



**November 4, 2015**

York Region Council  
17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 6Z

**Re: 2041 Urban Expansion Plan Premature and Full of Costly Liabilities**

**Dear Chairman Wayne Emmerson and York Region Council:**

**Plans for additional urban expansion (2041 Growth Scenario), particularly in the Rouge River Watershed, are premature, unscientific, unsustainable and probably negligent.** The additional urban expansion envisioned in York Region's 2041 Preferred Growth Scenario would pave farmland and greenspace; increase greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and runoff; and increase downstream flooding, erosion and pollution.

Liabilities grow as climate change gathers steam and urban sprawl leads to more greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and runoff. In 2013, flooding and ice storms cost the GTA more than \$1 billion and Alberta suffered \$5 Billion in flood damages. Scientists and insurance companies are predicting, and already observing, significant increases in the frequency and intensity of storms and damages.

Provincial Policy Statement 1.1.1h states: *"promote development and land use patterns that conserve biodiversity and consider the impacts of a changing climate"*. A 2014 Report for the Credit Valley Conservation Authority entitled "Stormwater Management in Ontario: Legal Issues in a Changing Climate", states:

*".. since all orders of government can be sued for negligence .....  
each order of government has a strong incentive to consider its existing procedures  
and systems in light of new information, including information about climate change"*.

The 2007 Rouge Watershed Plan relies on the restoration of forest and wetland cover as a top priority "due diligence" action to control runoff, protect water quality, conserve biodiversity and offset the impacts of urban growth and climate change. Unfortunately, York Region and other levels of government are delaying the implementation of priority actions within approved Rouge Watershed, Rouge Park and Great Lakes Water Quality Improvement Plans. These delays increase the risk of serious liabilities.

**Urban Expansion - Contrary to Provincial Policy Statement for Water Protection**

Provincial Policy Statement 2.2.1 states: *Planning authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by:*

- a) using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning, which can be a foundation for considering **cumulative impacts**... ;*

**FRW Patrons**

Lois James, "Save the Rouge" founding member and Order of Canada Recipient

Rathika Sitsabaiesan, former MP Scarborough Rouge River

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Hon. Alvin Curling, former MPP Scarborough Rouge River

Derek Lee, former MP Scarborough Rouge River

Joyce Trimmer, former Mayor of Scarborough, posthumous

b) *minimizing potential negative impacts, including **cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts**; ...*

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) analyzed development scenarios during the creation of the 2007 Rouge Watershed Plan and found that **as the urban envelope expands**:

*“meeting water quality targets will become an increasingly distant goal”*

*“ E. Coli bacteria levels significantly exceed provincial standards”*

*“middle tributaries would be subject to major hydrological impacts”*

*“ the maximum impervious cover that a watershed can withstand before experiencing **severe hydrologic changes & geomorphic & ecological impacts is approximately 10%.** The Main Rouge Watershed.... impervious cover was 18% as of 2002.”*

#### **Urban Expansion – Contrary to the Protection of Public Health and Safety**

Scientific research and monitoring clearly shows that urban expansion would lead to increased E. coli bacteria and pollution in our water and increased flooding, erosion and pollution damage in vulnerable downstream communities, lakes and water sources. For example, the TRCA’s 2007 Rouge Watershed Report Card and Rouge Watershed Strategy Scenario Modeling and Analysis Report, state:

*“middle tributaries would be subject to major hydrological impacts under OP build-out and full build-out conditions” ... Page 4.1.49*

*.... “future urbanization will increase the magnitude and duration of erosive flows in receiving watercourses despite the use of current extended detention criteria to control runoff from more frequent events”. Page 4.1-43*

*“Over 500 flood vulnerable areas within Markham would be expected to be inundated during the Regional Storm (Hurricane Hazel) and a number of roads and homes are predicted to flood in flows as low as the 2-year flood event.” Page 5-25*

These reports predict adverse water quality and quantity impacts with urban expansion, even with the best foreseeable mitigation. Experience demonstrates that "best foreseeable mitigation" promises are unrealistic. Once their land is designated and zoned, developers go to great lengths to minimize or avoid environmental protection costs.

**Conclusion:**

The 2006/07 Annual Report of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner notes:

"The province established population projections for some communities subject to the Growth Plan, before assessing the related water and wastewater infrastructure needs, their associated costs and environmental impacts. **This puts the cart before the horse.**  
....many parts of Southern Ontario have reached their capacity to accommodate additional infrastructure, housing and human populations."

Given the scientific findings of the 2007 Rouge Watershed Strategy; the requirements of the *Planning Act* and Provincial Policy Statements and "due diligence"; the profound implications of climate change; the unsustainable cost of servicing further urban expansion and taking on greater financial, environmental and legal liabilities; and the slow pace of transit and municipal infrastructure improvements and watershed remedial action plans; **we respectfully ask York Region Council to:**

- 1) **Choose "No More Urban Expansion" as your 2041 Preferred Growth Scenario and ask the Province for reduced population targets to moderate intensification;**
- 2) **Defer further urban expansion decisions until at least 50% of already planned expansions and developments have been implemented and the environmental, economic and social consequences have been fully evaluated;**
- 3) **Accelerate the implementation of watershed and natural heritage system plans, as outlined in Rouge Watershed and Park Plans and other remedial action plans to improve the health of our watersheds, ecosystems and communities;**
- 4) **Commence a study to expand the Greenbelt to protect additional greenspace and farmland in the Rouge Watershed and other watersheds.**

By taking these steps, York Region Council can stop developers from prematurely ratcheting away Council's decision-making powers and transferring them to the OMB.

Sincerely,



General Manager (647-891-9550)  
Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW)