

November 7, 2023

Mayor David West and Council  
City of Richmond Hill  
(by email)

**Subject: OPA 18.5 pertaining to the Yonge Carrville/16th KDA**

Dear Mayor West and council:

As a retired professional transportation planner, I continue to have serious concerns with Council's unanimous decision to approve Official Plan Amendment 41, related to dramatic increases in development densities in the Richmond Hill Centre Draft Secondary Plan, and the current plans to also approve OPA 18.5 pertaining to the Yonge Carrville/16<sup>th</sup> KDA.

My reading of the latest staff report (SRPBS.23.027) and discussions with staff suggest that the planned increases in residential density were driven by the Province's demands that Richmond Hill accommodate a set number of new residents (in total). The attitude of both staff and our council appears to be that they cannot question the specific direction they have been given by the Ford government as they are mere "creatures of the Province". They assume that **they had no choice** in the case of OP Amendment 41 and the same questionable logic appears to apply to OPA 18.5.

In responding to these directives, staff appear to have allocated the demanded increases in population across the City to those areas that they judge to be most likely to be able to accommodate growth. In doing so staff and council have all but ignored the transportation facts that we have presented and given the developers the increases in densities (and land values) that they desire. Developer wants outweigh resident's concerns.

My concern is that staff and council are failing to address the many planning issues associated with the arbitrary density increases being imposed by the Ford Government, apparently, it has been suggested, to benefit their friends and supporters. This applies to both Amendment 41, which I attempted to address before council on May 3, 2023, and the current proposals for the Yonge 16<sup>th</sup>/Carrville KDA.

While I appreciate staff's attempt to address the public's concerns about the traffic implications of the proposed increases in density in the Yonge/16<sup>th</sup> KDA, on page 13 of the staff report (SRPBS.23.027) they continue to argue, hopefully, that **we will see "an increasing shift toward alternative modes of transportation, such as transit and active transportation"**.

While I fully support efforts "to encourage these modes to accommodate higher volumes of traffic" the evidence provided by 30 years of Transportation Tomorrow Survey data

and modelling work, that I have shared with staff, is clear. **The potential for future modal shifts to transit is very limited, especially given the substantial changes in office occupancy and peak transit ridership that have been observed across North America in the wake of Covid.**

In the face of the transportation facts provided and common sense, it is clear that doubling residential densities to the point where we are planning for 55 story towers in the Yonge/16<sup>th</sup> KDA and 80 story residential towers in the Richmond Hill Regional Centre is both extreme and not consistent with the tradition definition of “good planning” which recognizes that there are some limits to the densities that can be supported in non-downtown locations considering transportation and other social and physical services.

Unfortunately, the Ford government has changed the Planning Act and Provincial policy in recent years to define “good planning” as anything that they decree to be in “the Provincial interest”.

I don't accept the position that council has no options in this regard. As it stands the approval of the proposed policies will provide certain land owners with substantial increases in their land values while creating serious land use planning and transportation issues in the future. This should be a concern for Richmond Hill residents, current business owners and our council. Isn't it time for council to prioritize the concerns that residents and business owners have about over-development rather than the interests of the development industry?

I hope that council will question planning and legal staff as to your options in regard to the changing events related to Provincial planning policies and directives rather than continuing to rubber stamp staff recommendations that reflect the idea that Richmond Hill has no choice in these situations.

Yours truly

David Crowley.  
48 Greenbelt Cres.  
Richmond Hill, Ontario  
L4C 5R8.