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**AMENDMENT NO. 52 TO THE YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN - VAUGHAN
HIGHWAY 400 EMPLOYMENT AREA**

***(Regional Council at its meeting on October 23, 2008 amended
Recommendation 1 as follows:***

***That the Commissioner of Planning be authorized to give Notice
to adopt Amendment No. 52 to the Official Plan of the Region of
York, as set out in Attachment 1 (as amended) to this report as
follows:***

***Attachment No. 1 (figure 2, 3 and 4) is amended to defer
the lands shown as “Mixed Use Area –
Employment/Commercial” within Vaughan local Official
Plan Amendment 637 at the northwest corner of Teston
Road and Jane Street, to address the proposed
commercial uses at the time the Vaughan Secondary Plan
OPA 637 is brought forward for consideration by Regional
Council; and***

That Clause 6, Recommendation 2 be amended to read:

- 2. The Regional Solicitor be directed to prepare the
adopting by-law for Regional Council’s consideration
at a future meeting.)***

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The following communications be received:**
 - (a) Victor Doyle, Manager, Community Planning and Development,
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, September 26, 2008;**
 - (b) Rosemarie L. Humphries, President, Humphries Planning Group Inc.,
representing the Vaughan 400 North Landowners Group, September
30, 2008; and**
 - (c) James Kennedy, President, KLM Planning Partners Inc., October 1,
2008;**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated
September 8, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and
Development Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Planning be authorized to give Notice to adopt Amendment No. 52 to the Official Plan of the Region of York, as set out in *Attachment No. 1* to this report.
2. The Regional Solicitor be directed to proceed with the adopting bylaw for Regional Council's consideration on October 23, 2008.
3. Modifications, as necessary, to the Secondary Plan (LOPA 637) be considered through a future report to ensure:
 - Identification and protection for water, sewer, road, and transit infrastructure requirements and co-ordination with the updates to the Regional Master Plans in early 2009;
 - The GTA West Transportation Corridor has been sufficiently protected;
 - Sustainability policies have been included;
 - All Regional policies are fully met.
4. Regional staff be authorized to attend the Ontario Municipal Board in support of the Regional position, if necessary.

2. PURPOSE

This report is to provide a recommended approval of the Regional Official Plan 52 in order to expand the existing urban area and identify the lands as Regionally significant employment lands. The report also sets out the next steps required prior to the approval of the Vaughan Secondary Plan Official Plan Amendment 637.

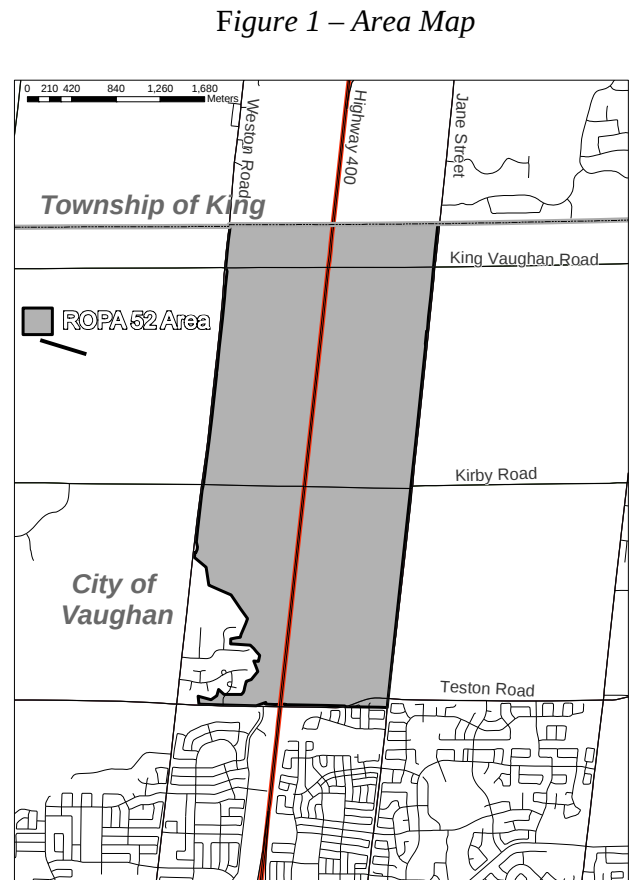
This Amendment has been initiated by York Region at the request of the Council for the City of Vaughan, following the City's adoption of OPA 637 on June 26, 2006. This Regional Amendment adds the OPA 637 planning area to the Region's "Urban Area" by re-designating the subject lands from "Agricultural Policy Area" to "Urban Area" while expanding the existing "Regional Greenlands System" to implement the Provincial Greenbelt Plan within the subject area.

