



January 8, 2024

Planning and Economic Development Committee  
Region of Durham  
605 Rossland Road East  
Whitby, Ontario  
L1N 6A3

Via Email to: [Clerks@Durham.ca](mailto:Clerks@Durham.ca)

**Re: Pause the Durham Region Official Plan approval request and determine the servicing and financing costs for the proposed urban boundary expansions**

Stop Sprawl Durham has long advocated that our regional leaders deliver sustainable neighbourhoods that benefit ALL residents, both current and future. We have advocated for complete communities that would provide affordable housing options where people want to live, be serviced by transit, strengthen our region's climate resilience, and protect residents from the costly impacts of sprawling growth.

In [Report 2022 P-11](#), staff recommended that only 2348 acres were required for future housing needs and the Region's Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development, Brian Bridgeman, said that the land needs approved by Council both "detract[ed] from the achievement of Regional sustainability policies and obligations" and "deemphasize[d] Regional priorities that focus growth on existing communities, where services and infrastructure are either already in place or can be provided more efficiently" ([May 24, 2022, Planning Staff memo to Council](#), p. 17 of 18). Regional Council's decision last May to pass a proposed Official Plan that would add 9000 acres to our existing urban boundaries was not in the best interests of residents and taxpayers and will have costly implications for years to come.

Now it's budget time. And what we are seeing is that the Region cannot afford to service the lands Council already designated as living areas, and is expecting taxpayers to bear the costs of past decisions to build more and more costly infrastructure beyond our current urban boundaries into rural areas. Regional Council has already passed a [7.4% increase in Water and Sewage user rates](#) and a [7.5% budget guideline increase](#) for 2024. At the December 6, 2024, Works Committee meeting we learned that even with a 7.4% increase in Water and Sewage rates, the Region's reserves and reserve funds will be fully depleted over the next ten years, and that user rates will increase for years to come. Staff presentations at the December 12, 2023, Finance & Administration Committee meeting additionally pointed out the substantial costs associated with servicing "new communities."

Taxpayers are already struggling with rising costs of living and cannot take further financial hits linked to property tax and user rate increases. We cannot afford the substantial additional costs of servicing new lands outside our existing urban boundaries. We will not only have a housing

affordability crisis but we will see a *property tax affordability crisis* if Durham pursues unnecessary urban area expansions.

If the land needs contained within the proposed Durham Region Official Plan are approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, taxpayers will be burdened with the impacts of building costly infrastructure and providing services beyond our existing urban boundaries.

You have seen the costs of servicing growth areas in multiple December staff reports, the Water and Sewer budget, and the proposed Budget Guideline increases. NOW is the time for the Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council to consider the fiscal impacts of servicing the Council-approved urban boundary expansions in Durham Region's proposed Official Plan (DROP) and the impact that will have on taxpayers in the region.

We ask that the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommend to Regional Council that:

1. Council immediately ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to pause his review and approval of the Durham Regional Official Plan to allow Council time to determine and consider the servicing costs and financial impacts associated with the substantial land needs included in the plan.
2. Council direct staff to determine the servicing costs and financial implications of expanding our urban boundaries by more than 9000 acres.

Yours truly,

On behalf of Stop Sprawl Durham  
Abdullah Mir, co-lead  
Helen Brenner, co-lead

StopSprawlDurham@gmail.com