

Date: Sept 17, 2024

To: Mayor and Members of Council

Subject: Committee of the Whole –Block 41 Application for Approval

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to yet again come before you to share my thoughts on Block 41. It was just over a year and a half ago when I was standing here at the Public Hearing expressing my concerns regarding the Greenbelt incursions that were being proposed (**see attached submission**). Unfortunately, in the interim, despite a lot of work by staff, a confusing back and forth with the Greenbelt rules by the Province and the release of the Government of Canada “Recovery Strategy and Action Plan for the Redside Dace (*Clinostomus elongatus*) in Canada”, the Block Plan is essentially the same as what was being proposed at the Public Hearing, hence my disappointment and reason for appearing again today.

My name is Deb Schulte and I live at 76 Mira Vista Place in Woodbridge. At the Public Hearing I shared my role on the Greenbelt Task Force and my interest in Block 41. I am keenly aware of why approximately 40% of Block 41 was designated Greenbelt. It was because of its important natural heritage features; the East Purpleville Creek valley and stream corridors, significant wetlands and woodlands, the presence of endangered and many threatened species, including Endangered Red Side Dace (**Map A**), and its significance to surrounding and downstream areas of natural and scientific interest. This is identified in the Report; however, it does not seem to be enough to ensure that the Greenbelt boundaries are respected.

The meddling in the planning process by the Province, the silencing of York Region with regard to planning matters, and the neutering of the TRCA, has the ultimate protection of this important natural heritage in Vaughan Council’s hands.

Recently the Government of Canada has released its “**Recovery Strategy and Action Plan for the Redside Dace (*Clinostomus elongatus*) in Canada**” and Purpleville Creek and areas of Block 41 have been identified as significant habitat for the Red Side Dace (**Map B**). The report states, “The Redside Dace Recovery Implementation Team acknowledges that intensively developed areas will present additional challenges to the protection of Redside Dace and its habitat. **For this reason, it is especially important that subwatersheds supporting Redside Dace in areas not yet developed, and outside of designated high-density growth areas, be effectively managed and protected.**” Activities that occur adjacent to identified critical habitat (riparian vegetation/meander belt/stream) can still damage or destroy such habitat features, particularly when they negatively impact the existing magnitude, timing, and frequency of

stormwater flows.” It is imperative to integrate Redside Dace habitat protection into the urban development planning process, particularly with regard to stormwater management.

In Section 8.4 of the Strategy, **Proposed measures to protect critical habitat**, states, “Section 35 of the *Fisheries Act*, which prohibits the carrying out of any work, undertaking, or activity that results in the harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat, applies to all fish habitat, including the critical habitat for the Redside Dace as described in section 8.1.1 (including the entire bankfull channel width, the meander belt width and the riparian vegetation within it, and associated riparian vegetation extending 30 m out from the meander belt width).

It is clear to me that this Block Plan does not respect this section of the Recovery Strategy or Action Plan. We need an independent/impartial/knowledgeable arbitrator to determine if this Block Plan will be adequate to meet the requirements of the Recovery Strategy and Action Plan. From my knowledge of this issue, it does not.

I shared with you at the Public Hearing that the Elder’s Mills Nature Reserve is an excellent example of what will happen to a PSW wetland when a stormwater pond is connected to it. All the sensitive species die and it fills up with invasive species. Stormwater management ponds do not remove road salt or contaminants, just sediment, and if their outflows are connected to a wetland or a creek/stream, all that warmed, contaminated water will kill sensitive species. Red side dace needs clean cool water to survive and that will be significantly impacted by the many stormwater management ponds to be constructed either in existing wetlands, like 2A and 2B, or adjacent to Purpleville Creek and its tributaries.

I do not believe that the Province intended to allow for significant wetlands to be destroyed, nor have active parkland uses in the natural heritage areas of the Greenbelt when they made the change from agricultural to rural greenbelt designation. What is the point of having a Natural Heritage Area designation in the Greenbelt if we are going to allow development activities to occur there? I believe it was to be appropriate where already disturbed land and farmland in the Greenbelt was adjacent to developing areas, not in the Greenbelt Natural Heritage Areas, in critical endangered species habitat. I believe that the development industry has taken advantage of the confusion caused by the Province with their Greenbelt changes and reversals and we need to push back if we are to preserve the few remaining high quality natural heritage quality areas in Vaughan.