3. BACKGROUND

Location

The lands subject to ROPA 52 and OPA 637 comprise approximately 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of undeveloped lands, bounded by Teston Road to the south, the King-Vaughan boundary to the north, Weston Road in the west and Jane Street to the east (see *Figure 1 – Area Map*). Combined, the proposed Amendments would establish a prestige, Regional-scale business park that will contribute to meeting the long-term employment needs of the Region and the City of Vaughan to 2031.

The lands are currently located outside of the urban boundary of the City and Region, and are partially located within the Provincial *Greenbelt Belt Plan*, and are shown as “White Belt” or “Places to Grow” under the Provincial *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Growth Plan). There are approximately 500 hectares of developable land within the planning area, once the *Greenbelt* and other environmentally-constrained lands are removed.



Previous Reports on Vaughan Highway 400 Employment Area Considered by Council

Vaughan Council initiated the study to examine the expansion of the urban area for employment uses north along Highway 400 on February 14, 2005. Since that time a considerable amount of work has been completed to support this expansion. In addition, some significant Provincial policies and legislation has been put in place including the *Greenbelt Plan*, a revised *PPS*, and the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The consideration of the proposed expansion and the secondary plan has been evolving within the terms of these Provincial directives as well as the Regional Growth Management exercise – Planning for Tomorrow which was initiated in the fall of 2005.

As a result, a number of reports have been considered by Council apprising them of the evolving nature of the policy context of the proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 52 and the importance of protecting future key regional employment lands.

On December 15, 2005, Council considered a preliminary information report that provided the initial information on the City of Vaughan initiated *Highway 400 North Employment Lands Secondary Plan Study* and the applicable policy and planning considerations. Conclusions of this study support the redesignation of the site for employment purposes and were the basis for the City's adoption of OPA 637.

On October 4, 2006, a Statutory Public Meeting was held under Section 17(15) of the *Planning Act* as part of the meeting of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee. The proposed amendment presented at the public meeting included the redesignation of the subject lands from "Agricultural Policy Area" to "Urban Area" for employment uses while maintaining the "Regional Greenland System" on the west side of Highway 400.

On June 21, 2007, an update report was considered by Council outlining the planning process to proceed with this amendment and the local Official Plan Amendment 637. It also provided more details regarding the planning considerations.

On May 15, 2008, a further report was considered by Council to confirm the importance of protecting strategic employment lands across the Region. Support, in principle, of the expansion of the urban area and establishment of a Regionally significant employment area within the City of Vaughan through ROPA 52 was recommended. The May 15th report directed Regional staff to prepare this additional report recommending adoption of ROPA 52. Adoption of ROPA 52 is now appropriate as the additional work identified in the previous staff report has sufficiently progressed to meet the municipal comprehensive review requirements of the *Growth Plan*.

Provincial Plans

Strategic approach to ROPA 52 is consistent with employment policies of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

The strategic identification, and adoption of ROPA 52, as a Regionally-significant employment area is consistent with the municipal planning requirements for employment lands set out in Policy 1.3 of the PPS. In particular, ROPA 52 represents the planning, protection and preservation of employment lands for future uses, as required in Policy 1.3.1(c). The requirement, under Policy 1.3.1(d), to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided, will be met through the Region's future approval of OPA 637, and finalization of the related development phasing programs through the City of Vaughan's block planning process.

ROPA 52 supports the intent of the Growth Plan

Section 2.2.8 of the Provincial *Growth Plan* contains eight policies or tests that must be satisfied prior to the approval of a settlement area boundary expansion, as proposed under

ROPA 52. A complete listing of these tests, and an explanation of how ROPA 52 satisfies each, is outlined in *Attachment 3*.

