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April 13, 2022

REGION OF PEEL

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

Peel Regional Council
Meeting of April 14, 2022

Re: Request to reject proposal for Urban Boundary expansion. Update the Official Plan with new density targets to meet provincial guidelines within existing built and greenfield areas, and to delay Official Plan approval until after provincial election, June 2nd, 2022.

Dear Member of Regional Council,

My name is Yvonne Pigott, I have been a resident of the GTA for most of my 74 years.

I am deeply concerned about urban sprawl and strongly oppose the frequent attempts to expand the urban boundaries of the cities and towns in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. On Thursday April 7th 2022, The Planning and Growth Committee heard from over 25 delegates – including myself-- and received over 750 petitions and letters from residents in Peel and beyond covering a wide range of ages, locations, housing types and workplaces. However, the decision to endorse the staff report was a *fait accompli* among the members of the Planning and Growth Committee, who recommended sending the report to Council. The residents' concerns for the impact on Peel Regions' long-term financial and environmental sustainability were ignored.

Urban Boundary expansion will not support affordable housing: rather it will facilitate building expensive houses, while chipping away at our food base and destroying sensitive habitat, saddling municipalities with obligations to subsidize the cost of installing and maintaining infrastructure. In contrast, we need more gentle density that supports walkable communities where there are nearby places to buy food, visit friends and family and enjoy nature.

What we seem to be doing is continuing decades of costly sprawl, developing large swathes of residential land at the edge of our communities and turning food producing fields into isolated housing and warehouses with little to no service by public transit. Instead, we build highways to connect these places and bring even more traffic to the Region. Much of this is truck traffic, as more low employment distribution centres are built, serving short-term consumption patterns, not long-term regional prosperity.

In writing this letter I have been prompted to think about my own early experience at 9 years of age, moving from the city to the suburbs. We (a family of 7 kids) were now transplanted to the country, so to speak: For me, the experience was life altering. For example, I previously went to school on foot; but now I needed a drive to get to school and the Grey Coach bus to get home. My friends were too far away so we couldn't visit or host one another very often. I put on a lot of weight, probably from sitting around and watching TV. Everything social and material related revolved around the car and it would be years before I could get my license. Fortunately, I had no choice but to spend time outdoors: escarpment, woods, fields, creeks and waterfalls, tons of birds, and even farms, some with cherry trees. Farms in the area also meant a steady supply of fresh corn, tomatoes, green beans, potatoes, you name it. That experience has stayed with me. Unfortunately today, most of those same natural areas my family enjoyed are now built out or are quite degraded and fragmented.

More and more areas in the GTA have met this fate. In the course of my life the widespread clearing of natural and agricultural areas to make way for built environments has greatly accelerated. But such previously isolated harms to natural systems, accumulating over time, are now pushing those systems

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into a non-viable state. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recent report outlines the dire effects of sprawl-enabled climate change, not to mention habitat loss, on our communities right now and into the foreseeable future; this comes in the form of extreme weather events, increased flooding, heat waves and more frequent and severe droughts.

Why allow natural areas to be cleared and built out when there are so many existing low-built areas, such as suburban Mississauga, Brampton, or Hamilton, all of which seem better suited for moderate intensification? Take Mississauga's Heartland Centre area for example: its low-rise expansive single family homes and retail complexes stretch in every direction. Surely it makes more sense to tap into existing infrastructure in these built areas and increase the population density within them, rather than indiscriminantly expanding into natural areas to create more low-density, residential and commercial complexes. Doesn't greater concentration of population density make for greater economy of scale?

I respectfully ask all members to see the broader picture in making decisions at the Council and Regional level. We are in a climate crisis. Destroying valuable arable land and bulldozing for aggregate for housing and highways will severely limit our opportunities to build viable, connected housing and employment in the future.

On April 14th do not submit the Region of Peel Draft Official Plan to Minister Clark. Please delay submitting the Official Plan until after June 2nd. Give the public more time to have their say, and for everyone to take sober second thought on the consequences of sprawl for the next 30 years.

Sincerely Yours,

Yvonne Pigott

