

From: [Susan McMurray](#)
To: [Planning and Housing](#)
Cc: [Councillor Fletcher](#); [Councillor Myers](#); [Councillor Malik](#); [Councillor Morley](#); [Councillor Bravo](#); [Councillor Perks](#)
Subject: [External Sender] Submission to PH5.3 Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review - Final Report
Date: July 4, 2023 4:00:12 PM

I am emailing on behalf of Labour Council President Andria Babbington,
Susan

Dear members of Toronto's Planning and Housing Committee,

At the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, we represent 150 unions and locals in this region with more than 220,000 working people across all sectors of the economy.

You will be considering a set of 70 Employment Area conversion requests at your meeting tomorrow (Item PH5.3).

While only 13% of Toronto's land area, Employment Lands house 25% of Toronto's jobs. Many of these are good, unionized jobs that are essential to the economic success of our city. In general, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council opposes conversion of employment areas. When we lose employment areas they are gone forever. This means moving or eliminating what are often considered to be good industrial and other jobs. It also means there is no employment land available as other employers and jobs want to move in, whether it be to support construction, green jobs, film, or other sectors. And the conversion of one employment area, especially to residential, can result in the elimination of others.

Conversion of employment areas to mixed use or regeneration often happens because there is speculation on these lands and/or there is a sense that something positive can happen at a location without an understanding of the negative consequences.

Toronto clearly needs housing, community benefits, community services, schools, etc., but there is land available for housing and services without converting employment areas. And if housing is built, but there are not the appropriate services nearby or built into the plan, there is pressure on the city and partners to find ways to provide these services even if the land and planning are not yet available. In addition, when we start down the slippery slope, one conversion or partial conversion can propel other conversions because with housing, residents complain about the dirty, noisy, or intensive transportation conditions generated by nearby employers.

The letter to you of June 27, 2023 by Steam Whistle Brewery is a good example of why conversions are generally a bad idea. Even though their location is not among those directly affected by conversion, the letter points out the growing pressure on industry when residential is nearby, as they have seen the pressure on businesses like theirs to relocate. It also lines up well with the evidence used by City staff against most of the conversion requests: the relatively close proximity of many of their employees to the workplace. If this business has to move elsewhere, their employees will need to decide whether to take longer commutes, or quit their jobs and find something close by,

likely with a pay cut. Neither option is a good one. We are currently striving to reduce people's commute times, both for mental health reasons and to reduce the impact on our environment.

We know that staff have recommended against most of the 70 requested considerations. We appreciate their careful analysis in laying out reasons why conversion should be avoided for the vast majority.

At 555 Rexdale Boulevard, where the recommendation is to proceed with some conversion and retain some employment areas, there are surrounding industries in the construction sector that would likely be negatively affected by the conversion. Good jobs would be at risk.

We also understand that some Councillors may bring motions to open up the conversion requests that staff have recommended against.

Let us return to the issue of housing. Mayor-elect Olivia Chow has vowed to address the housing crisis in our City. It seems premature to make decisions at this time that directly affect housing, when the mayor will be presiding over city decision-making in just over a week.

We urge the Committee to vote against conversion requests. At minimum, we urge the Committee to take staff advice where staff recommended against conversion.

Yours truly,

Andria Babbington
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