Two key applicable parts of Section 2.2.8.2 of the Growth Plan are highlighted and they state:

“A settlement area boundary expansion may only occur as part of a municipal comprehensive review where it has been demonstrated that:

- a) sufficient opportunities to accommodate forecasted growth contained in Schedule 3, through intensification and in designated greenfield areas, using the intensification target and density targets, are not available:
 - i) within the regional market area, as determined by the upper – or single tier municipality, and
 - ii) within the applicable lower tier municipality to accommodate the growth allocated to the municipality pursuant to this plan.
- ...
- c) the timing of the expansion and the phasing of development within the designated Greenfield area will not adversely affect the achievement of the intensification target and density targets, and other policies of this Plan.”

In the context of the municipal comprehensive review, the work completed to date by the Region including the forecast and land budget refinements of September 2008 address the regional market component of the 2.2.8.2 i). On this basis, it is proposed ROPA 52 be recommended for approval now that the joint work underway to satisfy the local *Places to Grow* policy components of the municipal comprehensive review, noted above in Policy 2.2.8.2 ii) and c) is sufficiently progressed.

The Provincial Greenbelt Plan is implemented through ROPA 52

This amendment implements the Provincial Greenbelt Plan for the lands on the west side of Highway 400 by designating the lands as “Greenbelt Plan: Natural Heritage System” and providing policy in the Regional Plan which incorporates the Provincial Greenbelt Plan policies. The Provincial Greenbelt extends through the Purpleville Creek corridor which forms part of the East Humber River watershed system and provides a major opportunity to reconnect the remnant natural features in the western half of the amendment area.

The implementation of the Greenbelt Plan within this amendment area will ensure the highest level of environmental protection is employed for these lands and will assist in achieving long term environmental sustainability of the East Humber River watershed.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan does not apply to this amendment area as this employment area is south of the limits of the ORMCP area.

Comments Received From Other Jurisdictions

Further comments were received from the Province on August 15, 2008 appended to this report at *Attachment 4*. The key issues raised were:

- status of the Region's municipal comprehensive review exercise
- calculation of the employment lands supply
- status of the Highway 427 Employment lands
- status of the transportation, water and wastewater master plan updates
- "major office" use designation impacts on Growth Centres
- Protection of the GTA West Transportation Corridor
- Conformity with the Greenbelt Plan

The Province indicated that the adoption of the Regional OPA 52 was premature until some of these key issues were addressed.

The City of Toronto also provided comments which indicated the provision of 'major office' within these employment lands could be an issue if it impacts office use in the Regional Centres and Corridors especially where subway services are being introduced.

The refined Regional forecasts and land budget of September 2008 addresses some of these issues. Inclusion of a Regional policy regarding the GTA West Employment lands, the Greenbelt lands further addresses specific issues raised. Through both revisions to ROPA 52 and refinements of local OPA 637, the issues raised can be appropriately addressed. These revisions are outlined further in Section 4 of this report.

Status Update on Region's Growth Management

Municipal comprehensive review has sufficiently progressed to now trigger recommendation to approve ROPA 52

A significant amount of work has been done through the Planning for Tomorrow growth management exercise and, in September 2005, it was identified that "there is a limited supply of strategically located lands along the 400 Series Highways that need to be preserved over the long term for employment uses." A further report in November 2007 reaffirmed, "there is a limited supply of large lots readily available for [employment] development, and a limited supply of strategically located lands along the 400 Series Highways. Employment areas need to be better planned and preserved to accommodate these important characteristics."

The analysis required to satisfy the urban expansion criteria of the *Growth Plan* and Regional Official Plan has further progressed with the release of the “Refined York Region 2031 Forecast and Land Budget” at the September 3, 2008 Planning and Economic Development Committee. Vaughan has completed a substantial amount of work through the background studies leading to the adoption of local OPA 637 which in turn supports ROPA 52. Vaughan is also currently finalizing the Employment Land Needs Study through Hemson Consulting Ltd. The Region’s revised forecasts and land budget demonstrate a need for these additional employment lands in Vaughan to meet the City and Region’s employment forecasts prior to 2031.

