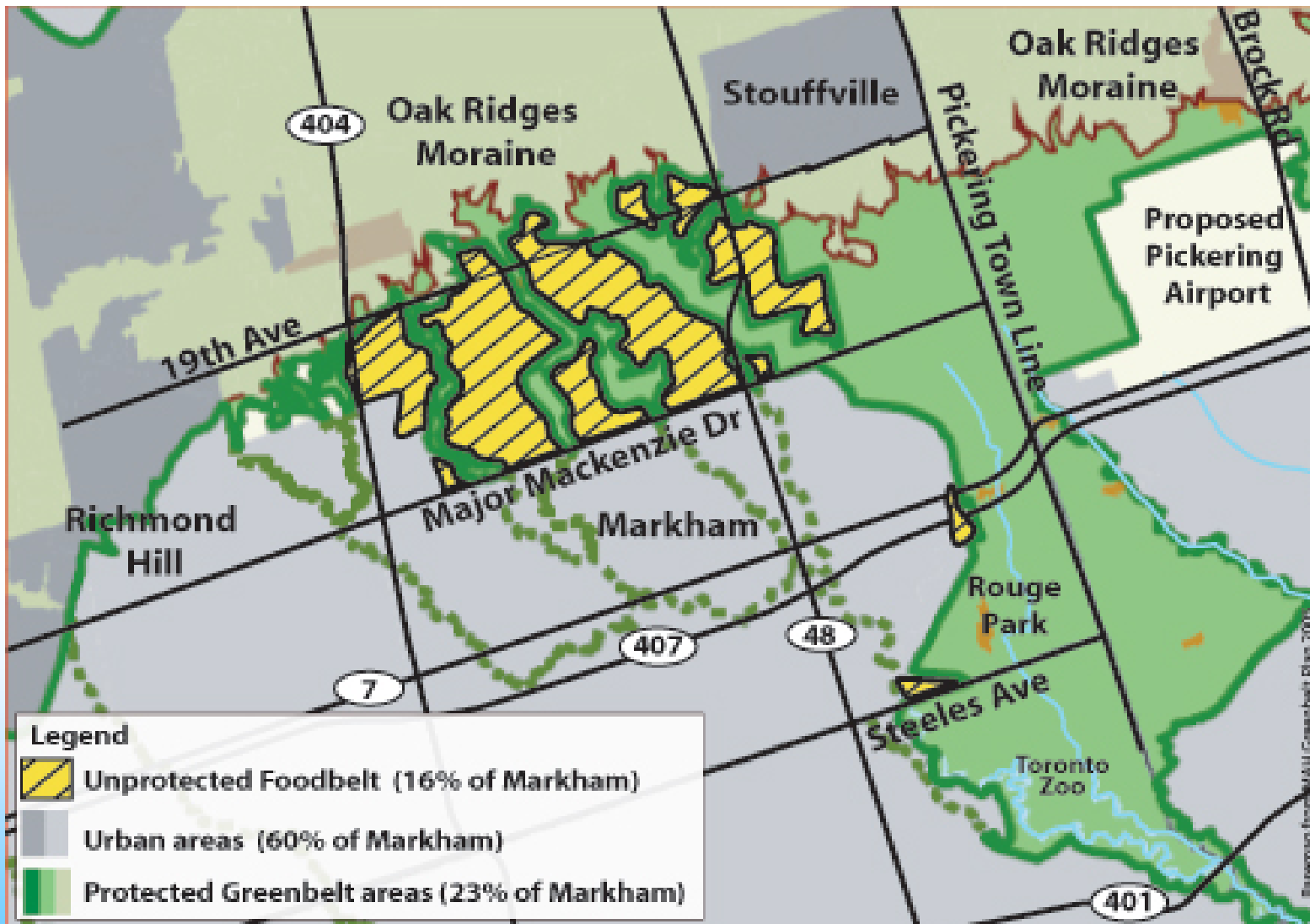
- 3000 ha/year (30 square kilometres/yr)
- 92% prime agricultural land (69% Class 1)

Potential Area of Sprawl

- 1000 square Km total by 2031
- 2x size of existing City of Toronto



Protect Markham's Foodbelt



Markham

Canada's Best Farmland

- Markham's rural area is predominantly the top category of Class 1 farmland according to the Canada Land Inventory;
- The Greenbelt study completed by the Province also indicated that the rural area in Markham is prime agricultural land;
- Markham's rural area qualifies as prime agricultural land under the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS);
- Less than 0.5% of Canada is Class 1 farmland.

Markham Source: Markham 2009 Agricultural Assessment



Markham's Ideal Growing Conditions

- **Markham's moderate climate, fertile soils and good rainfall and water sources support high foodland productivity;**
- **Markham enjoys a flexible and diverse food production profile which includes cash crops, fruit and vegetables;**
- **Climate change will increase the diversity of crops which can be grown in Markham;**
- **With climate change and population growth, it is imperative to protect foodlands with good rainfall, like Markham.**



Farming has “Growing” Economic Potential

- **Markham farmers want to keep farming;**
- **Markham farming is diverse, flexible and productive;**
- **Demand is growing for fresh, healthy, local food;**

Source: Markham 2009 Agricultural Assessment



Farming is Economically Important

In Canada, agriculture and the agri-food sector:

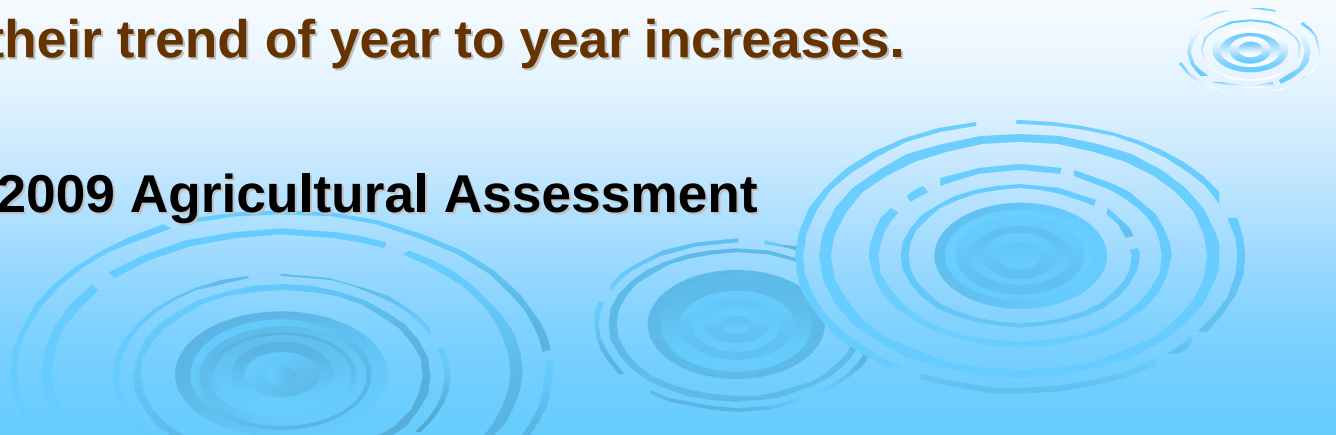
- **provide 1 in 8 jobs;**
- **account for approximately 8% of GDP;**
- **provide good food at one of the lowest costs in developed countries.**



Economic Benefits of Farming in Markham

- **2006 Markham Agri- related Revenues \$62 million**
- **Markham's Gross Farm Receipts / hectare (\$1,272):**
 - **28% higher than the average for GTA farms (\$999/ha)**
 - **63% higher than the average for Ontario farms (\$777/ha)**
 - **Continuing their trend of year to year increases.**

Source: Markham 2009 Agricultural Assessment



Urban Expansion and Development Increases Flooding and Erosion

- Markham has **533 areas (including homes and businesses)** and **129 roads which would be flooded** during the Regional Storm and a number of roads and homes which would flood in flows as low as the 2-year flood event.

