

June 16th, 2010 ✓

Chair, Members of Council and Staff,

I want to thank you for this opportunity to comment on the staff recommendation to expand the urban boundary in Vaughan. I am puzzled why this recommendation is coming forward given that Vaughan Council has not yet completed the public process on this issue nor made a decision as to whether they will be recommending an expansion at this time. If a decision has been made between yourselves and the City of Vaughan then the public process is a sham, democracy is dead in York Region and today's meeting would be a total waste of your and our time. Please assure me this is not true by delaying this decision until the City of Vaughan has completed its public process on this matter.

The "Places to Grow" legislation sets out criteria that must be met before an urban boundary expansion can be made (policy 2.2.8.2). I have reviewed the reports required to make the case for an urban boundary expansion and several critical studies are missing. We do not yet have the economic study proving this sprawl is sustainable, nor the secondary plans in place that prove it can be done without negative impact to the surrounding countryside (which provide important habitat and ecological function to local endangered species) and the high value farmlands surrounding this proposed expansion. Please delay this decision until you have the necessary studies confirming that this is a wise thing to do for the long term health and sustainability of our City and the Region.

Through a careful analysis of the reports provided by the consultants it is clear that an urban boundary expansion is not necessary. Both the Urban Strategies Inc. "Where and How to Grow – June 2009" report pg. 79 and the Hemson Consulting Ltd. "Housing Analysis and Employment Land Needs – April 2019" report pg. 5", indicate that all the residential growth required can be met within the existing urban boundary. Page 34 of the "Where and How to Grow Report" states "The 2031 Priority Opportunity Areas yield approx. 54,200 units at the low end of the FSI range." This report also identifies that there is approx. 30,000 units remaining unbuilt in the Greenfield areas already slated for development in existing OPA's.

Do the math 54,000 plus 30,000 equals 84,000 units and we only need approx. 66,000 units to accommodate the growth. The only way the expansion has been justified is because Hemson has scaled back the intensification numbers to the 45% minimum you have identified for Vaughan. This is not based on any facts. A quick analysis of the proposals developers have already submitted to the City for the some of the Priority Areas indicate proposals that are for much more than the minimums that are being projected for in the "Where and How to Grow" document and that document yielded the 54,000. The developers know the market. That is their business and if they are confident that they can be successful with these buildings then why are we artificially constraining the market. The Hemson report does not reflect the reality in Vaughan. People did not come out en mass to oppose the modest intensification that would net 54,000 units. The Hemson Housing Analysis is inadequate and misleading.

So what is clear is that we do have the capacity to accommodate the growth without an expansion of the boundary, and the secondary plans for intensification are being drawn up to allow for that higher growth to occur, so we will get the 54,000 intensification units regardless. An urban boundary

expansion is not required and by the way it flies in the face of so many of the objectives in your Official Plan that I am appalled that this is even on the table, especially since it is not required. I request a meeting with the planners proposing this expansion to review our findings and conclusions before any decision is made by Council.

I have heard that we need this expansion because we must continue to provide ground related units. We have approx. 30,000 units still to be built within the existing OPA's and that 70% of that is for ground related housing. An interesting fact is that currently over 85% of Vaughan's housing stock is ground related and the whole premise for expanding into the "white belt" is to supply more ground related units. This type of growth is a result of outdated thinking and has been proven to result in higher taxes, create more traffic congestion, and result in negative environmental effects. The residents spoke out against this type of growth and their input has been ignored.

With over 85% of our housing stock in ground related units maybe it is time we look to get a better mix of housing types in Vaughan, to satisfy the needs of our community; the seniors looking to downsize and reduce maintenance, and young adults looking to start out who can't afford a house.

A York Region Land Budget Report dated April 2009 reiterates the requirement for a boundary expansion, and goes on to explain why it is required.

"The Region has constructed very significant amounts of water and wastewater infrastructure to service future growth and has debt financed those works that will be recovered from future development charges. It is essential that sufficient land supply be available for development in order to ensure that the Region is able to collect development charges on a timely basis."

So we are in a box, having already spent future money – we have mortgaged our future, and our children's future.

But have we? Why must the collection of development charges be tied only to urban sprawl? We can levy similar charges to intensification development as well? This revenue would be far more beneficial, since the supporting infrastructure is already in place. Let's get creative now, because the urban expansion has a limit, so we better figure out how to grow our city and reduce our debt without further expansion.

I shall end with a plea. Let's chart a new vision for Vaughan and York Region; a vibrant, sustainable future one that actually implements the grand objectives in the York Region New Official Plan and do not approve the unnecessary urban boundary expansion in Vaughan.

Sincerely,
Deb Schulte