In fact, on page 9 of the report staff states that, “The MZO does not propose development on lands with existing woodlots or PSW’s.” So why do we have SWM 2A and 2B on previously designated PSW’s in the Greenbelt (**Map C**)? Probably, as has been identified in the report, the Land Owner Group has been able to reclassify some of these former PSW’s based on a

Provincial amended Ontario Wetland Evaluation System. Who has verified these changes? It reminds me of the story of the fox looking after the hen house. The TRCA has been neutered, so who has the expertise to evaluate the Landowner redesignations?

It is also troubling to read the staff assessment that, “ The Block Plan does not conflict with the policies of YROP 2022 as it: Protects natural heritage features within the Regional Greenlands System **to the extent possible.**” Having re-read the YROP 2022 as amended after the Provincial flip flop, this does not meet the intent of the policies on natural heritage, hence the qualifier. I won't even get into where did some of the existing forested areas go in the Plan (**Map D**)?

The report states that there are already 6 identified tableland wetlands, outside of the Greenbelt (**Map C**), to be removed to facilitate more homes, so you don't have to remove ones in the Greenbelt. Locate some of the SWM ponds on the currently isolated wetlands that are to be removed and create a central water feature that the community can enjoy, rather than pushing them onto the Greenbelt. Let's get creative, rather than the same old sprawl development that Vaughan has become so well known for.

All the changes were done with the preface that it was to build more homes faster, which is clearly not possible when you are creating a new development block. Despite all the rhetoric in the report I have yet to see new home construction create affordable housing options in Vaughan. Townhomes and condos were supposed to be the answer, however even those are running around \$1 million. Definitely not affordable to low to middle income residents, as targeted in the report.

Some of the most egregious incursions into the Greenbelt in this proposed Block Plan are the internal residential streets that jut into the Greenbelt in multiple locations. This is not allowed by any of the rules. When you add this to the parks and stormwater management ponds incursions, it destroys the intended buffer that was to provide protection to the red side dace habitat in this area. These incursions are simply not necessary. This block is now identified with a density of 90.6 jobs and people per hectare. The planning policy identifies 70 jobs and people per hectare, so we can lose a few homes and get those roads and Stormwater Management ponds out of the Greenbelt. You let it happen here and you will be unable to say no elsewhere. This sets a very bad precedent.

All this intrusion is supposed to be necessary because we are in desperate need of more homes. There is lots of opportunity for more development in Vaughan. Block 29 is also coming along and is a lot less environmentally complex. If you accept this block plan as proposed you will be signing the death warrant for the endangered red side dace in this area, one of the last quality sites in Ontario, and you will be setting a grave precedent for other development areas in Vaughan. I raised these very concerns at the Public Hearing and despite what has been

