

C54
COMMUNICATION
COUNCIL – June 22, 2021
CW - Report No. 32, Item 9

From: Clerks@vaughan.ca
To: [Adelina Bellisario](mailto:Adelina.Bellisario)
Subject: FW: [External] Response to York Region's Request for Comments on ROPA 7
Date: June-21-21 11:04 09 AM
Attachments: [Markham Council ROPA 7 Jun21 21.pdf](#)

From: IRENE FORD <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 11:03 AM

To: Clerks@vaughan.ca; Marilyn lafrate <Marilyn.lafrate@vaughan.ca>; Tony Carella <Tony.Carella@vaughan.ca>; Maurizio Bevilacqua <Maurizio.Bevilacqua@vaughan.ca>; Linda Jackson <Linda.Jackson@vaughan.ca>; Gino Rosati <Gino.Rosati@vaughan.ca>; Mario Ferri <Mario.Ferri@vaughan.ca>; Alan Shefman <Alan.Shefman@vaughan.ca>; Sandra Yeung Racco <Sandra.Racco@vaughan.ca>; Rosanna DeFrancesca <Rosanna.DeFrancesca@vaughan.ca>

Cc: Suzanne Craig <Suzanne.Craig@vaughan.ca>

Subject: [External] Response to York Region's Request for Comments on ROPA 7

Vaughan Council,

With regard to the item entitled, Response to York Region's Request for Comments on Regional Official Plan Amendment 7, please seriously consider the ramifications detailed by Planning Staff at the City of Vaughan and at the City of Markham as well as the precedent that this decision will have for similar areas in York Region and beyond.

I encourage Vaughan Council to reconsider and withdraw recommendations made at the Committee of the Whole Meeting June 8, 2021 Item 6(9) and **ENDORSE** the staff report and recommendations as originally presented; and, **NOT SUPPORT** the proposed ROPA 7 application.

Greenbelt fingers were not intended to be for active urban parks, they are part of York Region's Regional Greenlands System. Calling them Greenbelt fingers is misleading these lands are part of the Greenbelt and part of the Regional Greenlands System, natural heritage network. They were intended to protect watersheds and provide naturalized areas, corridors and habitat connectivity to support biodiversity. I urge Council to not compromise on this matter.

Map 2 of ROPA 2 clearly shows these lands as part of the Regional Greenbelt System. The Block 41 lands have already received special treatment through endorsement of a MZO, active urban parks and recreational uses have and where never intended to be a use permitted on the Regional Greenbelt System. Do not support the ROPA 7 private application.

I would also like to express my concern about Regional Councillor Jackson expressing her disappointment with Vaughan Staff, there are clearly substantive reasons that staff do not support the ROPA 7. To not support staff is to undermine their ability to do their job and politicize the decision-making process by supporting private interests above public interests. **This is a MZO in disguise on the Greenbelt.**

Block 41 and Block 27 landowners and other developers successfully opposed the approval of Vaughan's Natural Heritage Network in 2015 and have relentlessly been trying to downgrade the protection of the natural features, watersheds and ultimately protection and habitat for endangered species on these Blocks. **As a member of on the Board of the TRCA Regional Councillor Jackson should be well aware of the importance of lands in NW Vaughan for biodiversity, habitat connectivity. Not to mention source water and stormwater protection for Vaughan residents and municipalities downstream.** It is disappointing that she so willingly supported and advocated for the private ROPA 7 application, did not give staff a chance to respond to the Consultants presentation and choose to not support City of Vaughan staff recommendations. Support of ROPA 7 undermines Greenbelt protection and the ability of the City of Vaughan to achieve its own policy goals and objectives, especially those related to Climate Change. Land-use decisions like this will defy meaningful progress to address the Climate Emergency declared by Vaughan Council (Declared in response to school children who entered Council chambers 2 years ago. Still Vaughan citizens await the annual update report on the Climate Change emergency.)

It should also be pointed out that much of the soil that is under relentless development pressure is Class 1 and Class 2, the best soil in all of Canada.

My letter sent to Markham Council is attached for reference. I request the Clerk post this email with below supporting information and the attached letter as communications to the June 22 Council Meeting for this agenda item.

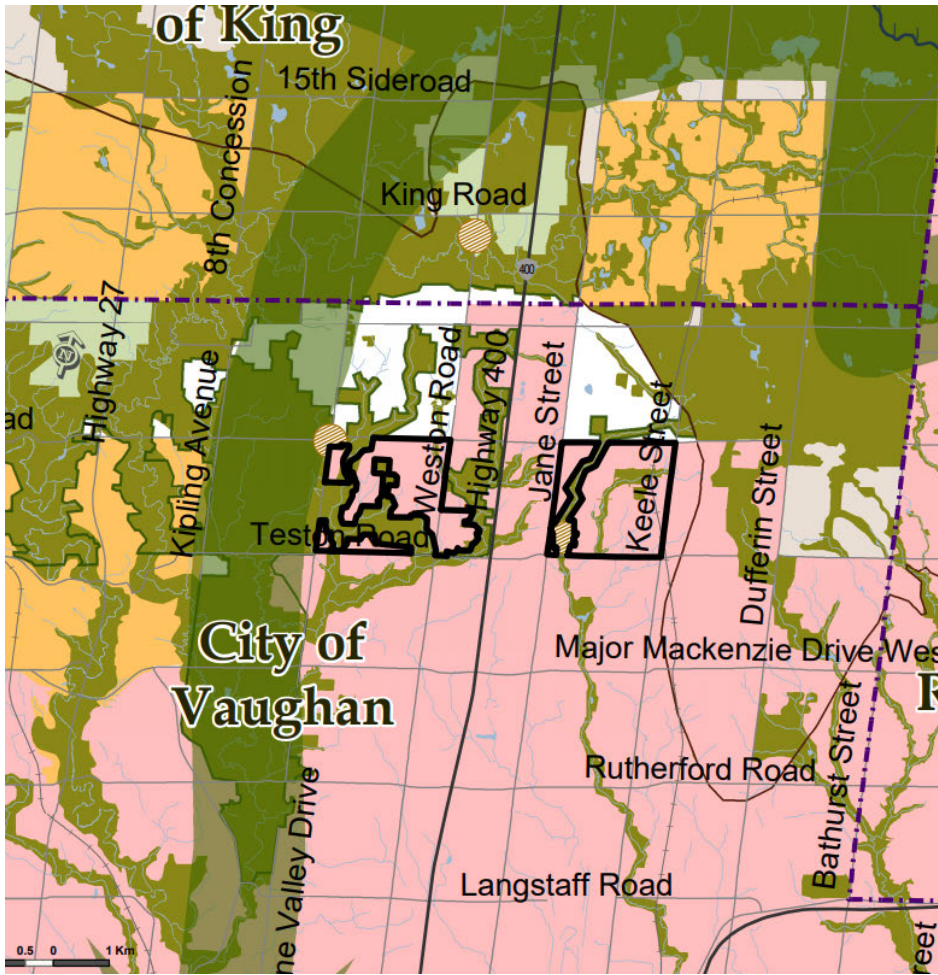
Thank you,
Irene Ford

Supporting Information

ROPA 2: <https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/bf481c35-acf2-479f-8faa-928985d3dbc0/ROPA%2B2.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mul6KCK>

4

3. That Map 2 - Regional Greenlands System as shown on Figure 2 following is amended:
 - (a) By deleting the Hamlet identifications from the lands outlined in black; and,
 - (b) By designating the lands outlined in black and coloured pink within the City of Vaughan as Urban Area and continuing to identify lands in the area as part of the Regional Greenlands System within the subject lands.



EXCERPT FROM MAP 2

REGIONAL GREENLANDS SYSTEM

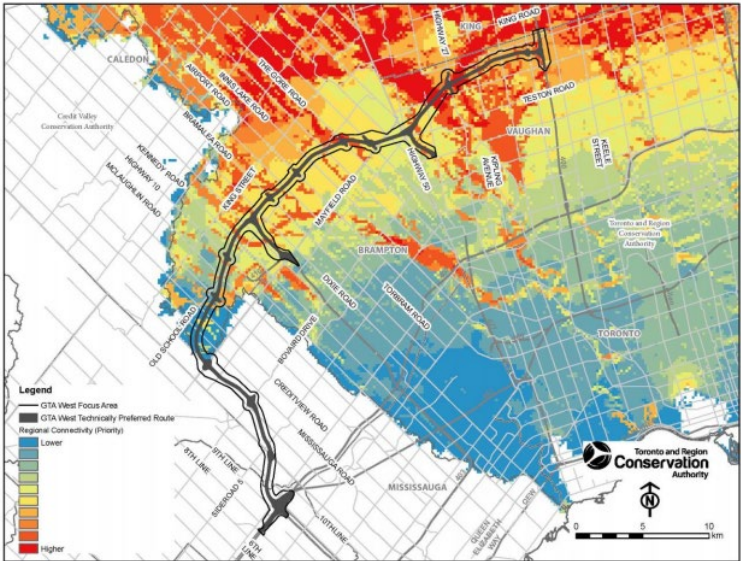
- Regional Greenlands System (includes Greenbelt Natural Heritage System and ORMCP Natural Core and Natural Linkage Designations)
- Greenlands System Vision
- Urban Area
- Towns and Villages
- Hamlet
- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan
- Oak Ridges Moraine Boundary
- Oak Ridges Moraine Plan Area
- Greenbelt Plan
- Greenbelt Plan Area Boundary
- Greenbelt Protected Countryside / Hamlet
- Provincial Highways
- Existing
- Controlled Access Highway
- Under Construction
- Municipal Boundary
- Regional Boundary

York Region Geomatics
 Produced by: Geomatics
 Planning and Development Services Department
 © Copyright, The Regional Municipality of York, August, 2010
 © Copyright, The Regional Municipalities of Durham and Peel, County of Simcoe, City of Toronto
 © Queen's Printer for Ontario 2003-2010. Includes Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Boundaries and Water Features

Figure 2 to 10
 19OP-2009-002
 as modified
 September 2010

TRCA Staff Report Entitled:
 GTA WEST TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE
https://pub-trca.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=7051&fbclid=IwAR14pHgkXjYk1akRABDS0_OZHm4C8oB1yl7e23fRkwUdPY6QdteYxy0HMU

Attachment 1



Map 1: TRCA's regional connectivity map shows higher priority areas (in red, orange, and yellow) that are important for maintaining landscape level connectivity among habitat patches across TRCA jurisdiction. These areas provide critical north-south and east-west linkages and losing them would compromise the long-term resilience of ecosystem, habitat, and biodiversity in TRCA's jurisdiction.

Legend

Holland Marsh

Land Evaluation Score

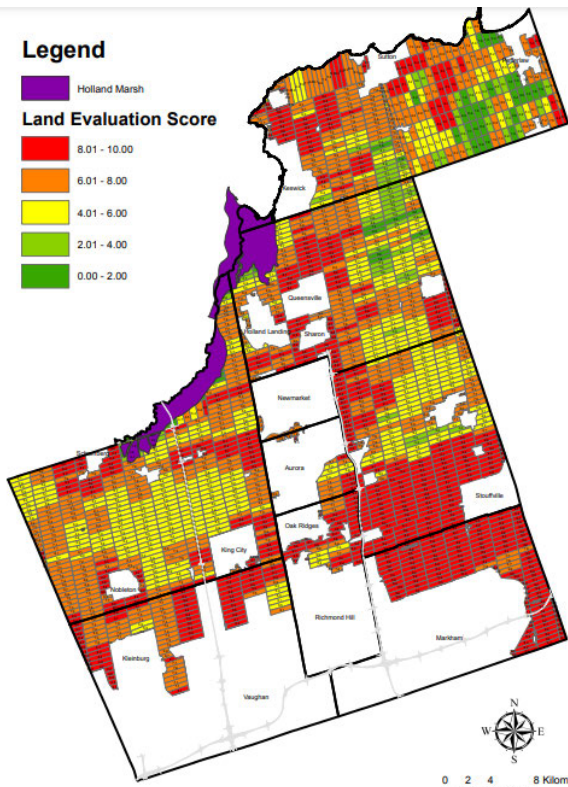
8.01 - 10.00

6.01 - 8.00

4.01 - 6.00

2.01 - 4.00

0.00 - 2.00



MAP 2 - LAND EVALUATION RESULT

October 16, 2009



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK
YORK REGION AGRICULTURAL/RURAL LAND REVIEW



June 21, 2021

Markham Council:

RE: Agenda Item 10.2 entitled City of Markham Comments on Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 7 to Allow Urban Park Uses in the Greenbelt

An application for private Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 7) is being put forward “to re-designate the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside Areas within the New Community Areas from “Agricultural” to “Rural”¹.” If approved ROPA 7 would apply to lands in Vaughan and Markham. It would also be a precedent setting decision for other Greenbelt Fingers not included in the ROPA located in Vaughan, York Region and beyond. These lands have the strong designation of prime agriculture because they are part of the Regional Greenbelt System

This letter is asking Markham Council to:

- **NOT support and endorse the private ROPA 7 request: and**
- **Support Vaughan, Markham and York Region staff who do not support ROPA 7^{2,3,4}.**

Approval of ROPA 7 is premature by any local or regional council as well as the Minister of MMAH. Staff have not yet developed the accompanying policies to be in a position to be able to support the amendment as requested and to inform the decision-making process.⁵ The landowners indicate in a communication to the City of Vaughan that they are only seeking “parks, recreation and infrastructure uses”⁶. These terms are not clear, for instance under

¹ <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73610>

² <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73605>

³ Exert from Markham Staff Report emphases added, pg. 2: <https://pub-markham.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=40867>

Markham staff do not support active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors for three main reasons as follows:

1. Markham has consistently planned for the use of the **Greenbelt corridor and Natural Heritage System lands for ecological, passive recreation and natural open space uses** which are considered to be fundamental to achieving City-wide environmental objectives as well as the development of sustainable communities in adjacent urban areas;
2. The provision of active parkland in the Greenbelt **could adversely affect the amount of active urban parkland and greenspace in the FUA communities and elsewhere in Markham if the City is required to provide parkland dedication credit for unanticipated urban parks in the Greenbelt;** and
3. The relocation of active urban parkland to the periphery of the FUA neighbourhoods could impact the City’s ability to provide active parkland in appropriate locations within walking distance to all residents.

⁴ Exert from York Region Staff Report, emphasis added, pg 5-6: <https://pub-markham.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=40867>

“Policies will recognize the unique natural heritage values of these river valley features in their urban context; they are part of the Regional Greenlands System and contain key natural heritage/hydrologic features that will continue to be protected. Policy options are being assessed that balance the important environmental considerations and provide local planning flexibility within the changing context of these lands abutting new urban areas. **The designation would allow for Regional Official Plan Update: Policy Directions Report 6 continuation of existing agricultural operations/productive lands as appropriate for all of these river valley areas. Current agricultural policies align with the Province’s”**

⁶ See 1 above.

recreation a golf course could be allowed⁷. It is not within Vaughan, Markham or York Region Councils authority to make a decision about the fate of these lands. The province is the approval authority for changes to Greenbelt prime agricultural as is clearly indicated in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) letter emailed by TACC to Vaughan Council⁸.

It is not as simple as redesignating land within the Greenbelt as the consultant presented to Vaughan Council⁹. It was incredibly disappointing to hear a Regional Councillor rebuke Vaughan staff during the June 8 Committee of the Whole meeting for not supporting the private ROPA 7 request. Clearly staff understand there are substantive supporting reasons, shared across municipalities, at the Region and by the public, to **not recommend** support of ROPA 7 at this time.

One of the Greenbelt Fingers in Vaughan, Block 41, is adjacent to non-greenbelt land that received MZO approval last November¹⁰. There are also two MZOs approved in Markham adjacent to Greenbelt Fingers that are not part of the ROPA 7 but would set a precedent for allowing parks on these lands¹¹. Clearly by allowing parks on adjacent Greenbelt land this would allow more density for these developers. Increased density should be supported but not like this and at the expense of protection of the Humber River watershed in Vaughan and the Rouge River Watershed in Markham and maintaining the Regional Greenbelt System.

