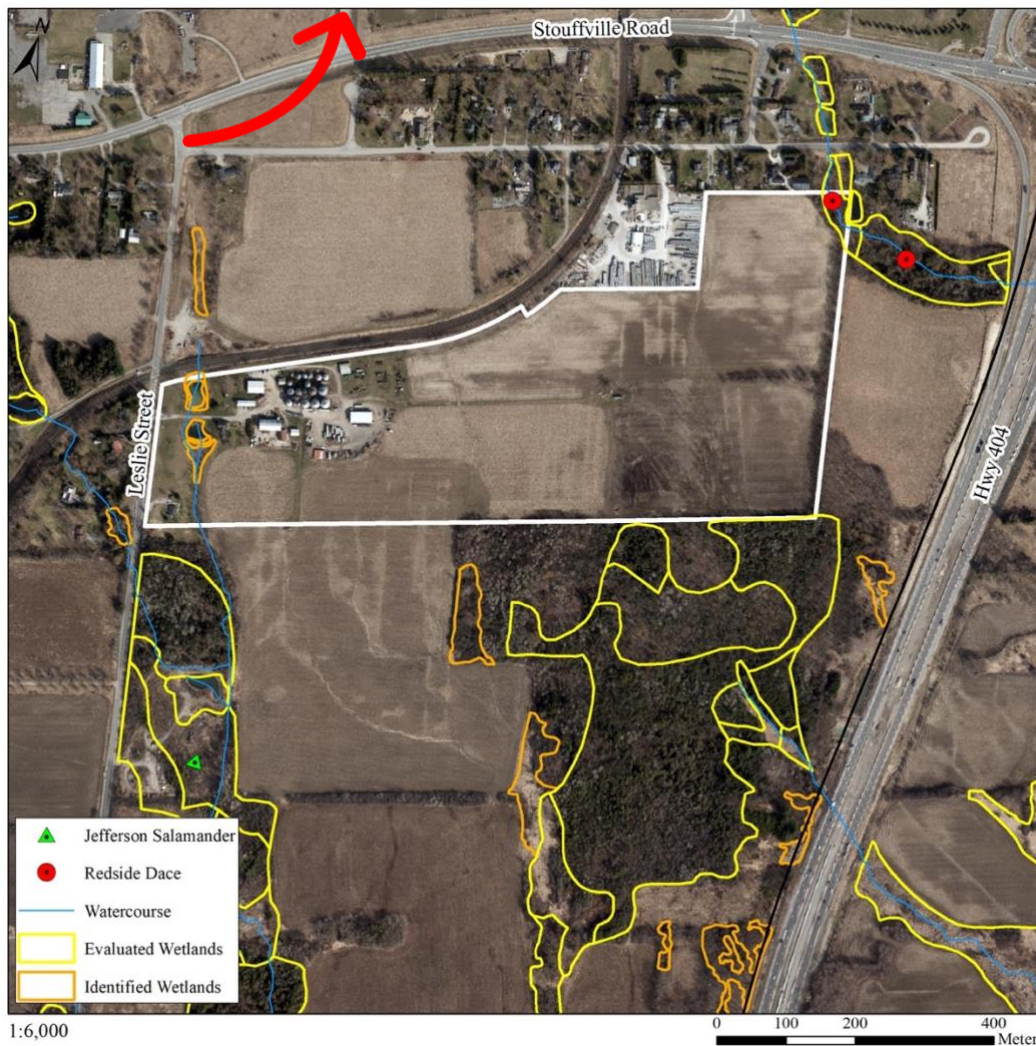


April 12, 2021

Clerks@richmondhill.ca

Dear Mayor and Council

RE: Councillor Muench member motion 14.1 : [Review of Farming & Agriculture in Richmond Hill](#)



Richmond Hill Councillors keep coming up with motions for the Leslie/404 area even though the Province has categorically stated that they will not touch the Greenbelt/ORM, protecting it for future generations and a [memorandum of January 26, 2021](#) from York Region reiterated the same position. YREA also must restate issues of concern from our previous letters so that they may hopefully be given due consideration this time.