Sequence of key deliverables for urban area expansion, local OPA approval, and development of the lands

This ROPA provides for an urban expansion. The details for this new urban area will be dealt with appropriately through the local Secondary Plan level. The Release of the refined local component of the Region’s comprehensive review process as further demonstrated by the refined York employment forecasts for Vaughan provides more detail that is supportive of the local Secondary Plan review. This is in addition to other significant work including:

- Population and employment distributions to the local municipalities have been refined reflecting the Council adopted minimum 40% intensification scenario.
- Hemson Consulting Ltd. has progressed in conducting an employment land-needs analysis on behalf of the City of Vaughan as part of its official plan review process but is accelerating the portion of the work dealing with ROPA 52 to address growth forecasts allocated and the timing and staging of development in accordance with *Places to Grow*.
- Infrastructure requirements have been initially identified through the first draft of Master Servicing & Transportation Strategy Study undertaken by the firm of Cole Engineering, on behalf of the landowners within the ROPA 52 planning area. These will be co-ordinated with the Regional Master Plan work which is nearing completion.

The review of local OPA 637 and incorporation of any required modifications to reflect the broader Regional and Provincial objectives and refinements is the next step. These may be determined through further work on the transportation system including any necessary protection for the GTA West Transportation Corridor, new interchanges with Highway 400, arterial road improvements, and Highway 400 crossings as well as natural heritage systems, water and wastewater systems, fiscal impact, and ensuring sustainability policies are included.

The local process for block plans will determine the precise road locations, lot fabric, and the extent of the natural heritage space as well as other public space requirements.

Phasing and urban design standards will also be implemented through the block process. Development will subsequently follow through the plan of subdivision process and site plan process as necessary.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

ROPA 52 in keeping with key messages of Provincial Plans and Directions

The objective of this amendment is to expand the Urban Area to establish a new, Regional-scale significant employment area which protects and preserves these lands as employment lands for current and future employment growth. The addition of these lands will help to ensure an adequate supply of employment land is provided which provides for a variety of appropriate employment uses.

The current supply of unencumbered employment lands has fallen to 8.5 years which is well below the 20 year planning horizon set out in the *PPS*. Even with the inclusion of the existing encumbered employment lands, the employment land supply is only at 14 years. The inclusion of these lands is required to meet the forecast employment growth for Vaughan of an additional 113,700 jobs by 2031 as set out in the “Planning for Tomorrow - Refined York Region 2031 Forecast and Land Budget” report considered by Planning and Economic Development Committee on September 3, 2008.

These lands in particular provide large contiguous parcels of employment land with a high degree of exposure and access for goods movement adjacent to Provincial Highway 400. The addition of these lands is required to meet the forecast growth of the *Provincial Growth Plan* prior to 2031.

This expansion is in keeping with the *Provincial Policy Statement*, *Growth Plan*, *Greenbelt Plan* and direction of the Province’s *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper*. As noted above, these Provincial policies include planning for, protecting for and preserving employment areas for current and futures uses.

The Province’s *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper* also contains a number of key proposed strategies that emphasis the proactive planning for employment, identification of existing and emerging Strategic Employment Areas as well as planning for longer planning horizons.

In addition, the site specific policy amendment deals with the long term planning and protection for the proposed GTA West Transportation Corridor and the function of the area as Regionally Significant Employment Lands.

Criteria for Urban Boundary Expansions in Regional OP has been met

Criteria for Regional urban area expansions are set out in Policy 5.2.3 of the Regional Official Plan (ROP) - describing nine specific tests that must be met. Like in the case of Provincial policy, the adoption of ROPA 52 to expand the Region's urban area is consistent with these tests. A complete listing of the ROP criteria, and a description of how ROPA 52 would conform to each, is included in this report as *Attachment 2*.

New Regionally Significant Employment Area

To recognize the Regional significance of the Vaughan 400 employment lands, it is proposed that the site will be identified as a Regionally significant employment area through a new site specific policy in the Regional Official Plan. The purpose of this site specific policy is to ensure the long term protection of these lands for employment uses as they contain large contiguous areas along Highway 400 and have a high degree of exposure and access for goods movement.