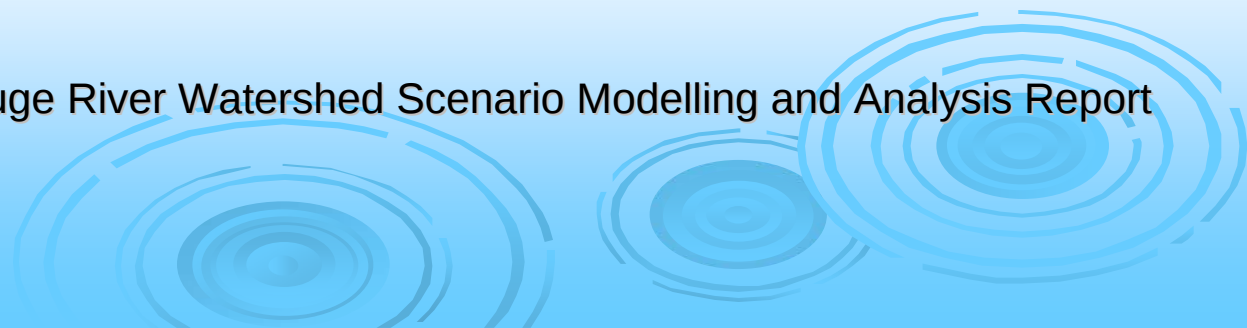
Source: Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Page 5-25 Rouge River State of the Watershed Report



Urban Expansion Increases Damage to Existing Downstream Properties

- Urban expansion *increases the magnitude and duration of erosive flows in receiving watercourses*
- *middle tributaries (Markham communities) would be subject to **major hydrological impacts*** if the urban envelope is expanded
- ... development-induced changes to the flow regime *cause uncontrolled erosion, enlargement, and habitat degradation*

Source: 2007 TRCA Rouge River Watershed Scenario Modelling and Analysis Report



Main Rouge Watershed

well above threshold for “severe” impacts

- the **maximum impervious** cover that a watershed can withstand before experiencing **severe hydrologic changes and consequent geomorphic and ecological impacts** is approximately 10%.
- The Main Rouge subwatershed has significant urbanization and an approximate **total impervious cover of 18%** as of 2002.
- Source: TRCA Rouge Watershed Report Card Section 5 – Key Findings



Flooding Damage is Increasing with Climate Change



Costly Infrastructure Damage

- Canadians spent more than \$3 billion in 1998 to repair damages caused by extreme weather.
- Disaster recovery payments by insurance companies and taxpayers have been doubling every five years throughout the 1980's and 1990's, an alarming trend that cannot be allowed to continue" (IBC National Strategy, 1999).



Provincial Policy Statement

- **PPS 2.2.1** Planning authorities **shall** protect, improve or restore the *quality and quantity of water* by:
- minimizing potential *negative impacts*, including cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts;



Urban Expansion Pollutes our Streams & Drinking Water Sources

- **“meeting water quality targets will become an increasingly distant goal as the footprint of development expands”**
- **Source: Rouge River Watershed Strategy and Implementation Plan
Water Quality Section 4.2-30 Summary and Conclusions**