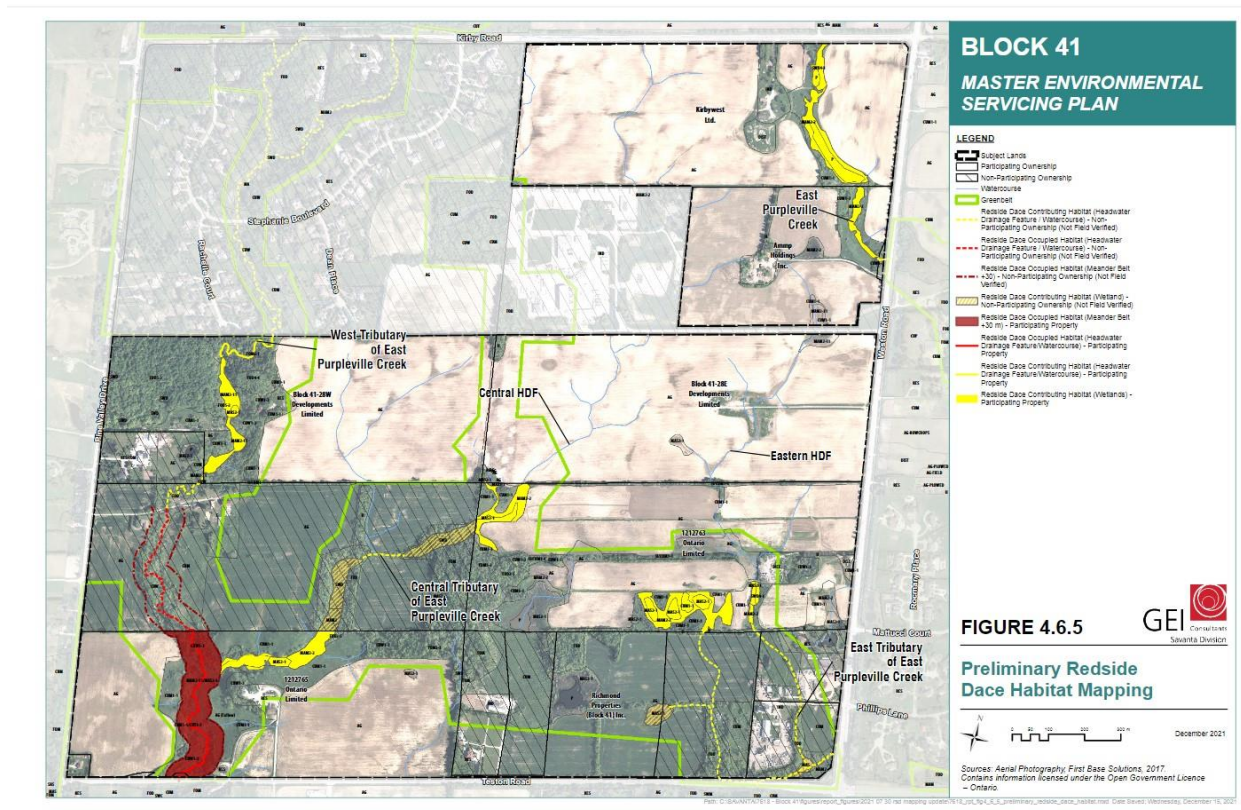
commented in the report, my concerns and the concerns of other members of the public have not been adequately addressed.

Please send the report back to staff to get those local roads out of the Greenbelt, I am not talking about the necessary and allowed collector roads. Relocate SWM 2A and 2B, as they are currently being located on top of existing previously designated PSW's. Don't let the Stormwater Management ponds drain into wetlands or the creek without getting the salt and contaminants out of the water first. We must do better. The fate of the endangered red side dace in Purpleville Creek is in your hands, along with several other threatened species.

