

February 07, 2022

**The Honourable Doug Ford, M.L.A.**

Premier of the Province of Ontario

*By Email*

## **Re: Provincial High Tech TOC and Bridge TOC Plans**

Dear Premier,

We are writing on behalf of **multiple community groups in Richmond Hill, Markham, and Vaughan** representing a non-partisan and non-profit coalition of York Region residents with common concerns and visions for a better future for our respective cities. Today, **we are united in broad opposition to the province's plan to develop two Transit Oriented Communities (TOCs) on both side of Highway 407 at Yonge Street.**

Your TOC plans for Yonge and Highway 407:

- Call for 67 condo towers, 40 @ 60 storeys or more, 11 @ 80 storeys. (First Canadian Place is 72 storeys).
- Implement a density of 175,000 residents/km<sup>2</sup> (which is 4 times that of Yonge-Eglinton, 5 times that of North York Centre, and 6 times that of the Toronto Central Waterfront).
- Make the Yonge-407 centre the second most densely populated area on earth (see [www.kickassfacts.com/17-densely-populated-places-earth](http://www.kickassfacts.com/17-densely-populated-places-earth)), just after the Dharavi slums of Mumbai, India – made famous by the film Slumdog Millionaire.
- Concentrate the equivalent population of Newmarket (88,000 people) into 45.5 hectares (an area equivalent to about half of Exhibition Place). The TOCs have less than 10 hectares of parkland and one school; Newmarket, by contrast, has more than 320 hectares of parkland and 29 public and catholic schools.
- Compound an existing jobs deficit, despite the fact that Richmond Hill, a largely BEDROOM COMMUNITY already had a net shortage of 30,000 jobs in 2016.

Before your provincial government unilaterally started imposing its TOC vision on Richmond Hill and Markham, both municipalities spent over a decade in consultation with the public developing their plans for these same areas. During this process, residents expressed concerns regarding several key issues:

- The two developments were being planned independently by the two municipalities when they should be developed together.
- The proposed densities would be the highest in Canada.
- There was no plan for burying the hydro corridor between Bayview Ave. and Yonge St.
- They offered no plan for integrating this development into a future South York Greenway (a pedestrian and cycling route across York Region).

Nevertheless, the municipalities had worked with the community and had done a reasonably good job in planning mixed communities, integrating affordable housing, parks, community centres, schools, fire and police services, larger apartments more suitable for raising families, and most importantly a 2:1 ratio of residents to jobs. By contrast, your government's plan neglects to provide for sufficient employment opportunities, infrastructure, and facilities such as parks, schools, community centers, libraries, recreational and health care facilities, which are necessary to make it a liveable community.

The population density proposed by your government's plan of 175,000 residents/km<sup>2</sup> is particularly disturbing. While land is very expensive in the GTA, in cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Manhattan it is even more scarce. Nevertheless, none of those cities has imposed the population density being proposed in your plan. Yes, we need a place to grow, but do we need to chase seemingly dystopian levels of density?

The other major problem with your government's TOC plan is that it creates a deficit of 18,000 jobs, which will further exacerbate the employment crisis in this area. More people will have to commute to work, thus forcing more cars onto the roads despite any proposed future enhancements to the public transit network. The principle of TOCs is to have people live, play, and work seamlessly within walking distance; none of this is achievable with the unprecedented density and associated lack of commercial facilities and infrastructure planned for the TOCs.

We are perplexed at how the Ontario government could have developed such a shocking plan. It is bad not only for the future of York Region, but the entire GTA. We are compelled to demand that the TOC plans be immediately rescinded, that a public debate be called to gather more input, and that money be allocated to do a proper, good faith, *Blue Sky* plan that considers not only this development but the entire southern York Region corridor from Vaughan to Markham. We further believe that **an open and accountable planning process must include the adoption of the plan by Richmond Hill and Markham Councils; we ask for your commitment that no plan in this area will be imposed through a Minister's Zoning Order.**

We are acutely aware that this is an election year, and we will harness all of our efforts to make the TOCs and other provincial government impositions on the 905 area the Number 1 local issue in this coming election. We want responsible development, and your plan is not.

For more information or contact details, please visit <https://abetterrichmondhill.ca/tocs/>

Yours Sincerely,



John Li

On behalf of,

**Community Groups in Richmond Hill, Markham, and Vaughan**

Alena Gotz, President

Aileen-Willowbrook Residents Association (AWRA), Markham

Alex Wong, President

BayMills Ratepayers Association, Richmond Hill

Anet Mor, President

Flamingo Ratepayers Association (FRA), Vaughan

Simon Cui, President

Jefferson Community Association (JFC), Richmond Hill

Pat Pollock, President

Mayvern Area Residents Association (MARA), Richmond Hill

Gary Zikovitz, President

North Richvale Community Group, Richmond Hill

Jordan Max, President

Springfarm Ratepayers Association (SFRA), Vaughan

Adam Birrell, President

Thornhill Historical Society, Markham/Vaughan

Brian Chapnik, Chair

Village Core Residents Association, Richmond Hill

Evelin Ellison, Vice President

Ward One (South) Thornhill Residents Inc (WOSTRI), Markham

John Li, President

Yonge-Bernard Residents Association (YRA), Richmond Hill

**cc**

- CBC, Globe & Mail, Toronto Star, City News, The Liberal, ...
- Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure
- Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Minister, Ministry of Transportation
- President and CEO, Infrastructure Ontario
- President and CEO, Metrolinx
- Regional Clerk, Regional Municipality of York
- President, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation
- RH/Markham/Vaughan City Council
- City Clerk, RH/Markham/Vaughan
- Chief planners of RH/Markham/Vaughan and the Region
- Local MPs/MPPs
- Leaders of the New Democratic Party of Ontario and the Liberal Party of Ontario