



*land use planning
&
development*

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April 13, 2021

Acting Mayor DiPaola and Members of Council
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 3P4

Re: Item 14.1 Motion by Councillor Muench – Review of Farming and Agriculture in Richmond Hill

Dear Acting Mayor DiPaola and Councillors,

I act on behalf of the Leslie Stouffville Landowners Association (LSLA), landowners in the Leslie Street/Stouffville Road area, encompassing approximately 500 acres/200 hectares of land impacted by the above noted Motion. The lands encompassed by LSLA ownership have historically been part of the farming community in Richmond Hill but, as you are aware from our previous submissions to City and Regional Councils, farming is no longer a viable enterprise in this part of the urbanizing City. Therefore, **LSLA is in full support of this Motion** to study the existing COUNTRYSIDE designation of this area through the ongoing City Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), City Plan 2041 Official Plan Update.

As I noted in my earlier presentations to you, I believe that the COUNTRYSIDE land use designation is no longer appropriate for this area of Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville. This specifically results from the demise of farming and the agricultural community coupled with the expansion of transit and the urban development surrounding this area, which has impacted on the ability to maintain a rural character and a continued viable farming community.

The study of this issue, as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review, in no way undermines current Provincial policy and in fact is the specific direction that we have been given by the Province through our discussions with provincial representatives, as the appropriate manner in which to deal with the issue.

The Gormley GO Station is within the area encompassed by the LSLA and is the core of an area that is to be studied as an MTSA. It is therefore appropriate that the long-term land use for the larger area in northeast Richmond Hill be studied as part of responsible and comprehensive planning for the City looking ahead to 2041.

I have reviewed the submission by the representative for the York Region Environmental Alliance and would suggest that all of the issues raised by this submission, including

protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine Natural Core and Natural Linkage Areas, impact of the existing rail line, organic urban agriculture and the future form of housing, would be appropriately reviewed and studied as part of the evaluation of the area recommended by the proposed Motion.

A comprehensive and coordinated study of the area could provide for the linking of the Oak Ridges Moraine Corridor Park, through the area to connect with Phyllis Rawlinson Park, TRCA lands and ORM Core and Linkage areas, all through the establishment of a Secondary Plan for the area between the West Gormley and North Leslie Secondary Plans and incorporating a potential Oak Ridges Provincial Park. This could be further linked, through intermunicipal cooperation, to Whitchurch-Stouffville and Aurora, providing a linked open-space system for use by future residents of the area and the region resulting in a "Growing of the Greenbelt". This would be in keeping with Provincial objectives.

It should be noted that the long history of planning for this area includes the clear direction to the Region of York from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, in a letter dated August 22, 1994, that not all agricultural lands in the Region should be in the same designation and an accompanying map illustrated that **no agricultural policy areas of provincial interest were to be established in Richmond Hill**, followed by a later letter dated July 24, 2002, indicating that there was "**No provincially significant agricultural areas identified within the Town of Richmond Hill...**" (letters attached). A Staff Report dated September 5, 2007, to Richmond Hill Council on the Oak Ridges Moraine Conformity OPA 218, reported on the approval of Regional Official Plan 50 that re-designated the Agricultural Policy Area to Rural Policy Area. The change in designation was approved on the basis that: **no provincially significant agricultural areas exist within the Town, the fragmented ownership of lots having less than 100 acres in size and the existence of non-agricultural uses such as golf courses, aggregate operations, a composting facility and pockets of rural residential uses** (report attached).

As noted in the Motion before you today, further erosion of the agricultural/rural community has occurred in the past 14 years since the adoption of OPA 218, including the approval of the West Gormley and North Leslie Secondary Plans and resulting urbanization surround the LSLA lands in the northeast part of the City as well as the Metrolinx GO Stations.

It is clearly appropriate to evaluate this area with respect to the future of farming and long-term land use as part of the MCR, both at the City level and at the Regional level. The direction to study the area as part of these MCR's should also be provided to the Province, as input to its consultation on Growing the Greenbelt, in order to engage all three levels of government that have an interest in this area, in a comprehensive planning exercise that has intermunicipal, regional and provincial implications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input to Council and we request that you **support this motion** as part of a responsible approach for planning for the future of this area of the City looking ahead to 2041.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael S. Manett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MPLAN Inc.

