

Dear Regional Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to act wisely and take action to protect the precious environmental resources in your care – the farmlands, wetlands, and forests we have here in Durham Region and vote to not accept the latest version of the Official Plan before you tomorrow.

Act for the people of our Region and for the future generations of all species to protect our lands and climate from further and permanent destruction and to protect the municipal taxpayers.

Listen to the experts, the science and not to the developers and to the myth that expanding urban boundaries is needed for solving the housing

problem. On the contrary, sprawl will only exacerbate the situation,

destroy our natural resources, add to the climate crisis, drain municipal coffers and add to the homelessness crisis.

I strongly object to the amount of land unnecessarily and irresponsibly being allocated for development by Durham Region. I urge Durham to retreat from and modify the Official Plan to keep these lands protected from development and reduce impact on our environment.

First, we had you – our Durham Regional Council support a devastating 9,000+ acres more (most land likely to be designated in Clarington and

Pickering) of Durham's precious lands for development than the commenting public wanted (the public overwhelmingly wanted no additional community lands approved, as per Land Needs Scenario 5) and also more than Durham Regional staff originally recommended. (Durham staff had recommended Scenario 4, but, Durham Regional Council members, including Mayor Foster, on May 25th, 2022 went with industry's BILD Scenario 2A instead).

Next came Ontario Bill 23 and the appalling assault on the Greenbelt with an additional 5,000 acres of precious irreplaceable lands – lands that were supposed to be protected in perpetuity – taken out of the Greenbelt. So, we have a whopping total of 14,000 acres of land in Durham Region that may be slated, unnecessarily, for development.

What makes this all so egregious is that allocating this land for development is completely unnecessary and at a time when our planet is under existential risk due to climate change and environmental degradation. Premier Ford's own Housing Task Force found that there was enough land in the white belt to accommodate future growth and no new land was needed to be approved for development.

Heed the correspondence you have received from the National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O) and their call to you to abandon the expansion of its urban boundaries as part of its proposed Envision Durham, Regional Official Plan (ROP).

Heed the calls of the many Durham residents who are asking you to retreat from expanding our urban boundaries and to protect our precious lands.

Warning lights are flashing red but the response in Durham is to add fuel to the fire.

Many experts and the public are calling for smart urban growth within existing urban boundaries – livable, vibrant, walkable communities with transit instead of more sprawl and the costs – both financial and environmental – of servicing those lands.

Evidence of the devastating impacts of climate change is already here, and we know that this land development will negatively impact our climate and environment. Recently the UN released their landmark report on climate change with the UN Secretary General António Guterres warning of the urgency to act stating “Our world needs climate action on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once.”

A Toronto Star article on the UN report stated: “While Guterres referenced a science fiction movie in his remarks, the solutions to this crisis are both well understood, already in use and, in some cases, almost embarrassingly simple. Protecting intact forests, wetlands and other natural ecosystems would have massive payoffs.”

[https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thestar.com%2Fnews%2Fcanada%2F2023%2F03%2F20%2Fthe-un-just-released-a-landmark-climate-change-report-heres-the-timeline-it-gives-us.html%3Fsource%3Dnewsletter%26utm\\_source%3Dts\\_nl%26utm\\_medium%3Demail%26utm\\_email%3D6E7640A9A2409877EEE51E5D08C44AE8%26utm\\_campaign%3Dbn\\_172348&data=05%7C01%7CCheryl.Bandel%40Durham.ca%7Cb9586ba339674d58bcce08db56292050%7C52d7c9c2d54941b69b1f9da198dc3f16%7C0%7C0%7C638198506854415923%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoijMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiv2luMzliLCJBTiil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=O1zXRmVXJxqF0DgzpaysXU8Zhq27I4pGkqHpSk7bug%3D&reserved=0](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thestar.com%2Fnews%2Fcanada%2F2023%2F03%2F20%2Fthe-un-just-released-a-landmark-climate-change-report-heres-the-timeline-it-gives-us.html%3Fsource%3Dnewsletter%26utm_source%3Dts_nl%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_email%3D6E7640A9A2409877EEE51E5D08C44AE8%26utm_campaign%3Dbn_172348&data=05%7C01%7CCheryl.Bandel%40Durham.ca%7Cb9586ba339674d58bcce08db56292050%7C52d7c9c2d54941b69b1f9da198dc3f16%7C0%7C0%7C638198506854415923%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoijMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiv2luMzliLCJBTiil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=O1zXRmVXJxqF0DgzpaysXU8Zhq27I4pGkqHpSk7bug%3D&reserved=0)

The embarrassingly simple solution here in Durham is to do just that – preserve and protect our intact farmlands, forests, wetlands, and other natural ecosystems and stand up and say no to approving these additional lands for development. These natural systems are the carbon sinks we desperately need.

Once it’s gone, it’s gone. Development means the destruction of these essential natural systems. Some of the best farmland in Durham is south of the Moraine. At a time of food insecurity, it makes no sense to subtract from our precious farmlands and pave over them.

Speaking as a Clarington resident and its specific impacts, I am sickened to see the unnecessary loss of prime agricultural land and green spaces in Clarington to urban development, including the proposed erosion/destruction of the beautiful separation

between Bowmanville and Newcastle – precious farmland on both sides of Highway 2 and green spaces around Wilmot Creek will be a memory, lost for future generations if this goes ahead.

The loss of habitat and wildlife corridors is heartbreaking and depressing. We CAN build within our current urban boundaries and intensify in built up areas where appropriate.

I urge you to be the leaders our world needs today, to act bravely and abandon the present plan. I urge you to reject further expansion of urban boundaries and instead seek creative solutions for growth within our existing urban boundaries. We need Durham staff and politicians to stand up for the well-being of Durham residents and the planet, not for developers who will always want more. This is especially important for our youth and future generations who will be most impacted.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Wendy Bracken

Newcastle