Polluted Water entering Robinson Creek Trout Stream, Markham



Dead Rainbow Trout in Polluted and Eroded Robinson Creek, Markham



E. Coli Bacteria in Streams at Markham / Toronto Border (Oct. 2, 2009)

➤ Little Rouge River at Steeles

E. Coli bacteria level 250

➤ Main Rouge River

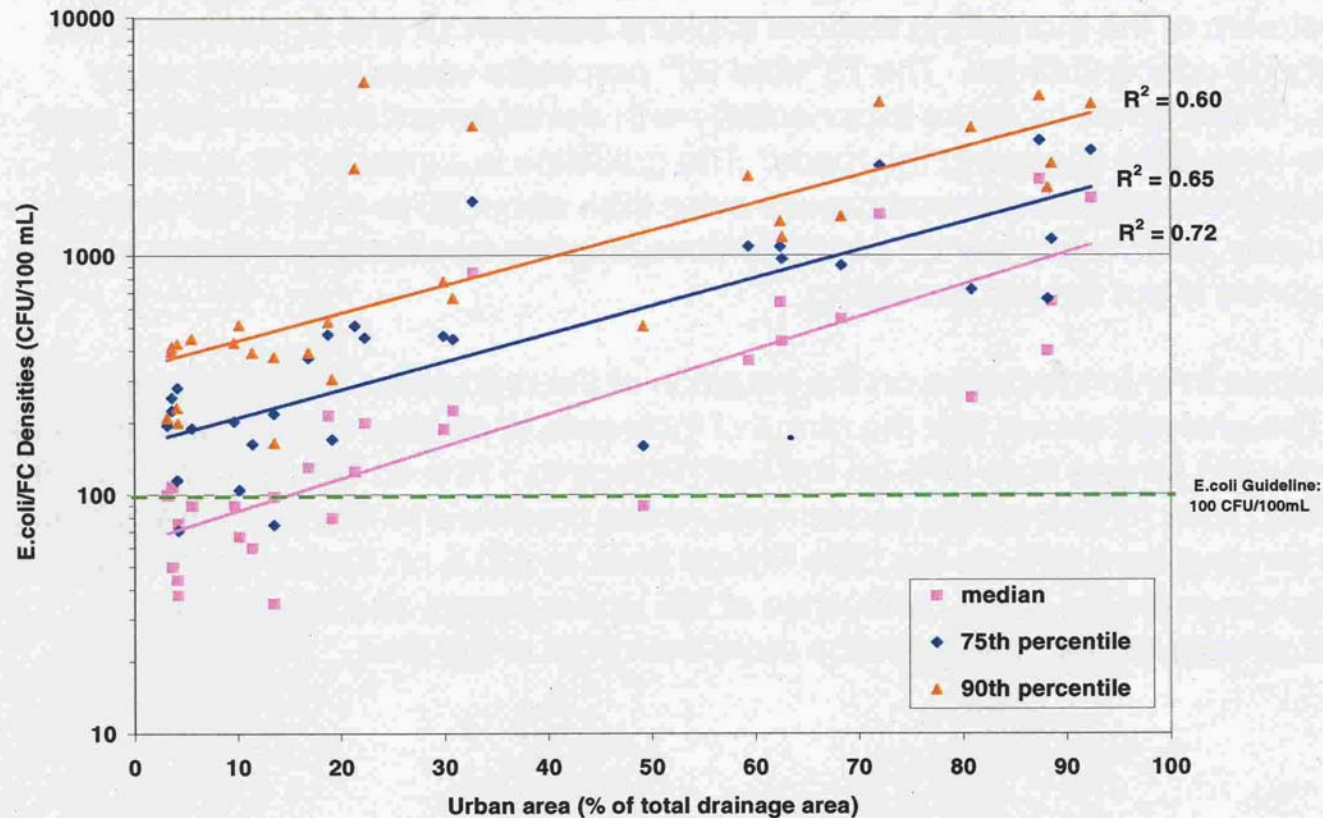
E. Coli bacteria level 380