A revised ROPA 52 specifically establishes the appropriate parameters that define a Regionally significant employment area for these lands as shown in the revised amendment in *Attachment 1*. In particular, the criteria for these lands included are:

- Strategically located in proximity to major transportation infrastructure including existing or future Provincial 400-series highway corridors or interchanges.
- Generally large contiguous blocks of land providing land for employment uses which have a significant Regional function or market draw.
- Preserved and protected as employment lands over the long term with conversions only considered in the context of a Municipal Comprehensive Review.
- Subject to comprehensive local municipal secondary plans.

Refinements Proposed to ROPA 52 address issues raised

Further to comments received based on Regional staff reports of November 11, 2005, October 4, 2006 and May 10, 2007, and the statutory public meeting held on October 4, 2006, the draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 52 has been revised as follows:

- Introduction of a site specific policy and criteria for the protection of these lands as Regionally-significant employment lands.
- Inclusion of policies and designation to implement the Greenbelt Plan on the west side of Highway 400.
- Inclusion of policies to protect and promote the timely completion of the GTA West Transportation Corridor.
- Deferral of the lands immediately north of the existing estate residential not proposed as employment lands.

The introduction of a site specific policy and criteria for these Regionally-significant employment lands provides clarity regarding principles of the function of this area and a

process for protecting them and developing them for employment uses. The Greenbelt policies and GTA West Transportation Corridor policies are in response to the issues raised by the Province and the current Provincial legislation.

The deferral of the lands immediately to the north of the existing estate residential is based on this Regional amendment being intended only for the designation and protection of key employment lands. It has been proposed that the deferred lands be designated for residential uses rather than employment lands. It would be more appropriate to defer consideration of these lands for inclusion in the urban area until further progress of the Vaughan Comprehensive Official Plan Review which considers the residential land requirements in more detail. The balance of the Regional OPA for these lands could then be brought forward at the time that the local Official Plan Amendment 637 is considered by Regional Council.

Next Steps for Secondary Plan

While significant work has been prepared at the secondary plan level which progressed the Regional OPA 52, detailed planning at the secondary plan and block plan level will provide the implementation framework for this key employment area. The Secondary Plan is currently undergoing a full review and will require subsequent Regional Council approval which is expected by the Spring of 2009.

In order for the Region to consider approval of the local Official Plan Amendment 637 a number of steps need to be completed through continued work with the local municipal staff, Provincial staff and the applicant:

- Approval of ROPA 52 needs to be in place setting the framework for the local amendment.
- GTA West Transportation Corridor needs to be sufficiently protected.
- Identification in the Master Environmental Servicing Plan and protection for water, sewer, road, overpass, and transit infrastructure requirements needs to take place in co-ordination with the finalization of the updates to the Regional Master Plans in early 2009 with consideration for future development beyond the amendment area in the whitebelt.
- Vaughan's employment comprehensive review by Hemson Consulting Ltd. be completed which includes addressing the impact of the "Prestige Areas – Office/Business Campus" designation on the employment structure of the City especially the Vaughan Corporate Centre.
- Sustainability policies are included in the Secondary Plan.
- Natural heritage policies in the Secondary Plan are further refined through the MESP study completion.
- Fiscal impact study has been completed by Region staff for the secondary plan area based on inputs from completed MESP and Master Plan updates.
- Resolution of any land use compatibility issues with existing adjacent residential development.

Based on the work needed to be completed and its timing, it is anticipated that the Secondary Plan could be considered for adoption in the Spring of 2009.

Regional approval of OPA 637 will be recommended by staff upon the satisfactory completion of the work described above. Approval of this OPA – serving as the Secondary Plan for the ROPA 52 area – will expand the City’s urban area, and establish detailed land uses and staging and timing for the new employment area. OPA 637 will need to establish, at a minimum, the following:

- Designations and policies that protect for the GTA West Transportation corridor.
- Land use designations and policies that limit development to employment uses only.
- Local land use designations and policies, including suitable building heights and floor space index, supporting the Region’s designation of this area as a Regionally Significant Employment Area.
- A phasing plan that identifies the amount and timing of development that matches the availability of required road, transit, water and sewer servicing infrastructure.
- Provision for adequate community infrastructure typically located within employment areas.
- Provision of a supportive road network including crossings of Highway 400, new interchanges with Highway 400, and arterial road improvements in keeping with Regional policies
- Policies that implement the Region’s Transit Oriented Development Guidelines and provide for suitable pedestrian and cycling paths, linkages and routes.
- Sustainable development policies.
- Natural Heritage policies in accordance with the Greenbelt Plan.

