

**Ministry of
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September 26, 2008

Ms. Heather Konefat, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Community Planning
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Ms. Konefat:

Re: Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 52 (ROPA 52)
Vaughan Highway 400 North Employment Area
MAH File No.: 19-DP-1994-07043

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH) is in receipt of the abovementioned proposal to amend the Regional Municipality of York's Official Plan. As you are aware, provincial One-Window comments/staff reports were previously provided regarding this proposal on December 23, 2005 and May 27, 2008, both of which raised significant provincial interests and issues.

Your letter of September 8, 2008, indicates that the Region intends to bring this proposed amendment to Planning Committee on October 1, 2008, and for consideration at Regional Council on October 23, 2008. Based on reviewing the draft amendment, the primary provincial interests and issues have not been adequately addressed. As such, it is requested that this amendment not proceed at this time. A summary of the outstanding provincial interests and issues is provided below.

Municipal Comprehensive Review/Growth Plan Conformity

The Growth Plan states that an urban expansion may only occur as part of a *municipal comprehensive review* which it defines as "an official plan review, or an official plan amendment, initiated by a municipality which comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the Growth Plan". The Region's "Planning for Tomorrow" work is still ongoing and, as a result, bringing forward this site specific urban expansion is premature. At a minimum the requirements of a municipal comprehensive review include:

- Use of the population and employment forecasts in Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan and allocation of population and employment to lower tiers where applicable;
- Completion of an intensification strategy in accordance with policy 2.2.3.6 of the Growth Plan that at a minimum:
 - quantifies and accommodates a significant portion of both future

- employment and residential development through intensification throughout the built-up area in accordance with the policies in 2.2.3 of the Growth Plan;
 - o identifies a minimum intensification target for residential development that maximizes and ensures the implementation of the intensification strategy;
 - o identifies the appropriate type and scale of development and sets targets for employment and residential growth in intensification areas, urban growth centres, major transit station areas and intensification corridors;
- Assessment of available land supplies and demonstration of the need for any proposed urban expansion, including how the minimum designated greenfield area density target will be achieved along with the other objectives of Section 2.2.7 of the Growth Plan and how the proposed expansion will allow the municipality to meet the minimum intensification target for residential development and related objectives in accordance with Section 2.2.3 of the Growth Plan; and,
- Implementation of the results of the municipal comprehensive review through the Official Plan program.

As the timeframe for completion of Growth Plan conformity nears (June 16, 2009), it is anticipated that the Region will be drafting a comprehensive update of its official plan to accomplish this. The forecasting, land budget, master transportation, sewer and water exercises are important elements of overall conformity. As all are still in process and the minimum requirements identified above not yet completed, it is recommended that the Region defer the approval until such time as the comprehensive review is complete.

Employment Forecasts

At the September 3, 2008 Planning and Economic Development Committee, the Region released a refined forecast and land budget summary as part of the "Planning for Tomorrow" work. The forecast for employment was identified as approximately 799,000 for the year 2031. This forecast is still beyond the 780,000 for the year 2031, as identified on Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan. The Region's estimate does not conform to the Growth Plan and represents an inconsistency when considering the overall intent of the Growth Plan. Further, the justification for this urban expansion, in part, relies on the employment forecast of 799,000, as well as assumed timing constraints on the availability of the Highway 427 employment area – an assumption the prior provincial staff reports have not supported.

Strategic Employment Lands

The draft version of ROPA 52 provided to the Province includes a new policy for "Regionally Significant Employment Lands". Currently, the Growth Plan and Provincial Policy Statement only contemplate the designation of expanded urban areas based on justification within the respective timeframes of those documents (i.e. up to 20 years). In addition, there is lack of any supporting information on the basis, intent and effect of this proposed policy framework. The Province requests the Region to provide supporting rational for the inclusion of such a policy.

GTA West Corridor

The policies propose to rely solely on the lower-tier secondary plan to ensure the protection of the GTA West Corridor, a provincially significant corridor as shown in the Growth Plan and a *planned corridor* by definition pursuant to the PPS. This corridor therefore needs to be shown in the Region's official plan along with policies regarding its protection. It is noted, that the draft Regional master transportation plan materials identify

this corridor and the modelling appears to rely on it. This is an example of where this incremental urban expansion does not appear to be appropriately integrated with the region's broader official plan review and conformity exercises.

Greenbelt Plan

The proposed amendment recognizes the area of the Greenbelt Plan that is within the subject lands, but only provides a general policy reference to the Greenbelt Plan. The *Greenbelt Act* states that municipalities are to amend their official plans to bring them into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan at the time of their next official plan review. It is the Ministry's understanding that the Region was going to undertake Greenbelt conformity as part of the "Planning for Tomorrow" exercise. As such, the incremental and cursory approach taken in proposed Amendment No. 52 to the Greenbelt Plan is not supported.

Next Steps

The protection of employment lands is a key new element in the Growth Plan, the PPS and the *Planning Act*. The establishment of a long-term approach identifying and protecting certain key lands beyond provincial planning horizons – including certain lands adjacent or in proximity to key infrastructure such as airports, highways and ports - is a topic of ongoing consideration at the provincial level. Conceptually, some or all of the subject lands may be an example of such an area.

As such, while the Region is requested not to proceed with the adoption of this amendment pending further discussions with the Province on the matters identified above, we do support in principle the identification and protection of employment lands. As an alternative, the Region may wish to consider a resolution in principle supporting the protection of these lands for long-term employment uses.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a meeting to discuss these topics further, please call me directly at 416-585-6109.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Victor Doyle", is written over the printed name and title.

Victor Doyle, MCIP, RPP
Manager, Community Planning and Development
Municipal Services Office – Central Region

c: John Zipay, City of Vaughan
Stephen Kitchen, Township of King
Ron Glenn, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure
Heather Doyle, Ministry of Transportation
Tom Farrell, Ministry of Natural Resources
Kevin Huang, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority