



Aaron I. Platt

Direct Line: 289-904-2370

Email: aplatt@LN.Law

*Aaron Platt Professional Corporation

BY EMAIL (phc@toronto.ca)

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Chair Perks and Members of Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West, 10th Floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Attn: Councillor Perks

Dear Sirs and Mesdames:

**RE: PH21.1 – City of Toronto Official Plan Amendment 804
Tonlu Holdings Limited & 1000009801 Ontario Ltd.
340-364 Evans Ave. & 12-16 Arnold Street, Etobicoke
Our File: 37001-0001**

On behalf of our clients, Tonlu Holdings Limited and 1000009801 Ontario Ltd. (collectively, the “**Owners**”) we are writing to express their issues with the proposed Draft Amendment to the City of Toronto Official Plan (hereinafter “OPA 804”) as it affects their landholdings located at 340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street in Etobicoke (collectively, the “**Subject Lands**”).

The Subject Lands contain a mix of retail, service commercial and office uses and therefore this initiative may severely impact the Subject Lands. As members of the Planning and Housing Committee may recall, the Subject Lands were subject to an Employment Conversion request to allow mixed use development which was rejected by Council in October 2023. The Subject Lands are also currently proposed to be redesignated through an Official Plan Amendment Application filed by the Owners and currently in relatively early stages of review.

Background

Through Bill 97, the Province introduced new legislative changes to the definition of “Area of Employment” in the *Planning Act*. Specifically, “area of employment” now means:

“...an area of land designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic uses, those being uses that meet the following criteria:

- 1. The uses consist of business and economic uses, other than uses referred to in paragraph 2, including any of the following:*



- i. *Manufacturing uses.*
- ii. *Uses related to research and development in connection with manufacturing anything.*
- iii. *Warehousing uses, including uses related to the movement of goods.*
- iv. *Retail uses and office uses that are associated with uses mentioned in subparagraphs i to iii.*
- v. *Facilities that are ancillary to the uses mentioned in subparagraphs i to iv.*
- vi. *Any other prescribed business and economic uses.*

2. *The uses are not any of the following uses:*

- i. *Institutional uses.*
- ii. *Commercial uses, including retail and office uses not referred to in subparagraph 1 iv.”*

Municipalities, including Toronto, are required to amend their respective Official Plans to implement this change in definition.

It is our understanding, and our clients' position, that the Legislature's intent in changing a statutory definition was to more effectively identify those areas to be identified as "areas of employment".

Essentially, "areas of employment" are to be areas where the prescribed uses (in paragraph 1, above) exist but where the following uses are non-existent: (i) institutional uses, and (ii) commercial uses not associated with manufacturing uses, uses related to research and development in connection with manufacturing and/or warehousing uses.

The intent was not to revoke existing use permissions – especially when already in place and established.

This distinction is critical. Respectfully, proposed OPA 804 appears to misinterpret the Legislature's intent, leading and establishing unnecessary restrictions on these uses. The result will be sites where the existing use no longer conforms to the Official Plan but whose zoning is either legal non-conforming – or **remains entirely legal**.

The clear intent is to protect traditional industrial uses in industrial/employment areas due to compatibility concerns while allowing for greater flexibility where existing offices, retail and institutional uses *already* inhibit industrial (or non-sensitive land uses) operations (or their establishment).

Of course, the intentional by-product of this distinction is that these other areas incorporate greater flexibility to allow for other sensitive uses (including both residential and institutional) *that do not generate compatibility issues*.



OPA 804

As discussed in the Staff Report filed for this agenda item (the “**Staff Report**”), OPA 804 proposes various amendments to Official Plan Employment Areas policies in Chapter 2, 3 and 4 of the City of Toronto Official Plan. Specifically, these changes limit office and retail uses within Employment Areas to *only* those which are ancillary to industrial, warehousing and other Core Employment Area uses.

The City previously attempted to implement Bill 97 and the issued but not yet in-force *Provincial Planning Statement* through OPAs 668 and 680 the latter being Official Plan Amendments where the City had jurisdiction as the approval authority. The Owners, along with many other landowners, raised concerns with those OPAs and now raise the same concerns with OPA 804.

It is our understanding that the Minister had issues with OPAs 668 and 680. Consequently, the Minister took the extraordinary step of promulgating a regulation to remove the City as approval authority for those OPAs.

However, it appears the Staff Report has elected to ignore that reality and double-down on the previous approach that *clearly* did not find favour with the Minister or Province.

Issues with OPA 804

The Owners do not believe that the changes proposed by OPA 804 are appropriate nor what the Province intended as noted above for the following reasons:

1. Doing so could lead to a detrimental impact on its properties and the ongoing operations and services its tenants provide within Employment Areas.
2. OPA 804 effectively removes the distinction between the “Core Employment Areas” and “General Employment Areas” designations, rendering the latter meaningless and ignoring the evolution of those respective areas within the City.
3. Again, the intent of Bill 97 and the *Provincial Policy Statement* and the *Provincial Planning Statement* (the “**PPS 2024**”) is clear that **areas to be subject to employment conversion policies are limited to areas with traditional manufacturing, warehousing or related uses**. At the same time, mixed use development is to be encouraged outside of these specific and limited areas to maximize the land available to create housing opportunities.

Where institutional and/or commercial uses are permitted / existing, those areas are no longer to be considered an “area of employment”, as is the case for the Owners’ lands.

4. City staff have only indicated that various business parks should be removed from Employment Areas. However, this leaves numerous properties with retail and office uses as Employment Areas despite the direction of Bill 97 and the *PPS 2024*.

This is only a token gesture and will have a detrimental and undermining impact on such



Employment Area initiatives that have been successfully implemented using broad employment uses (including retail and offices).

5. By rendering sites as “legally non-conforming” through this initiative with often entirely legal zoning in place. The Staff Report is woefully silent on the need to amend zoning by-laws (including what is likely many site-specific and prevailing zoning by-law amendments) to conform to new Official Plan policies.

As a result, the City will be creating immense prejudice for landowners and operators who will now be left in difficult positions regarding any financing in place or proposed. Further investment in such properties will be undermined by this unwanted “non-conforming” status which leaves sites in zoning “limbo” thereby undermining key economic development policies and initiatives of the City.

The above comments are *not* theoretical.

They are a real and substantial issue for the Subject Lands that largely consists of retail, service commercial and office uses.

The current approach taken by the Staff Report fails to fully consider the implications for landowners, retail and building industries, the public and other stakeholders. A decision of this scale requires a more inclusive dialogue, ensuring that impacted parties could provide input and that the City fully understands the impact of such changes.

Furthermore, given the Province’s response to OPAs 668 and 680, we find it peculiar that Staff Report would advance an initiative without detailing a successful consultation with the Minister and the Province.

Frankly, it is perplexing that staff’s very first step in the process of addressing the aforementioned conformity exercise was not getting clear direction from the Province rather than largely advancing the same, unapproved and obviously problematic analysis and position.

We therefore request the Planning and Housing Committee defer this matter for future review and consultation.

Should the City proceed with OPA 804, we would request it be modified to clearly state that uses which existed prior to OPA 804 being approved are, and will remain, in conformity with the Official Plan such that our clients’ existing and future operations are not extinguished or otherwise hampered or prejudiced.



We hereby request to receive notifications regarding any meetings, report and/or decisions to or made by City Staff, the City Council or any Committee of Council pertaining to this matter.

Yours truly,

LOOPSTRA NIXON LLP

Per: Aaron I. Platt
AIP

CC: Client
David McKay, *MHBC*