

Town Hall Meeting Summaries

Summary Notes of Public comments made at the Growth Management Public Information Session in Richmond Hill Tuesday March 21, 2006

Feedback

- Even speaking to people for a year long consultation is not adequate, we need to do a lot more, and ongoing consultation, public and non-profit, businesses, etc. i.e. the stakeholders.
- What are the benchmarks, what do we need to look for in the future, what if the province is wrong in it's targets.
- How can we accommodate people from other areas in the world, e.g. Asia, if there are environmental disasters in this country.
- Regardless of what Region does, municipalities have to implement, if municipalities choose not to, or bow to NIMBY pressure, it won't make a difference.

Feedback



- Do we need additional Regional powers to require implementation to happen.
- Congratulate York Region on consultation so far and the planning that's been done.
- There are a lot of things we haven't done, and this may not be our fault, e.g. sometimes developers have enough money to throw at the OMB, lobbying provincial politicians (e.g. Queensville, extension of 404, Simcoe County)
- Bradford by-pass has been killed by the Province— request it be removed from plan
- Transit takes too long along Yonge Street, GO is faster, more efficient, need a GTAA transit authority, an integrated system, sewage, water, transit, infrastructure needs to be co-ordinated.



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Feedback



- We need courage and discipline to impose new initiatives.
- Suggest closing off a lane in rush hour for buses on Regional roads, especially Yonge Street or that Roads be turned into toll roads and rush hour drivers be required to buy bus tickets for use on toll roads.
- We have to change the way we think and address issues. Need to change our mindset as a means of directing urban development. Putting transit in after development drastically increases the costs. Putting transit in before development is less expensive - Ottawa is looking at this.
- There is a lack of planning for a Regional airport need one somewhere between here and Barrie. Toronto's airport has met capacity.



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Feedback



- Critical need for affordable housing in this Region, what is the Region's creative approach to providing this?
There are 6,000 families on waiting list, 76,000 persons are living on low incomes and low and middle income families can't afford to live here.
- Large number of hotel employees on Hwy 7 commute from Toronto.
- What is potential for secondary suites in York Region as only, only 2 municipalities have these suites as-of-right. People are living in horrible conditions. The region has to take the lead on providing more affordable housing opportunities
- Optimistic that the Region has a balanced view for people and the environment.



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Feedback



- Representing Observatory Hill group of ratepayers, hope that the Town (Richmond Hill) will buy the land and not build on it, because this area cannot be replaced.
- Widening of 16th avenue - the more you widen roads the more you encourage use of cars, would prefer to promote transit systems that could be a model for other municipalities.
- There are two schools on 16th, where widening can't occur.
- Happy to see SOE report on the environment. In absence of legislation for greening of buildings, what strategies can we employ to encourage developers to build green buildings.



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- I see many roads in the Region that appear to be under-utilized, a waste of money and what is the impact on the environment.
- Why can't pavement on roads be impervious vs. pervious?
- We are planning well, but the private interest is in the drivers seat, and we have to defend our interests against them.
- Official plans support public interests but private interests win over.
- Recommend that we buy the land, and put conditions on the purchase so that the public interest is achieved before private interests – e.g. trails construction



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Feedback



- Wastewater has 2 parts - sanitary sewage and storm water. On the second part the increase of impermeable surfaces is increasing downstream runoff and causing problems.
- Stormwater management should be included in the cost of development, green roofs make good economic as well as environmental sense.
- *Water for Tomorrow* program proves that conservation works, and need a number of other conservation programs to encourage reduction of resource use and reduction of our environmental impact.
- Need more education on the importance of conservation, *Water for Tomorrow* has a very good slogan – *Inch by inch is a Cinch, Yard by yard is hard!*



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Feedback



- In some areas of Richmond Hill we have the Green Box program - this needs to be expanded, to reduce waste. The Region needs to take the lead.
- Only one line in Vision 2026 mentions the aging population, what are we doing that is progressive in the areas of housing and transit for our senior population?
- Conditions for seniors living in respite care homes is not acceptable – 4 people per room separated only by drapes. The region needs to be more involved in this form of senior care. German community in St. Catherines have established senior's residents – modest apartments – model to be followed.
- My mother is in Leisureworld (in Richmond Hill) sharing a room it's \$1000 a month, Sunrise is \$1000 a week. This is the difference between the publicly funded and privately funded cost of care



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- There was an application for a high rise senior's residence in Thornhill, but want it moved up the street because of heritage homes. Markham has moved it's heritage homes to heritage village, Vaughan hasn't gotten there yet. What is York Region doing in growth plan around preserving our heritage with this growth.
- Many people choose to work from home, this is a solution to reduce traffic on our roads, the region could play a part by developing home business support centres in our Regional Centres to support residents working at home and reduce commuting.
- We need to find a way to encourage use of alternative fuels.



