



GOOD JOBS MATTER

PROTECTING EMPLOYMENT LANDS IN GREATER TORONTO

In the last quarter century, the labour movement has worked to defend good blue-collar jobs and protect employment land needed for those jobs. The city's nickname of Hogtown may have come from a meat-packing industry that has diminished in size, but the GTA still has the second largest food + beverage industry cluster in North America, including meat-packing and processing.

In the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area there are still more than 350,000 jobs in manufacturing, ranging from auto assembly to aerospace and chemicals and printing. As well, major facilities such as film studios, postal sorting plants and logistics warehouses provide more good blue-collar jobs.

However there is increasing pressure for re-zoning of Employment Land, due to the speculative rewards from having it turned into big box retail or residential high-rises. Recent experience saw over 100 applications to convert industrial land in Toronto, most of which were rejected by the City officials.

The updated Growth Plan should be governed by clear principles:

- The need to be sure that we protect and nurture good blue collar jobs for the economic health of the region, and for the next generation to have an opportunity to earn a good living.
- Recognition of the factors which put pressure on industrial operations to relocate, including adjacent residential development, traffic patterns (particularly from retail traffic), and restrictions on operating times.
- The need to curb the speculative pressures on land values from rezoning.
- The advantage of a cluster strategy for industries that complement each other.
- The need to protect the Greenbelt and farmland, and curb the urban sprawl which is at the root of massive traffic congestion in greater Toronto.
- Recognition that the long-term goal of net-zero communities is a critical part of the fight against climate change.

On the latter point, the urgency of climate change cannot be denied – that dynamic is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, primarily carbon. The term “environmental sustainability” is too nebulous. Extreme weather events and global warming are not caused by ancillary environmental problems – the goal of the province should be net-zero communities.

We do not agree with the concept of allowing conversions between Municipal Comprehensive Reviews. Even with the proposed caveat, this opens the door for relentless attempts to undermine the integrity of employment lands by introducing mixed use areas which will result in the kind of pressures detailed above. Lobbyists for powerful developers will be very active attempting to erode the protection that

currently exists, and finding loopholes in whatever zoning exists in order to proceed with their plans. There needs to be an equally effective force providing even better protection for these lands and the jobs that are located on them.

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