Per: Michael S. Manett, MCIP, RPP.

Encl.



Appendix	D
SRPD.	05-160
File(s)	DLO-ORM



Ministry of
Agriculture
and Food

Ministère de
l'Agriculture et
de l'Alimentation

Legislative Buildings
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 2B2

Hôtel du gouvernement
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 2B2

LAND USE PLANNING BRANCH

(416) 326-3118
(416) 326-3065 (FAX)

August 22, 1994

John Livey
Commissioner of Planning
Region of York Planning Department
17250 Yonge Street, Box 147
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Livey:

Re: Map 6 to the Region of York Official Plan

I would like to provide you with some preliminary comments on the schedule designating the Agriculture and Rural areas. As you know we provided a draft copy to your staff in May of this year outlining those areas we felt would be provincially significant. Your staff were not able to send a response in time to conduct a meaningful review of the schedule prior to your council date.

Our suggestion would be that the Region consider a further breakdown in the agriculture designation to an Agriculture 1 and an Agriculture 2. York has such a diverse agriculture character that putting all the lands that are shown as agriculture into the same designation could water down the strength of the policies. In any case, the lands that you have included cover all the areas of provincial concerns and so we have not objected to the schedule. This agreement is based on the assurances from you that some refinement of the map will take place when the local official plans are updated.

In the meantime it is important that you are aware of those areas where there is a known provincial interest in the agriculture designation and so I have enclosed a map illustrating this. In a normal review for an official plan these boundaries would be reviewed with the local municipalities for their input. At the request of Mr. Waller, this has not been done in York. This map is intended to show where you can expect to have staff of this Ministry applying provincial policy.



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Un bon goût de chez nous





This schedule will be used by staff of this Ministry until the additional work on the schedule is done by the local municipalities or your staff. We would be pleased to work with the local municipalities as they take on this task.

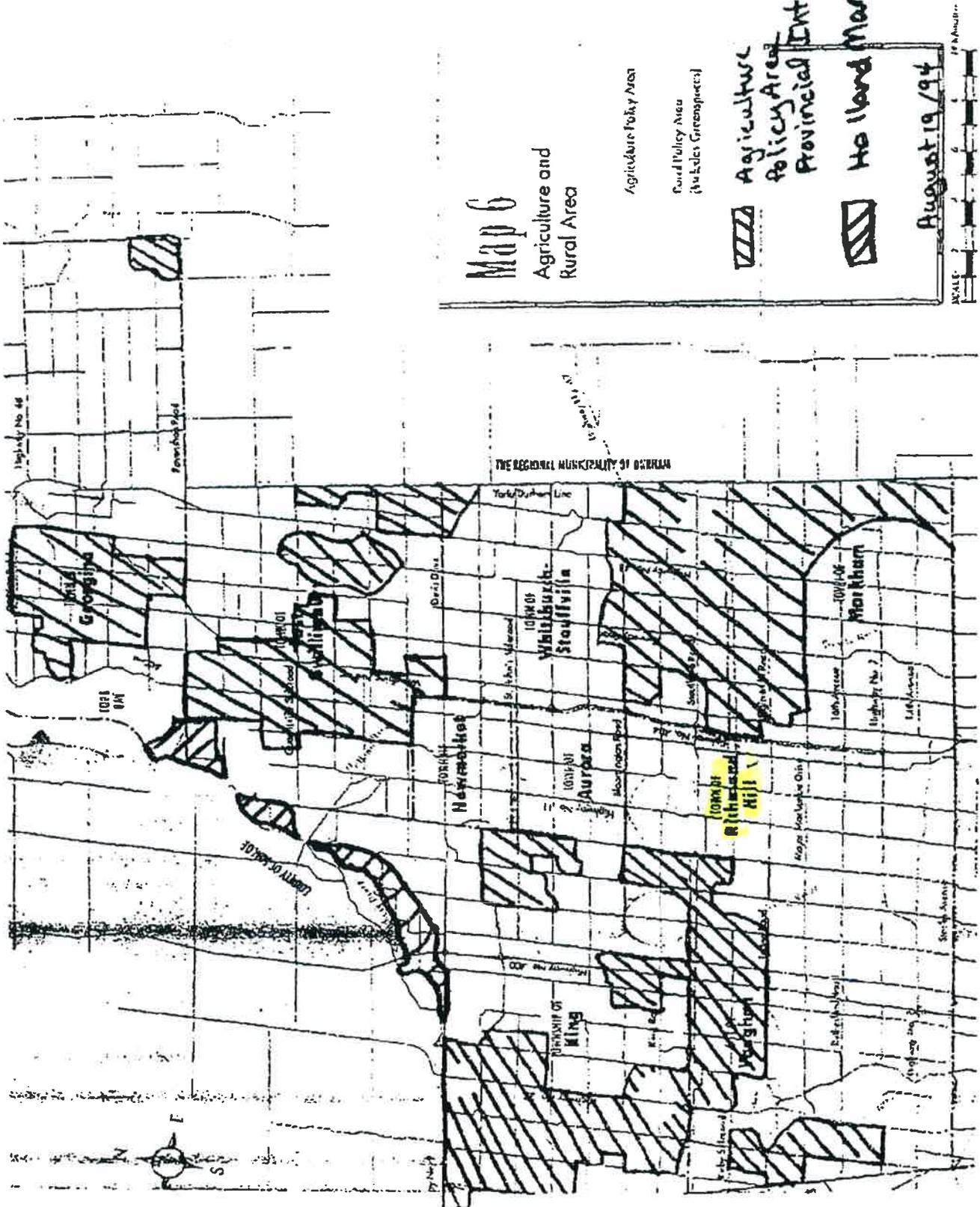
I trust this clarifies our position.