MOE Standard - less than 100



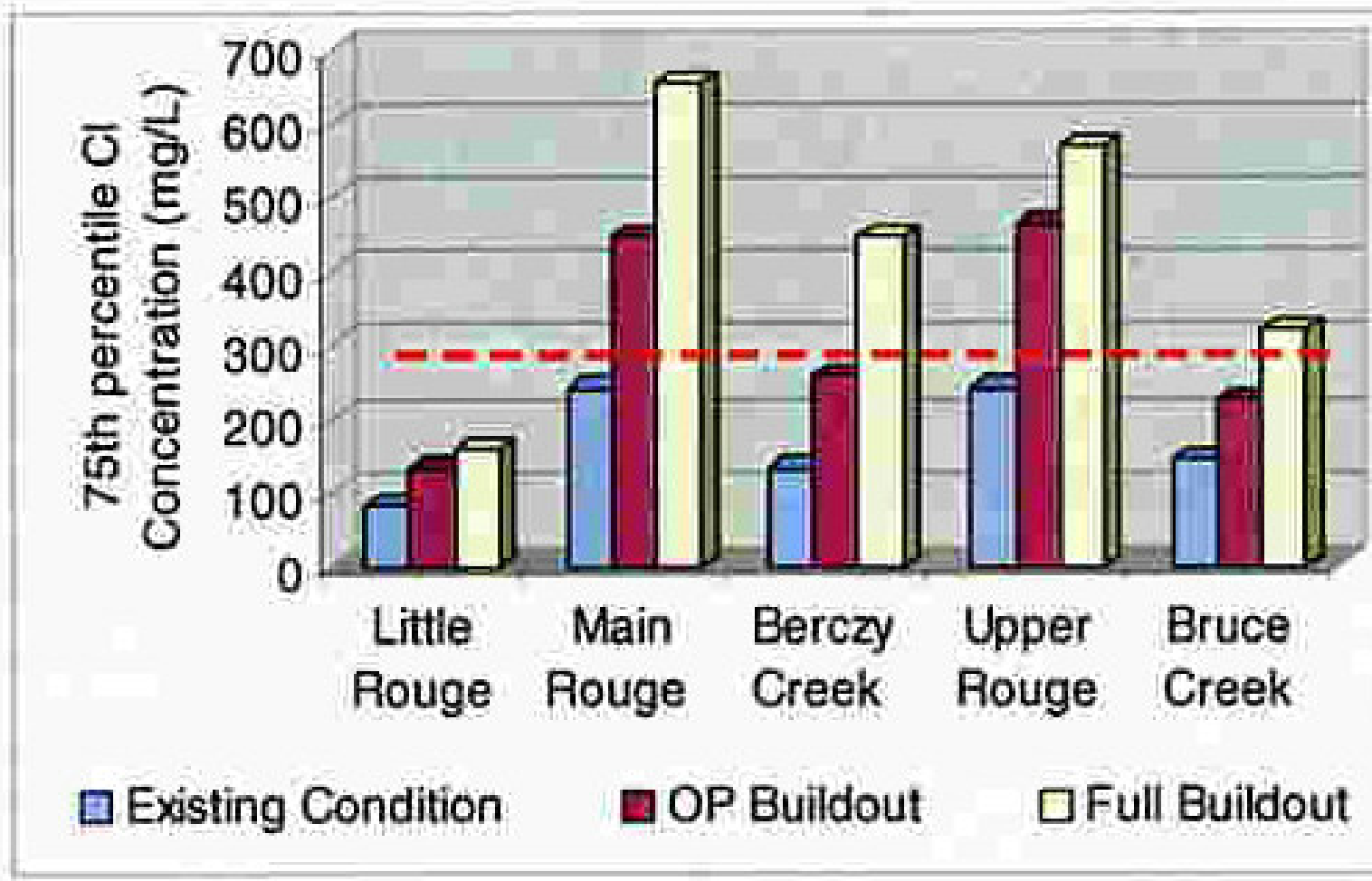
E. Coli Bacteria Levels exceed MOE Public Health Standards as the Urban Envelope Expands

Figure 4.2-6: Relationships between *E.coli*/*F.coli* densities and the extent of urbanization upstream of GTA monitoring stations (Regional Watershed Monitoring Network, 2002-2005).



Chloride Levels exceed MOE Standards as Urban Envelope Expands

Source: TRCA Rouge Modeling and Analyses Report (2007) P. 4-2-16



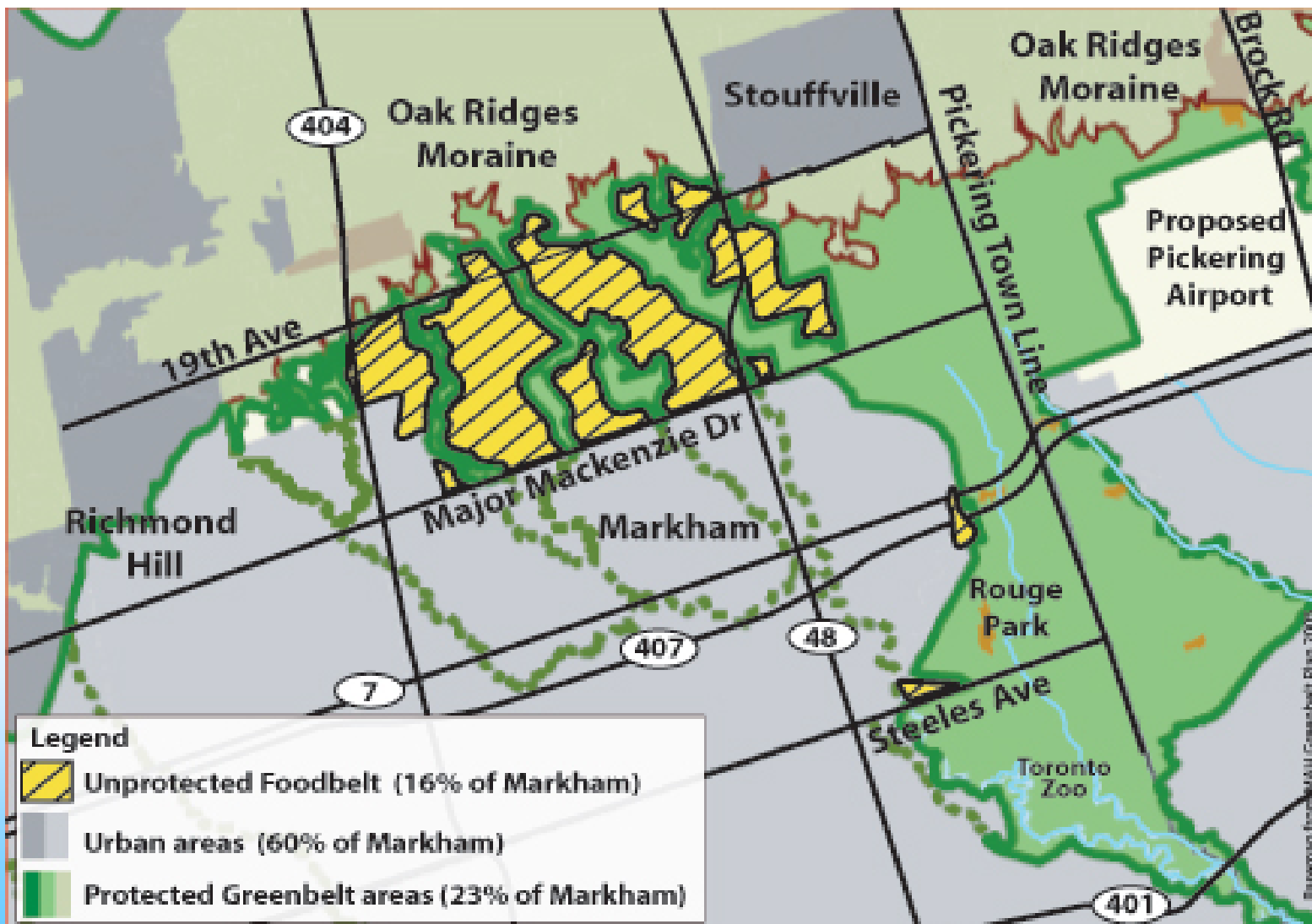
L. Ontario, Markham's Water Source already polluted from too much human waste



What will your Markham Legacy be?



Protect Markham's Foodbelt and Quality of Life



Additional Information

- Website: protectmarkham.wordpress.com
- Email: markhamfoodbelt@gmail.com