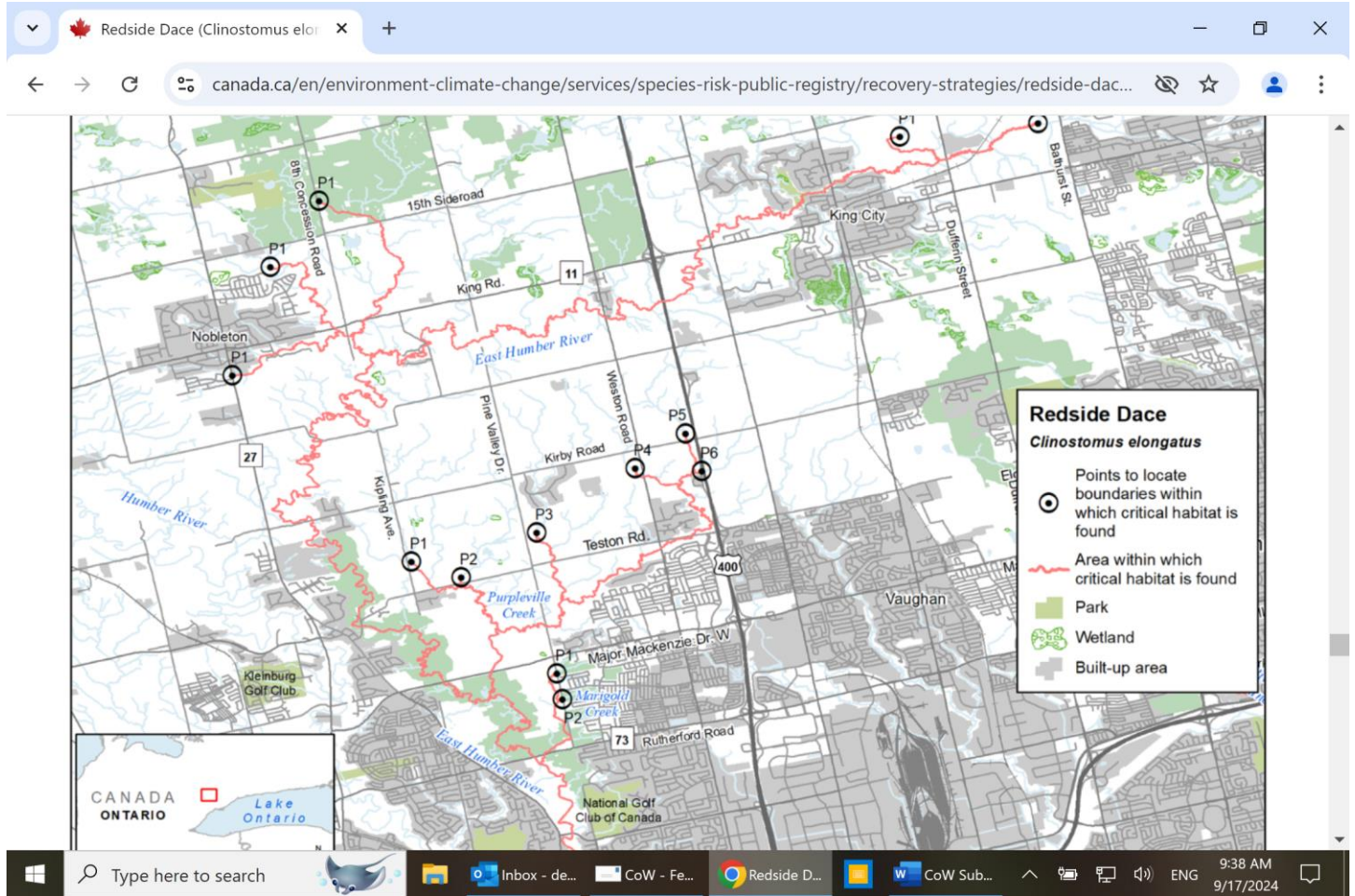
Sincerely,

Hon. Deb Schulte

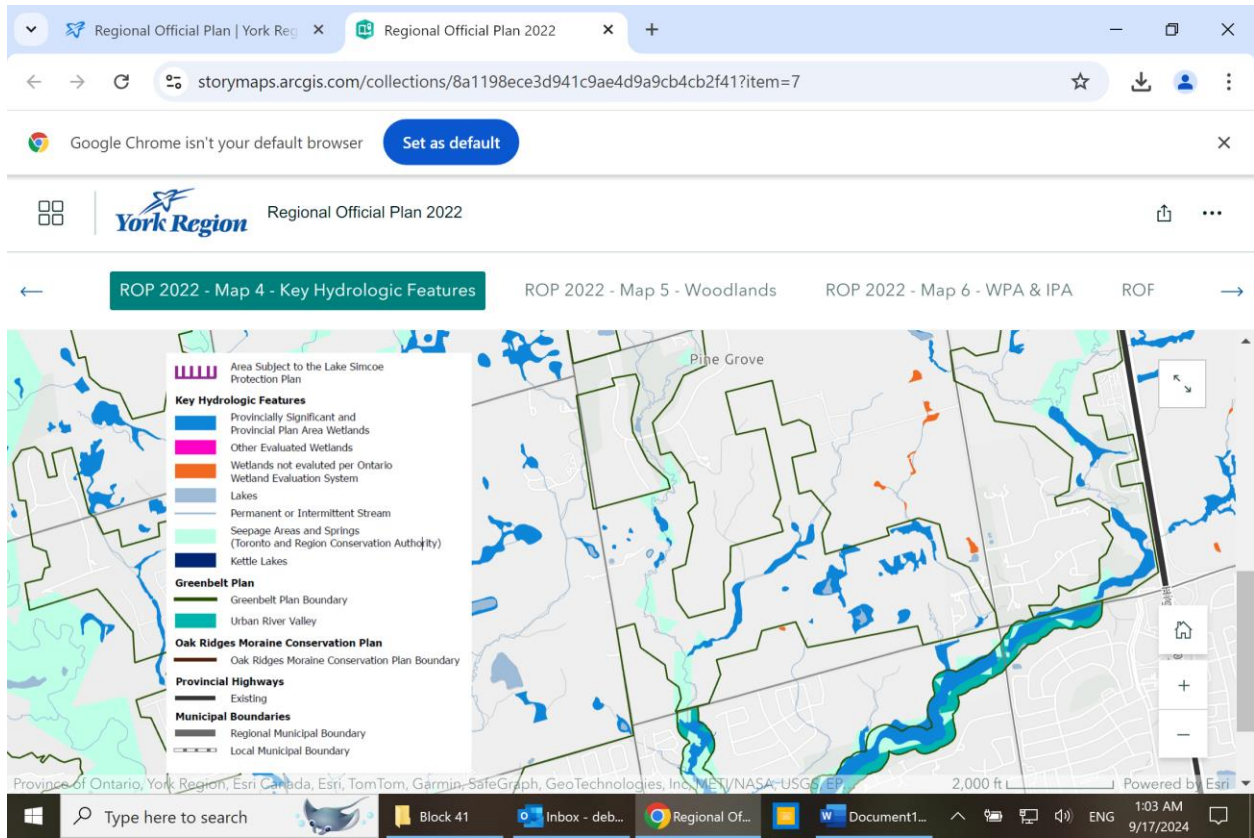
Map A: Preliminary Redside Dace Habitat Mapping



