

Letter to York Region Council
Via clerks regionalclerk@york.ca

Regional Chair Emmerson and Regional Councilors
York Region
17250 Yonge Street Newmarket,
ON L3Y 6Z1

From Claire Malcolmson
Stop Sprawl York Region
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RE 2021 Draft Official Plan
Thursday, June 16, 2022
Special Committee of the Whole item H.2.1

June 15, 2022

Dear Chair Emmerson and York Region Council,

I have delegated many times to no avail and I'm tired of it. I'm not alone. Some of us are going to just wave signs outside tomorrow morning and talk to the media instead.

It has been sad to watch staff advice and residents' pleas be ignored. It has been infuriating to see some Councillors act as agents of developers.

To those Mayors, DMs and Regional Councillors who are thinking of the future affordability of capital infrastructure, the cost of living of your residents, and the environmental impact of your decisions, I would like to sincerely thank you for your votes, your work and your integrity.

The state of our democracy concerns me. But as elected officials you can do something about that. You can lead with pro-social values, to engage and understand the needs of your residents, and to create communities that work for your constituents and the environment on which we all depend. York Region has made no effort to explain the *implications* of the draft OP to its residents, and has not offered traditional in-person consultation, though you have been able to do so for months. This was a missed opportunity to engage your constituents.

There is one area that I would like to emphasize in this letter because it is fundamental to both meeting environmental objectives and to building complete communities, a cornerstone of planning in Ontario. If the provision of rental housing is prioritized immediately, it would dramatically improve the lives of many people and the local businesses who prefer to have their workers live locally. It would reduce the cost and future tax burden per person of building new

homes; it would reduce commuter GHG emissions and reduce the environmental footprint overall relative to York Region's current sprawl plan, especially in East Gwillimbury. Isn't this called a "no-brainer?" or "win-win-win"? Who is seizing on this opportunity? How is this not being treated as a crisis and an opportunity?

I believe you know that York Region's 50 – 55% intensification rate works against the achievement of its population target and its affordable housing target. Indeed, staff reports have made this point. I urge Councillors and Mayors to work together with like minded politicians who want to support the workers in York Region, the 30 somethings that can't move out of their parents' basements, and the elderly on fixed incomes, who have too few affordable housing options.

If the province's "solution" is the contested EMZO tower cluster in Markham and Richmond Hill, then please advocate for improvements that would bring the provision of services and parks in line with other resident benefits received in all other communities. To not do so is to continue to marginalize and disenfranchise lower income people. We also want to recommend the prioritization of working with the Federal government to ramp up the availability of rental in every municipality. Please use all the tools at your disposal to get this done.

I hope to see these issues addressed in the Affordability Strategy. Stop Sprawl York Region would be pleased to be involved in the development of and public engagement around this critical plan.

I will end by reiterating the position of Stop Sprawl York Region: I want the Official Plan to: Create the variety of housing that York Region residents need; create the conditions to be able to lower taxes and invest in existing communities; protect the Greenbelt, farmland, water quality, including Lake Simcoe; reduce traffic congestion; and create a safer climate for our future. The Draft OP does none of these things adequately.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Claire Malcolmson

On behalf of Stop Sprawl York Region

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www.StopSprawlYR.ca

We are a collective of community leaders, organizations, and people who care about the future of York Region.