Yours truly,

Sharon Johnston
Sharon Johnston
District Manager

cc. Land Use Specialist, Newmarket

shj/...





Ministry of Agriculture and Food

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**Resources Management Branch
Agricultural Land Use Unit**

July 24, 2002

Barbara Jeffrey
Principal Planner
Planning and Development Services Department
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Barbara:

Subject: Provincially Significant Agricultural Areas as per the PPS for York Region

OMAF staff have identified provincially significant agricultural areas as per the PPS for the Towns of East Gwillimbury, Georgina, & Whitchurch-Stouffville, and for the Township of King. Maps identifying these areas are attached.

Provincially significant agricultural areas also lie within the City of Vaughan and the Town of Markham. These agricultural areas have not been verified as per the PPS. OMAF staff would be pleased to verify these provincially significant agricultural areas.

No provincially significant agricultural areas were identified within the Towns of Richmond Hill, Newmarket, and Aurora.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at 613-475-4764.

Yours truly,

Ray Valaitis
Rural Planner





TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

SRPD.07.086

Planning and Development

Planning

SUBJECT: Request for Comments – Proposed Official Plan Amendment to amend Official Plan Amendment No. 218 – the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Conformity Amendment - File No. D10-ORM-CPI (SRPD.07.086)

PURPOSE:

The proposed Official Plan Amendment to amend Official Plan Amendment No. 218 – the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Conformity Amendment to allow “major recreational uses” on lands designated “Countryside Area”.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a) That Section 2.2.1.10.20.2 of Official Plan Amendment No. 218 be amended to add as a permitted use “Major recreational uses subject to the policies of Section 38 of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.”
- b) That Official Plan Amendment No. 244, attached as Appendix ‘A’ be forwarded to the Region of York for approval.

Contact: Salvatore Aiello, Acting Manager of Site Plans, extension 2471

Submitted by:

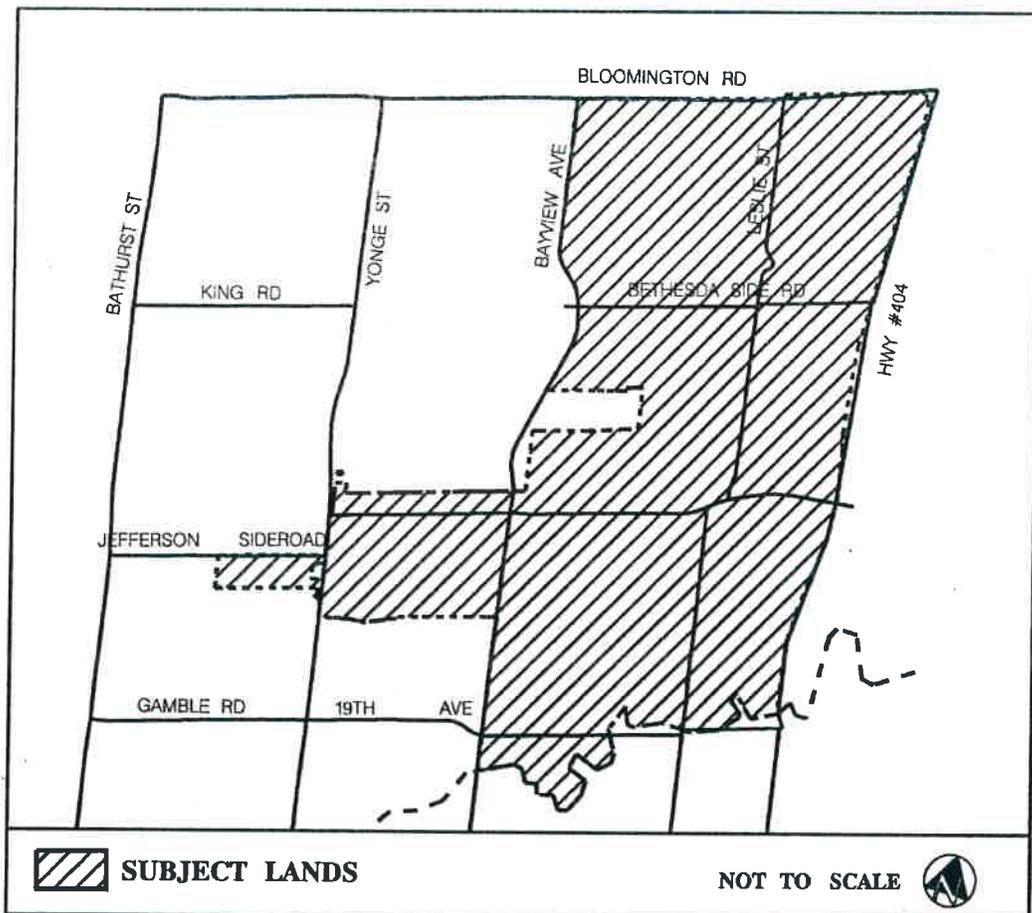
Approved by:

Ana Bassios
Commissioner of Planning and Development

M. Joan Anderton
Chief Administrative Officer



Location Map





BACKGROUND:

The approval of Official Plan Amendment No. 218 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued on March 9, 2006 did not include specific policies to permit “major recreational uses” within the Countryside Area designation. See Map 1 - Schedule 13 to OPA 218.

As way of background, the Ministry Staff, in a letter dated June 11, 2004, provided comments on the original draft of OPA 218 and commented that “under the ORMCP, major recreational uses (ie. Golf courses, ski hills, etc) are listed as a permitted use within the Countryside Area designation subject to the provisions of Section 38 in the ORMCP. We note however that OPA 218 has chosen not to include this specific use under Section 2.2.1.10.20.2 (ORM Countryside Area) and therefore does not include any specific policy requirements.”

“Major recreational uses” were not included in the original draft of OPA 218 because Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41 designated the Countryside Area within the Town as an “Agricultural Policy Area” which prohibits “major recreational uses” on prime agricultural lands.

On July 18, 2005 and again on July 25, 2005 the Town’s Council considered and endorsed modifications to OPA 218, including the addition of “major recreational use” as a permitted use within the Countryside Area. In order further facilitate this use, the Town applied for a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 50) to remove the “Agricultural Policy Area” designation which precludes “major recreational uses” within the Countryside Area. Attached as Appendix ‘B’ are the extracts from the meetings of Committee of the Whole and Council.

On June 21, 2006 ROPA 50 was approved and has the effect of re-designating the “Agricultural Policy Area” designation to “Rural Policy Area”. This change in designation was approved on the basis that no Provincially significant agricultural areas exist within the Town, the fragmented ownership of lots having less than 100 acres in size and the existence of non-agricultural uses such as golf courses, aggregate operations, a composting facility, parkland and pockets of rural residential uses.