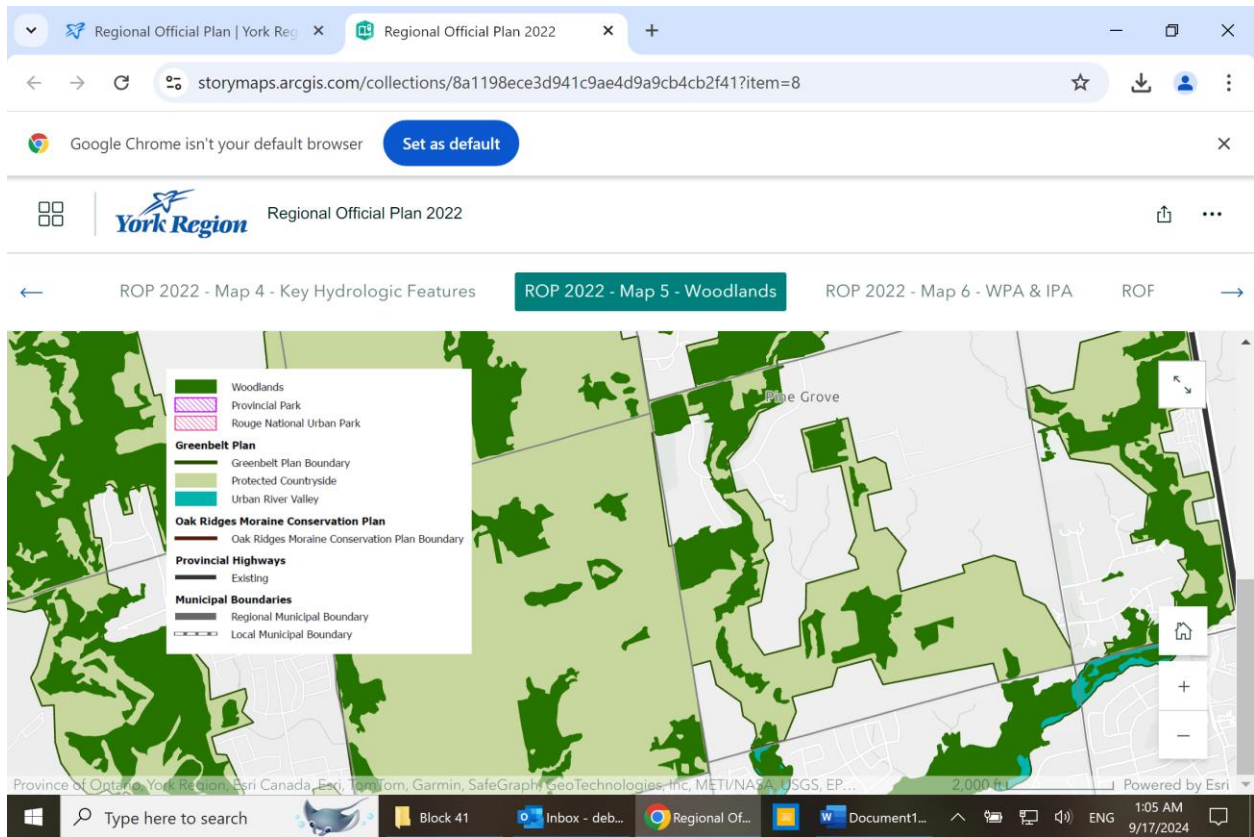
Map B: Redside Dace Habitat Identified in Government of Canada's Recovery Strategy and Action Plan, in and around Block 41.



