

No need to open highway corridors to development

York Region Council voted in favour of asking the province to allow employment areas along 400 series highways and permit the extension of Lake Ontario water and sewers to rural settlement areas like Nobleton. The majority of land in King Township lies in the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt making our Mayor the de facto steward of vast groundwater supplies, natural areas, and farmland. For those of us who care about the permanence of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine the result of the vote was a huge disappointment but not surprising. We've been here before, the creation of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Plans are a result of citizens in the late '90s demanding the province step in to manage out of control municipal led sprawl. There is absolutely no need to remove land from the Greenbelt for employment uses. A 2017 York Region report identified 2,588 hectares of vacant employment lands. As the annual uptake of employment land is 7 to 19 hectares annually there is no shortage of employment lands for the next generation. Over the next few years people need to think about the communities they want. Highway led sprawl creates more traffic, increases taxes and greenhouse gases and makes it harder to develop an efficient transit system. Locating employment lands within our towns and cities encourages more people to walk, take transit or cycle to work rather than drive, reducing gridlock. It's also healthier and less costly than extending pipes and roads. Will the Ford government open up the Greenbelt and approve our local politicians request to transform the Greenbelt lands into development? Thanks to the outpouring of public support for the Greenbelt the Ford government has backed down twice from opening up the Greenbelt since the 2018 election. But the province is fast-tracking the GTA West highway that runs through Ontario's Greenbelt. I am very concerned the province will succumb to pressures from developers and some municipal leaders during the 2025 Greenbelt Plan review. We need to make it clear at the next provincial election, there are places to grow and there are places to permanently protect for future generations.

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