



Remarks by Stephen Dupuis

President & CEO  
Building Industry & Land Development Association (BILD)

Markham Growth Management Strategy  
Public Information Meeting

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Good evening Mr. Chair, Mayor Scarpitti, Members of Council, Senior Staff.

My name is Stephen Dupuis and I am here in my capacity as President and CEO of the Building Industry & Land Development Association (BILD) representing more than 1,300 member companies operating throughout the Greater GTA.

I am also a proud York Region resident of more than 22 years.

I want to make it clear that I am not here representing any one builder or group of builders. BILD does not act in the interest of individual members but gets involved in precedent-setting issues of concern to all builders, and the issue at hand this evening is definitely one of those.

As members of Council would know from our correspondence last week, BILD concurs with the staff preferred growth option and I wish to take a moment this evening to explain our rationale.

Some in this room might recall the expression "let's make a deal planning." That's a term that goes back to the days when there was very little provincial planning direction and no over-arching regional planning framework. Those were the days of unmitigated urban sprawl.

As we all know, since at least 2003, there has been a steady stream of legislation and regulation designed to eliminate all the fragmentation in the planning process in order to curb sprawl, protect our natural heritage and preserve prime agricultural land.

Throughout all of this, all the land development and building industry has sought is certainty. Tell us where we can and can't build, and we'll get on with the job of housing families.

And so, we embraced the 1.8 million acre greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine as places we could not build.

At the same time we looked forward to the Growth Plan to tell us where we could build.

It turns out that a lot of the Growth Plan is actually focused on where we can't build, with all the natural heritage area extractions and other protections.

Once you get past all the restrictions, you get into the prescriptions about what can be built and the Growth Plan requirement of 40 per cent intensification within the built boundary and 50 persons per hectare beyond the built boundary.

When you step back and look at all the legislation and regulation governing development, you see a comprehensive, well-conceived, top-down, sustainable development framework.

That said, the Growth Plan only works if every municipality accepts its fair share of growth instead of trying to redirect it or pursue approaches that are designed for failure, which brings me to Option 3 – the no urban boundary expansion option.

BILD does not believe that Markham can reasonably expect to accommodate 150,000 new residents plus all future residential, commercial and industrial growth entirely within the existing urban envelope.

Markham is not an island within the GTA. If it doesn't accept its fair share of growth, why should the next municipality? And if every municipality can undermine the Growth Plan, we're right back to where we started before the various planning reforms.

The 100 per cent intensification option is the equivalent of saying no to growth and it is no more realistic a solution than a 100 per cent low-rise option.

Every municipality needs a continuum of housing supply. In fact, one of the aims of the Growth Plan is to provide housing options to meet the needs of people at any age.

A percentage of homebuyers, particularly families, will always aspire to the low-rise lifestyle, an option which should be available in every community.

If people wanted to live in a condo, they would purchase in the 416 area Code where 75-80 per cent of the condos sold by builders year in, year out, are purchased.

That's not to say the market should be ruled by freedom of choice, and that's why the Growth Plan is moving all municipalities towards 40 per cent intensification.

We fully expect to see a healthy shift towards more high-density development in the 905 area code in the coming years, but if Markham ramps up to 100 per cent intensification right out of the gate, you'll never get to where you're trying to go due to the push-back you will get from existing residents.

As Metrolinx Chair Rob MacIsaac once said, the only thing people dislike more than sprawl is intensification.

BILD encourages Council to adopt a balanced approach to growth that continues to provide a variety of housing and employment choices.

Specifically, BILD encourages Markham Council to respect the advice of its professional staff and adopt Option 1.

Thank you.