Summary Analysis

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan identifies four land use designations including Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Areas, Countryside Areas and Settlement Areas. Major recreational uses are not allowed within the Natural Core Area or Natural Linkage Area designations. The ORMCP states that Countryside Areas are “areas of rural use such as agricultural, recreation, residential development, Rural Settlements, mineral aggregate operations, parks and open space.” The policies of the ORMCP specifically lists “major recreational uses” as permitted uses within the Countryside area designation.



Section 38 of the ORMCP defines *Major Recreational Uses* as “uses that require large-scale modification to terrain, vegetation or both and usually also require large-scale buildings or structures, including but not limited to the following: 1) golf courses, 2) serviced playing fields, 3) serviced campgrounds and 4) ski hills.”

Section 13(5) of the ORMCP prohibits “major recreational uses” in prime agricultural areas and areas designated primarily for agricultural uses in the applicable official plan. As noted above, ROPA 50 states that no Provincially significant agricultural areas exist within the Town of Richmond Hill. As a result of ROPA 50, the inclusion of “major recreational uses” within OPA 218 would comply with the requirements of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41

Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41 brings the Regional Official Plan into conformity with the ORMCP. Section 2.5 Oak Ridges Moraine incorporates policies with respect to the Natural Core Area, Natural Linkage Area, Countryside Area and Settlement Area designations in conformity with the ORMCP. With respect to the Countryside Areas, ROPA 41 states that these are “areas of existing rural land uses which may include agricultural, major recreational, Hamlets, mineral aggregate operations, park and open space.” The inclusion of “major recreational uses” within OPA 218 would comply with the requirements of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41.

Official Plan Amendment No. 218

The specific issue at hand is that “major recreational uses” are not permitted within the Countryside Area designation under Official Plan Amendment 218 in accordance with Section 13(3) and 13(5) of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the policies of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41. The inclusion “major recreational uses” as allowable uses not only complies with the stated intent of the ORMCP and ROPA 41 but also recognizes that significant recreational uses including golf courses and major parkland facilities exist within the Countryside Areas. Given that the Town’s defined urban areas present limited possibilities for the establishment of new recreational facilities, the inclusion of “major recreational uses” in OPA 218 provides an opportunity for the future as the Town’s population grows and need for actively used parkland facilities are warranted.

At the July 9, 2007 Council Meeting, various modifications to By-law 128-04 – the implementing zoning by-law for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan were considered and adopted. The modifications to By-law 128-04 included development provisions that allows for “major recreational uses” within those lands zoned “Oak Ridges Moraine Countryside (ORMCO) Zone.” Permitting “major recreational uses” in the Zoning By-law recognizes existing facilities such a Bloomington Downs Golf Course and Phyllis Rawlinson Park. The proposed modification to OPA 218 is in conformity with Council’s intent to allow “major recreational uses” within the Countryside Area. It is anticipated that the Ministers approval of By-law 128-04 will be in compliance wit OPA 244.



Staff recommends that Section 2.2.1.10.20.2 of Official Plan Amendment No. 218 be amended to add as a permitted use “major recreational uses as described in Section 38 of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.” Attached as Appendix ‘A’ is a copy of proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 244 which would modify OPA 218 to include “major recreational uses” as permitted uses within the Countryside Area designation.

CONFORMITY WITH THE OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ PROTECTION ACT AND THE OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ CONSERVATION PLAN:

The addition of “major recreational uses” within Section 2.2.1.10.20.2 of OPA 218 is in conformity with Section 13(3) and 13(5) of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation does not have any financial or other implications.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

There are no direct implications with respect to the Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSIONS:

The policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and those of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 41 recognize that “major recreational uses” are appropriate land uses within the designated Countryside Area. The proposed amendment to OPA 218 recognizes the existing situation and the future potential need for major recreational facilities within the Town of Richmond Hill. It is therefore recommended that proposed OPA 244, attached as Appendix ‘A’ be adopted by Town Council and forwarded to the Region of York for approval.