Map C: ROP 2022 Key Hydrologic Features



Map D: ROP 2022 Woodlands



Date: February 7th, 2023
To: Mayor and Members of Council
Subject: Public Hearing – Item 4, Block 41 Block Plan

First, I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to voice my concerns regarding the Block 41 Block Plan being presented today. My name is Deb Schulte and I live at 76 Mira Vista Place in Woodbridge. As a former member of the Greenbelt Task Force, that worked to determine the framework for establishing a Greenbelt and its boundaries, I am keenly aware of why approximately 40% of Block 41 was designated Greenbelt. It was because of its important natural heritage features; the East Purpleville Creek valley and stream corridors, significant wetlands and woodlands, the presence of endangered and many threatened species, and its significance to surrounding and downstream areas of natural and scientific interest. The Greenbelt boundaries in Block 41 generally follow north-south valley stream systems and an east-west corridor across the southern portion of the Block containing wetlands and forested areas.

I hope each one of you will come to appreciate the significance of this area as much as I have. I have many concerns with this Block Plan, several of them are also identified in the Committee of the Whole (Public Meeting) report by City, York Region and TRCA staff. I urge Councillors to not approve this Block Plan until the issues raised are properly addressed. Once the Block Plan is approved there is no going back and it will set a grave precedent for the remaining new community areas in Vaughan.

As resident's representatives you have a huge responsibility to balance the needs of a growing City with the protection of some of our most sensitive and significant natural heritage areas. We have a city blessed with rich resources and we heard loud and clear during our Official Plan process that residents want Council to be respectful of our natural heritage as we grow our city. It is also now clear that the clarion call of more housing at all costs is a false flag. Vaughan has identified in its Official Plan enough housing to meet our portion of the Provincial Growth Plan and we have seen how the planned number is regularly exceeded; just review the past several years. It is also clear that little of what will be built in this block will be affordable or near term.

Despite what you may have been told by those wishing to diminish the Greenbelt in this Block, there was an important rationale for including significant portions of Block 41 in the Greenbelt, using science-based methods & criteria. These are identified in the Technical Report on Criteria, Rationale and Methods (The Regional Natural Heritage System for the

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe) published by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and its significance was reconfirmed in the Final East Purpleville Creek Subwatershed Study Report produced by the developers' consultants.

Natural Heritage:

This area is particularly important because it is critical habitat for an endangered species of fish – the Redside Dace – as well as several other threatened species. The rationale for protecting and enhancing the existing natural heritage in the area was to improve the conditions for Redside Dace and other threatened species to survive, especially if there was to be development surrounding the critical habitat areas. This is why in the Greenbelt determination there was enhanced set backs and larger areas identified around habitat features. Please see Figure 4.6.5 Preliminary Redside Dace Habitat Mapping in the Block 41 Master Environmental Servicing Plan.

Including the important Natural Heritage Network in Block 41 in the Greenbelt was to ensure that while we address the need for growth, we did so while also respecting the environment and the threatened species that inhabit this area. Allowing for active parkland, roadways (other than limited community connector roads and trails) and stormwater/salt run off management ponds in the Greenbelt, as has been proposed in this Block Plan, in these sensitive natural areas is not consistent with the Greenbelt Plan, nor the protection of our precious natural heritage features and critical Redside Dace habitat. York Region Official Plan 2022, in Section 3.4.5 Natural Features, requires an environmental impact study showing that any development or site alteration will not result in a negative impact on the natural feature or its ecological function. This has not been done. In fact, it is clear that it will cause the destruction of the sensitive habitat for Redside Dace in this area.

Stormwater Management:

I would like to delve into the Block Plans use of Greenbelt lands and wetlands for stormwater management and for stormwater ponds. This should not be allowed in this sensitive habitat system, especially as Redside Dace need clean, clear and cool water to survive, not contaminated and warmed road run-off. Let's be clear, there is no water purification that is provided by these ponds. They are installed to manage sedimentation and flow, not toxic chemicals or salt contamination.