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- Vaughan wants to put in waste transfer stations, where people drive their waste in, and bring in clothing for Goodwill. People at Dufferin and 7 don't want it there. There needs to be careful siting of these facilities to reduce incompatibility in our communities.
- Markham and Richmond Hill are scheduled for these, and no one wants these facilities in their communities.
- There is a 15 year roads plan, for 7 lane roads. We need 30 and 100 year plans to identify rights-of-way today not tomorrow when costs will be prohibitive.
- Part of a sustainable Region is food and agriculture but this aspect of the economy isn't mentioned in the plan. There is the GTA Agricultural Plan and committee which is supporting local food production and sales.
- Agriculture is not only a production of food, but also a source of entertainment for urbanites, e.g. pick your own food, and it's also environment, the farmland cleans the water and protects rivers.



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Feedback



- Upset about intensification, and it being shoved down our throats, too much too fast, so many compromises to make, our children will have to live in high rise and mid rise buildings with their families.
- There will be no areas to play, no parks in urban areas.
- We're making a terrible mistake bringing all these people in, counterproductive to our communities – social and health problems will happen with intensification.
- Canadians don't go to car shows to buy hybrid cars, they go to buy SUV's so not hopeful that people will use transit.
- Don't understand why all these people have to come in our area – Canada is a big country.
- What will the future employment be – Walmarts, foreign owned large companies, disregarding small businesses, for minimum wage, no benefits and part time only.



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- People won't be able to afford housing. Low income housing is not a reality because developers are out to make money, and the government is in all this and therefore, intensification is being forced on us.
- Government is not being democratic, and we have to approach this issue by ensuring our children have greenspaces around buildings, and design of units have to incorporate proper activities for children.
- Are losing our agricultural land bit by bit because of developers.
- Agriculture is national security and we're giving up best lands we have.
- Why do we have the mentality that we have to accept all this growth?
- Both Feds and Province have been negligent in planning.



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Feedback



- It is not healthy for a country to have such economic and job disparity between regions and Provinces.
- Regions need to tell province and feds to spread the growth and wealth around the country.
- Not good for the rest of the country to have so much wealth concentrated in such a small area.
- We need new people for the good of the country, but it doesn't all have to go to one place.
- This is not to say that the Region should not grow, but fewer in order to accommodate them in as sustainable way.
- While feds say we need immigration to drive jobs and economy but our children are educated and still unemployed.
- Employment needs to be well matched with what people want to do and what they're trained to do.



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- Environmental Commissioner of Ontario took issue with Places to Grow because it did not allow for immigration to go to other areas of the Province, but those communities aren't able to handle this growth.
- I have a Challenge for regional Council – nothing will change commuter travel patterns faster than gridlock and gas prices. Strongly encourage Council not to disappoint the public. Council might want to take road widening plans and budgets for the next 10 years, and instead of improving and widening roads put that money into good, efficient transit. This will change behaviours.
- Once you build the road, you can't take it back.
- If 40% intensification must happen, must have environmental provisions as mandatory things, e.g. greenspaces.
- Need attractive urban design in our communities and especially in intensifying areas.



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Feedback



- Need to Communicate to employees at Region and Town about these meetings – couldn't find out where this meeting would be held tonight.
- In 1949 heard that a desirable population for Canada would be 60 million people. Came here from Vancouver for employment opportunities and that's why people keep coming to Canada and the GTA and why we need intensification.
- Need teachers to teach kids that you shouldn't live on green spaces. We need to create a society where people are willing to settle for less when they don't need a single family home, and let young families live in homes with backyards.
- If seniors were to move out of single family homes, then there might not be a need for new larger homes.



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- People are coming here, that's a fact, so let's deal with it and plan for protection of the environment.
- When can we find out more about the past and studies.
- One of the most important things to talk about is what intensification is, it doesn't necessarily need to be high rise condos, it can be 3 or 4 story buildings.
- Important to communicate even to Regional Council that it's not all high rises.
- Important to define sustainability as a balance between circles – it's not swaying more towards one circle or the other but finding the balance in between them all, including the fourth circle of the arts.

