



Corporate Services Department
Planning and Economic Development

Memorandum

To: Committee of the Whole

From: Valerie Shuttleworth, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner

Date: May 12, 2016

Re: **Release of Draft Provincial Policy Amendments**

This memorandum responds to an announcement by the Province of Ontario on May 10th 2016 regarding draft amendments to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan), the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise Council on key draft amendments which have implications on the current Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and propose immediate next steps.

Regional Council endorsed 38 recommendations as input into the coordinated Provincial Plans review

On May 28th 2015, Regional Council endorsed 37 recommendations as the Region's formal response to the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) posting entitled "Coordinated Review of the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan". Regional Council, on September 24, 2015, included one additional recommendation on the Provincial Plans.

Draft amendments to Provincial Plans have implications on the current Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review

Amendments to the four Provincial Plans respond to all 87 recommendations of the provincially appointed panel, as articulated in their report of December 2015. A summary of the Province's intentions are set out in the May 16, 2016 document entitled "Shaping Land Use in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: A guide to Proposed Changes to the Growth Pan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan". Staff will undertake a comprehensive review of all the proposed amendments and report back to Council with recommended comments, prior to the provincial September 30, 2016 commenting deadline.

The amendments propose changes to the four plans across seven theme areas. A number of the recommendations align with the approach York Region takes in integrating growth management with infrastructure planning. Key proposed changes, that affect current Regional practice, are outlined below around the stated theme areas:

Building Complete Communities

- Require municipalities to identify and protect prime employment areas
- Increase intensification target from 40% to 60% of all new residential growth annually to be directed to the existing built-up area
- Increase the Designated Greenfield Area density target from a minimum of 50 to a minimum of 80 residents and jobs per hectare excluding certain non-developable lands (natural heritage features, rights of way for certain infrastructure and prime employment areas)
- Setting minimum density targets around major transit stations
- When identifying settlement areas, consider integrated planning for infrastructure and public service facilities that considers the full life cycle costs of assets and identifies options to pay for these costs over the long-term

Supporting Agriculture

- Provincial mapping of prime agricultural systems across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) to be identified in Official Plans
- Clarify uses permitted in prime agricultural areas to align with the Provincial Policy Statement

Protecting Natural Heritage and Water

- Provincial mapping of a natural heritage system across the GGH to be identified in Official Plans
- Apply Greenbelt natural heritage and water protection policies across the GGH
- Require watershed planning across the GGH

Growing the Greenbelt

- Include major river valleys and large coastal wetlands in the Greenbelt
- Do not require municipal support to add lands to the Greenbelt

Addressing Climate Change

- Require climate change policies in Official Plans consistent with province's Climate Change Strategy and greenhouse gas reduction targets
- Municipalities be required to undertake comprehensive stormwater management planning and examine infrastructure for weaknesses associated with climate change

Integrating Infrastructure

- Require municipalities to take an integrated approach to land use and infrastructure planning

Improving Plan Implementation

- Standard methodology for land needs assessment
- Align provincial initiatives which complement the land use planning framework
- Clarify methodology on how municipalities allocate forecasted growth to ensure intensification, and support transit and the development of complete communities

Staff will undertake a comprehensive and detailed review of the proposed amendments and report to Council prior to the provincial September 30, 2016 commenting deadline

Proposed amendments to the plans are extensive. The above highlights only those that are more directly relevant to the current MCR work and Official Plan Update. While staff has not yet undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the amendments relative to the 38 recommendations provided by York Region Council in May and September 2015, staff confirm that proposed amendments have implications on the work currently being undertaken through the Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Draft amendments to the Growth Plan propose to increase the minimum intensification target (from 40% to 60%) and the Designated Greenfield Area minimum density target (from 50 to 80 residents and jobs per hectare)

The draft amendments to the Growth Plan propose to increase the minimum amount of residential development to occur annually within the Built-up Area (the intensification target). Currently, the minimum annual intensification target for an upper- or single-tier municipality is 40%, the amendment proposes increasing this minimum to 60%.

While the Growth Plan currently requires that the Designated Greenfield Area be planned to achieve a minimum of 50 residents and jobs combined per developable hectare, the draft amendments propose to increase the density target to a minimum of 80 residents and jobs per hectare, excluding certain non-developable natural heritage features, rights of way for certain infrastructure, and "prime employment areas".

Planning for greater levels of intensification and density has impacts on the MCR land budget and growth scenario work

In response to Council direction of February 2016, staff are currently updating and refining the forecast and land budget work to reflect a minimum intensification level of 40%. The draft Growth Plan amendments are proposing to require even greater levels of intensification than recommended by Regional staff in November 2015 in the preferred growth scenario (45%). If proposed amendments to the Growth Plan are approved by the legislature, less land will be required for urban expansion. This has implications on the land budget currently being developed by staff.

As well, it appears that the proposed modification to the Designated Greenfield Area minimum density requirement would require densities in excess of those currently being modelled in the growth management forecast under development by staff.

The Province is proposing, through direction in the Growth Plan, to establish a standard methodology for assessing land needs

Although the details are not known at this time, the Province is proposing to establish a standard methodology to be used by all municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe for assessing future urban expansion land needs. Staff will need to have a better understanding of the provincial methodology to advance growth management forecasting and land budget work.

The update to the York Region Official Plan 2010 to address growth to 2041 will be required to conform with pending Growth Plan updates

The Province is targeting the end of 2016 to have updates to all four Provincial Plans in force. The proposed transition provisions of the draft Growth Plan amendments indicate that approval of a growth related Official Plan Amendment will be required to conform with the Growth Plan in effect at the time of approval. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for York Region's Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) to address growth to 2041. The current updated Municipal Comprehensive Review work plan, as presented to Council in February 2016, targets a draft ROPA being presented to Regional Council for adoption in the spring 2017, following which the ROPA will be forwarded to the Province for approval. Note that the current conformity deadline of June 2018 remains, however, the Province has verbally indicated it may be revised.

Staff will report to Council in June with more detail on the draft provincial plan amendments, propose an approach to respond to the EBR posting and present impacts on the MCR schedule

The current Municipal Comprehensive Review work plan has staff reporting to Council in June with a 40% intensification growth scenario forecast and land budget and presenting a draft ROPA to Council before the end of 2016. Staff had also anticipated bringing a report to Council in June responding the Councils direction of November 2015 regarding:

- Planning for density: 50 vs. 70 residents and jobs per hectare,
- Accelerating servicing of north Vaughan, and
- The merits of including the remaining non-greenbelt lands in northwest Vaughan as urban employment land

Given the impact of the proposed amendments to the Growth Plan on the current MCR process, staff will report back to Council in June with a proposed process to respond to the draft amendments and additional direction regarding timing of planning for growth to 2041 and the associated Official Plan Update.

A further report is anticipated in September to respond to the province's EBR posting with proposed amendments.

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