Block 41 Landowners MZO request included parks on Greenbelt designated land, this was endorsed by Vaughan Council but not approved by the Minister of MMHA. ROPA 7 is the latest strategy to circumvent due process to enable the loss of prime agricultural lands, less protection for natural core features, and further compromise York Region's Regional Greenbelt System. It is also another form of special treatment. Block 27 and Block 41 Landowners have been fighting since 2015, if not longer, when they and other developers successfully opposed the approval of Vaughan's natural heritage network, against the direction of the Province of the day.

The applicant has oversimplified their request it is not only a question about the viability of agricultural operations or that urban parks are an approved land use under the Greenbelt rural designation. **ROPA 2¹² for Vaughan and ROPA 3¹³ for Markham brought lands surrounding the subject lands of ROPA 7 into the urban boundary. Review of ROPA 2 and ROPA 3 implies that the subject lands of ROPA 7 were set aside, intentionally, as part of the Region's Greenbelt System.** The term Greenbelt fingers downgrades the importance of these lands they are Greenbelt Lands, regardless of shape or size and this does not justify downgrading the protection. Why is the applicant here again today questioning this and asking for your

⁷ <https://www.ontario.ca/document/greenbelt-plan-2017/general-policies-protected-countryside>

⁸ <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73608>

⁹ <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=73612>

¹⁰ See Item 32: <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=39457> and <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=39961>

¹¹ <https://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/10332313-markham-mzo-adds-to-circus-surrounding-flato-development-on-stouffville-border/>

¹² ROPA 2, refer to Map 2: <https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/bf481c35-acf2-479f-8faa-928985d3dbc0/ROPA%2B2.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mul6KCK>

¹³ ROPA 3, refer to Map 2: https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/d3a79360-0c88-4fcd-abce-8110fe740d34/17046_ropa3May2017.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mul6MPC

support to undermine the strong protection these lands have and should be maintained? If Council supports this then you undermine staff and the City of Markham's ability to achieve numerous policies and objectives, in particular those relating to Climate Change.

ROPA 7 is not the only example in Vaughan of the Greenbelt being under attack from within. A Vaughan Council Public Meeting on June 1 contained a development application for a rural-recreation use on the Greenbelt proposing a large banquet hall, hotel, sports fields and a parking lot for almost 700 cars. This is on one of the last full blocks of Greenbelt prime agricultural land in Vaughan, I thought it was off limits. It is unclear if the planning rationale presented by the consultant is valid, if the recreational use is compliant with the Greenbelt plan¹⁴ or why it is even being entertained by Vaughan Council since so much appeared to be beyond their decision-making authority.

Make no doubt about it, this is a MZO request in disguise on the Greenbelt. The applicant, developer is first seeking local and regional endorsement prior to requesting approval by the Minister of MMHA. It is disconcerting to me as a citizen that it was necessary to send this letter and depute at Markham Council because there is a very distinct possibility that Council will not support staff recommendations, made in the greater public interest, and instead choose to support private interests as was done with the Flato MZO earlier this year.

Even though the Province has clearly indicated that the Greenbelt is to be protected and expanded they are not living up to their promises. Support of ROPA 7 would mean that this Council is also not living up to their promises to protect the Greenbelt because ROPA 7 undermines the purpose and intent of the Greenbelt Plan to preserve and protect prime agricultural, natural heritage, watersheds and provide natural corridors for endangered species. It will set a precedent for similar areas in York Region and beyond to allow urban uses on lands intentionally protected to preserve our natural heritage, protect our drinking water through source water protection and reduce risk of floods through storm water protection.

Do not support ROPA 7 it is premature and there is inadequate information to enable an informed decision.

Thank you,
Irene Ford
Vaughan Resident

¹⁴ See Item 3(6): <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?id=2c68ecd5-3bb4-41fc-977b-f502c1d8d192&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>