Development phasing and urban design standards will be implemented for the new employment area through the City’s Block Plan process, which will commence following OPA 637 approval. This framework will be based on the high-level principles set out in OPA 637, which include urban design excellence, and establishing an attractive interface (e.g. linear landscaping, tree plantings, etc.) between buildings and the Highway 400.

Relationship to Vision 2026

True to the forward-looking and public-interest focus of *Vision 2026*, this report examines employment areas in a long-term and strategic manner, and addresses the need for these lands and the need of future generations of York Region residents to have access to a range of employment opportunities. In doing so, the recommendations of this report will serve to advance all eight goal areas of Vision 2026, and, in particular, “A Vibrant Economy,” and “Managed and Balanced Growth.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct fiscal impacts associated with this report, while there are long-term economic benefits to securing lands in the 400-Series Highway corridors as employment lands

Employment areas in the 400-Series Highway corridors enhance the Region's status as a preferred destination for business and industry, and serve to strengthen its overall economic competitiveness. Taking this strategic approach optimizes the location, profile and value of lands within existing and planned 400-Series Highway corridors. In effect, it establishes job- and assessment-generation as a first principle of development for lands that are logical destinations for employment. Not only is this approach good for the Provincial and Regional economy, but it also creates live-work opportunities that are sought by residents in new and emerging communities.

Development of the ROPA 52 planning area will not occur until the required infrastructure is available and fiscal impacts are assessed

A fiscal impact analysis will be undertaken by the Regional Finance Department following the completion of the owner-initiated Master Servicing & Transportation Strategy Study, being undertaken to assess the infrastructure requirements of these future employment lands. The conclusions and recommendations arising from this work will be reflected in the recommendation report that will be prepared to support Regional Council approval of the associated local Official Plan Amendment document, OPA 637. This may occur as early as 2009.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Identifying Regionally-significant employment lands beyond the existing urban area supports local planning

The strategic approach being proposed through this report is intended to support and guide local municipal planning for future employment areas in the 400 corridors. Further, it provides an enhanced level of consistency and clarity across the Region, as municipalities begin to look for new employment areas beyond their current urban boundaries.

Expansion of residential lands to the north of the existing rural residential subdivision as part of City's Comprehensive Official Plan review

Vaughan's study for OPA 637 concluded that the lands south of the Greenbelt Plan: Natural Heritage land designation and immediately north of the existing estate residential not be redesignated as employment lands. The inclusion of these proposed residential lands within the "Urban Area" is more appropriately addressed upon further progress of

Vaughan's ongoing Comprehensive Official Plan review which considers the residential land requirements in more detail. The consideration of these lands for inclusion in the Regional Urban Area could be brought forward at the time that the local Official Plan Amendment 637 is considered by Regional Council as these lands form part of the local OPA 637 area. Until that time, it is appropriate for these lands to remain within the "Agricultural" designation. Residents within the existing estate residential subdivision have also indicated that they have concerns regarding the compatibility of new uses with the existing uses.

7. CONCLUSION

The Regional amendment is key to protecting these lands as Regionally significant employment lands on the Highway 400 corridor as they have been identified as required prior to 2031 to meet the Region's employment forecasts, and substantial work has progressed at the local level confirming this need. Implementation of the policies will occur through the subsequent Secondary Plan, Block Plan and Plan of subdivision process carried out at the local level, with input from Regional staff.

The subsequent secondary plan process will establish appropriate specific land use designations and policies to implement the employment area function, preserve the opportunity for a provincial GTA West Transportation Corridor, and protect the significant environmental features.

The Regional Official Plan Amendment 52 has been evaluated within the context of the *PPS, Provincial Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan* and criteria for urban boundary expansions set out in the Regional Official Plan. The amendment is in keeping with the intent of the Growth Plan and the Natural Heritage policies of the Greenbelt Plan. It is, therefore, appropriate to now approve Regional Official Plan Amendment 52 and issue the notice.

For more information on this report, please contact Heather Konefat, Director of Community Planning at extension 1502 or Karen Whitney at extension 1505.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The four attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)