Near GO stations –

It is estimated that 2/3 of employees will now be permanently working from home so it is completely inappropriate to speculate on a housing need at Leslie and Stouffville Rd., especially as we have enough existing development land to 2051 without touching this area. The train line is primarily for freight with only a rush hour commuter schedule. Future homeowners in the huge Oak Meadow housing development **on farmland** north of Stouffville on Leslie should be forewarned of noise likelihood of frequent nightly cargo trains as there are bound to be complaints. Promoting a **dated** bedroom community model and building on protected lands on the Greenbelt/ORM shows a lack of visionary leadership of most of Richmond Hill Council. Not the environmental advocates they purport to be.

Impact of redesignation of countryside to settlement –

High and medium density housing on one of the last undeveloped part of Richmond Hill in an area that is entirely in the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and has been designated Countryside, Natural Linkage and Natural Core areas precludes development here and to say that these areas would be unaffected is blatantly false.

Any development proposed would be in a highly sensitive headwater area of the Rouge River Watershed with the subject lands both a recharge and discharge area that provides critical base flows to this watershed. These lands are in a matrix of agricultural fields, with woodlots and wetlands aligned along five tributaries of the Rouge River. These tributaries form the basis for the designated Natural Linkage and Natural Core Areas that are **an integral part of critical wildlife corridors between the Federal Rouge Urban Park lands to the south and to the major east-west corridor of the Oak Ridges Moraine.**

The linkage areas along these five tributary streams support an array of cold water fish habitat, significant woodlots and numerous wetlands that are part of the **Provincially Significant Rouge River Headwater Wetland Complex**. They support species at risk, provincially rare species and locally rare fauna and flora. The current mix of agricultural fields, wetlands, woodlands and regenerating fields help to sustain and support this highly diverse natural heritage system.

Housing development in this area would seriously imperil the ecological integrity of this landscape. All the hard surfaces that come with such development instigate flooding and detrimentally affect the recharge & discharge functions that are so critical to maintaining water flows to the Rouge River Watershed. To service development, a network of new roads would repeatedly cut through the natural linkage areas and its woodlands and wetlands. This would have a serious negative, irreversible impact on the areas flora and fauna and impede critical wildlife corridor functions. Sewers and other related infrastructure would cost taxpayers billions and compromise networks of underground streams and watercourses.

Support of agriculture in Richmond Hill

Traditional farming of 200 years ago morphed into conventional agriculture after WW2 with a heavy reliance on and steady increase of chemical fertilizers and pesticide use. These detrimental farming practices have contributed to soil erosion and degradation through loss of organic matter, air and water pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss and the release of billions of tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere. To better understand the impact of conventional agriculture on the health of people and the environment please inform yourselves by taking the time to view YREA's short [presentation](#) or the film [Kiss the Ground](#) because it can no longer be business as usual if we are to save the planet. We need to fix what we broke and regenerative organic farming is the start.

If Richmond Hill is truly committed to mitigating climate change, an agricultural model that looks at soil restoration in this area should be top of mind. Organic urban agriculture is a growing movement all over the world. It does not use the same amount of heavy machinery and toxic chemicals of conventional agriculture so can easily be incorporated near our more populated areas. Examples of success include [Detroit Michigan](#) and right here in the GTA south of Steeles [Black Creek Farm](#). YREA suggests Richmond



Hill seek out willing partners (TRCA, YRFN, YR, Ontario Farmland Trust?) to replicate a model similar to Detroit or Black Creek Farm in this area in Richmond Hill. **Retaining the countryside designation** would not put the cost out of reach for new stakeholders willing to bring back to life a farm that would nurture the next generation of young farmers committed to providing us with healthy local organic food which we could actually eat while preserving and enhancing the environment - not destroying it by growing pesticide laden GMO corn and soy. Here is an opportunity to truly make a climate change commitment and there is funding available to make such a project viable. Time to stop the lip service of what environmental champions you say you are and truly put those words into action. Time to walk the talk.

Sincerely

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

York Region Environmental Alliance

Partnering for a greener planet