I can share with you what happened in my Sonoma Heights community when the storm water ponds in the Elder's Mills Nature Reserve were connected to a network of wetlands in the

valley below our community. The peepers, gray treefrogs and other amphibians that were plentiful before, providing a beautiful chorus of sounds in the spring, vanished. It was devastating to the sensitive species that lived in the area and should not be repeated.

The wetland at the corner of Pine Valley Dr. and Teston is also a home to peepers and treefrogs, as are the wetlands in Block 41, as evidenced by the deafening chorus of their calls in the spring. **If we don't better manage the stormwater/road run off from our new developments in Block 41, with regard to their connection to the sensitive wetlands and Purpleville Creek, we will be ensuring the destruction of the sensitive species in this area, including endangered Redside Dace.** We should not have to drive up north to hear and see these beautiful creatures when they can be saved with careful management in our own city.

Development Density:

During my term on York Region Council, 2010-2014, I had the opportunity to be serving when we proposed guidelines for New Community Areas development to help create denser, more sustainable and more complete communities than were being developed at the time; with a mix of housing types, employment and commercial opportunities and better active and passive transportation options. It was clear at the time that each new development Block had unique opportunities and challenges, and the insistence of a consistent people and jobs per hectare ratio to each new Block was not appropriate. It was determined that the increased ratio was to be a target for the city as a whole, not an absolute for each Block. I was a proponent for this clarification, as I was thinking of Block 41 at the time.

It is clear that with almost 40% of the Block to be preserved as natural Heritage, and with limited public transportation, jobs, and commercial availability in the area, this Block did not lend itself to the high density being proposed through the New Community Guidelines, especially along the west side of the Block adjacent to Pine Valley Dr. In contrast, Block 27, which has the GO rail line running through it, is much better able to incorporate higher densities.

I believe that the plan is too limited in its employment and commercial opportunities. There are no rapid transit options and very limited public transit, which needs to be considered as we design the higher density portions of the Block. We need more affordable housing, but very little of what is to be built in Block 41 will be affordable to our young people, new Canadians, or many seniors. In the area, just to the south of Teston Rd., the homes are selling in the millions and townhomes at Pine Valley and Major Mack., a year ago, were selling for over \$1M. Locating 8 story residences along Weston Rd. abutting an employment area is appropriate, but not along Teston, that dead ends in the Village of Kleinburg, just to the west

of this Block, nor along Pine Valley, that is so close to the sensitive natural areas in the Block. I hope the City supports reducing the density of this Block from the current proposal, keeping in mind all the areas of density that are being created along our rapid transit corridors. We have no shortage of more appropriate intensification opportunities in Vaughan, which has been proven over the past decade or more.

There are very few employment/commercial opportunities proposed for this Block, so that people living in Block 41 will likely need to go elsewhere for employment and supplies. With limited public transit opportunities in the area, it will necessitate car transport, creating even more gridlock on our surrounding roads. This reality requires careful consideration as to appropriate Block densities and density locations.

Financial Impact:

We heard loud and clear through our Official Plan 2010 process and more recently through development consultations, **that the residents want you to preserve our precious natural heritage while developing the City.** Residents do not want every nook and cranny crammed with homes, especially as they are not going to be affordable. If not for our residents, for whom are we doing this?

It seems inappropriate to say there is no financial impact with this Block development when you know that development charges are going to be curtailed from future development and we do not know who will be making up the shortfall. Actually, we do know who will be paying for this; it is our taxpayers again.

The residents are counting on you to do a better job as we develop our few remaining new greenfield areas in Vaughan. These are precious opportunities to do better. Do not be fooled into believing it is housing at all cost. We need housing, but not more of the same. We need more multi-generational housing, more rent geared to income housing, more three four plex housing (missing middle), employment/housing options, not more of the same, which is what we are seeing in this Block Plan. Citizens of Vaughan are counting on you to be careful with our last remaining blocks for development. **Don't waste these precious opportunities to make Vaughan the very special place it can be and our residents want it to be; a careful balance of nature and community where we can all live, work and play, and still be surrounded by nature.**

Sincerely,

Hon. Deb Schulte