Feedback

- Can't close our eyes and assume growth will go away, have to accept it's reality and it's coming and it's here to stay.
- Along with York Region lacking it's own media, it's also lacking an identity. Local municipalities do, but York Region just seems to be an administrative unit. Part of problem is lack of "York region" media, or cultural centres, etc.
- Richmond Hill Performing Arts Centre will be a good centre, but suggest that York Region put some extra money into it to make it even bigger and better.
- Noticed that whenever there is new development, the traffic is worse. As it matures, it seems to level off.
- Look at why people feel they need an extra car when they moved here and look at ways to help them prevent having to acquire that extra car. Look at what we can be doing with transit.

Feedback



- Region has smart people but are being conned, not sure by whom – Queens' Park or developers. Regional planning should not be on our desktop it should be done with our neighbours.
- All sorts of traffic is now coming through the Region, need more GO trains to prevent this, e.g. up to Barrie.
- Need equivalent highly efficient transit, e.g. GO Trains, for Markham and Cornell, this would take cars off Yonge Street.
- What does overall 40% intensification mean? Shifting of housing choices. Many people will lose their homes to high rise buildings.
- Examples of high density areas that went in but transit didn't follow.
- Need special transit to Downsview to take traffic off Yonge Street.



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Feedback



- There are many stakeholders who say "build build build" and many councillors who support this.
- How much of the 10% transit growth is from the now defunct GO buses?
- We have gridlock now. If we believe bicycles would really help, then all our maps should show bikeways on all roads, no parking allowed, and the developers will shoot us on sight.
- Has the Region considered co-build options, to incorporate more sustainable options, around related infrastructure needs to minimize impacts.
- Growth is coming, but it's how we manage it that makes it sustainable.
- We need to become more knowledgeable about what the Federal and Provincial investment in York Region will be



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Feedback

- Sounds like the Region's most recent projections don't expect growth to be as high.
- Are we doing the Region's growth management plan because of the Province's growth management plan?
- Does 10% increase in VIVA transit ridership really just represent transfer of GO ridership?
- Really need to keep transit improvements coming in line with growth, intensification because buses are becoming more crowded, getting stuck in traffic, etc.
- Even with improvements, intersections and roads are operating at capacity, issues around transferring across transit system.

Feedback

- Accommodating diversity in Region, by holding meetings in different languages might bring out more people who wouldn't otherwise be able to participate.
- Travelling downtown by Viva is draining, need to drive to Viva in order to connect with TTC.
- Will never be able to build enough roads to accommodate all the cars we have, and not possible to support transit with low densities.
- Markham is not a pedestrian friendly environment.
- We need more points of interest, improve sidewalks to encourage people to walk.

Feedback

- As a resident who travels out of Region to work, do not find transit at all convenient to get to work unless you work in the Yonge Street corridor – other areas are much more difficult to access.
- What does federal government's budget announcement around the GTTA (Greater Toronto Transit Authority) mean for York Region.
- Concerned with transportation and traffic in the area, fully support GO transit, etc. but system is currently designed to feed downtown Toronto rush hour, not designed to bring people here. Nor is it designed to move people around the Region.
- Need a single, united system across the GTA. Needs to be easier and more affordable.
- Communication important with people who live in area, but feel that Province and Region makes decisions, and plans are so far forward, no sure if what residents are saying is impacting any decisions.

Feedback

- Why don't we plan to bring a university here, or a branch of U of T or Ryerson here so that our students don't have to commute downtown.
- What are we doing to keep heritage, nothing in Region's plans about this.
- Yonge street is not pedestrian or cycling friendly, road is too wide.
- What about farmland in green areas – important that we keep farmland so that we don't have to import food. We have to support our farmers.
- We need a university, more libraries, community centres. Libraries across the Region don't have the same standards/selection. E.G. Newmarket and other little towns have poor selections

Feedback



- We need to promote immigrant services like COSTI, in order to help new Canadians to use their skills here, to grow the community.
- Explain the OMB of the present and the future, because their decisions affect our decisions and the guy with the money controls the system.
- Important to integrate planning projects through co-build opportunities – address multiple or related infrastructure needs with sustainable long term solutions.
- Need to do more to balance environmental protection with the pressures of growth.
- Public comments to Regional Government officials and planners should be incorporated so that policy decisions reflect the community's input.



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Feedback



- Very important that feedback of tonight be compared with other evenings and analyse them around which issues are common across the Region and which ones are community specific.



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