




MEMORANDUM

To: Chair and Members of Development Services Committee

From: Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services 

Prepared By: Marg Wouters, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Policy and Research

Date: May 24, 2016

Re: **Proposed Amendments to Provincial Plans**

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the memorandum entitled “Proposed Amendments to Provincial Plans” dated May 24, 2016 be received.

PURPOSE:

This report provides a brief overview of the proposed amendments to four Provincial Plans released by the Province on May 10, 2016. A staff report providing detailed comments on the proposed amendments will be brought forward in the fall.

This report also outlines the implications for the timing of the Regional municipal comprehensive review (MCR) work currently underway to accommodate population and employment growth to 2041.

BACKGROUND:

In February 2015 the Province released the Discussion Document “Our Region, Our Community, Our Home” and initiated the Coordinated Review of four Provincial Plans, namely the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan), the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Each of these Plans are required to undergo a review every 10 years, and the Province has opted to review all four provincial plans together. The Niagara Escarpment Plan does not apply to Markham.

Public consultation for this Coordinated Review was anticipated in two phases: at the release of the Discussion Document, and at the release of proposed amendments to the Plans. Markham provided comments on the Discussion Document in May 2015. The deadline for commenting on the proposed amendments released on May 10, 2016 is September 30, 2016. Staff are currently reviewing the proposed amendments and will be reporting to DSC with recommended comments in September 2016.

Following public consultation on the Discussion Document, a report was prepared by the Advisory Panel for the Coordinated Review (Crombie Panel), outlining 87 recommendations for

strengthening the four Plans. Staff reported on the Advisory Panel recommendations in a March 7, 2016 report to DSC. The proposed amendments released this week are based on the Advisory Panel recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

Overview of proposed amendments to the Provincial Plans

The following are the proposed changes to the Provincial Plans as taken from ‘Shaping Land Use in the Greater Golden Horseshoe’, a guide which accompanied the four proposed new Plans. Links to this guidance document and the individual proposed Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan are provided in Appendix ‘A’ to this memorandum. The guidance document organized the proposed amendments under the following categories.

Bulding Complete Communities

The proposed changes would:

- Provide more guidance on achieving complete communities and require municipalities to plan for sustainable and livable communities.
- Increase the intensification target in the Growth Plan to a minimum of 60 per cent of all new residential development occurring annually in the existing built-up area.
- Increase the designated greenfield area density target in the Growth Plan to a minimum of 80 residents and jobs per hectare (excluding certain non-developable natural heritage features, such as wetlands and woodlands, rights of way for certain infrastructure, and “prime employment areas”).
- Require municipalities to plan for density targets around major transit stations which support that type of transit.
- Show priority transit corridors in the Growth Plan where municipalities would focus transit-related planning, zoning and development efforts. New policies would also provide the province with the authority to identify additional priority transit corridors.
- Support the development of community hubs by encouraging public services to be located together in existing facilities near strategic growth areas, accessible by active transportation and transit.
- Establish stronger environmental, agricultural and planning criteria in the Growth Plan for settlement area boundary expansions.
- Require municipalities to identify and protect prime employment areas. Prime employment areas, as defined in the Growth Plan, typically accommodate uses such as warehousing, logistics, and manufacturing that require a lot of land and access to transportation infrastructure, such as highways and railway lines. Certain employment uses, such as stand-alone office buildings, would be permitted in employment areas that are not identified as “prime”. New policies would serve to improve transit connections for employment areas.
- Require the province, through direction in the Growth Plan, to establish a standard methodology used by all municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe for assessing land needs.
- Provide new policies in the Growth Plan to help municipalities in the outer ring (outside the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) manage any lands that are designated but not required for growth to 2041, and provide specific tests and flexibility for appropriate growth in these municipalities.

- Strengthen policies regarding the preservation of cultural heritage to align with those in the Provincial Policy Statement.

Supporting Agriculture

The proposed changes would:

- Require that the province, in collaboration with municipalities, identify an agriculture system for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe that builds on the Greenbelt. Municipalities would be required to plan to protect the agricultural system's long-term viability.
- Clarify the types of uses permitted in prime agricultural areas (e.g., on-farm diversified uses such as home industries and agri-tourism) to align with the Provincial Policy Statement.
- Clarify how setbacks from natural features (e.g., streams) would apply to new or expanded buildings for agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses on agricultural land.

Protecting Natural Heritage and Water

The proposed changes would:

- Require the province to identify a natural heritage system across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- Apply natural heritage and water protection policies consistent with the Greenbelt Plan outside settlement areas across the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- Direct municipalities to avoid settlement area expansion into natural heritage systems with important water features, where possible.
- Require that natural heritage systems are protected if and when they are incorporated into an expanded settlement area.
- Require watershed planning across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- Encourage municipalities to develop soil re-use strategies and sustainably manage excess soil through planning approvals.
- Update land use designation mapping in the Niagara Escarpment Plan to reflect the most current and accurate information.

Growing the Greenbelt

The proposed changes would:

- Grow the Greenbelt to include major river valleys and large coastal wetlands. "Urban River Valley" policies in the Greenbelt Plan would apply only to publicly owned lands in these areas (existing land use permissions on privately owned lands in "Urban River Valley" areas would not change).
- Not require municipal support to add lands to the Greenbelt.
- Add four parcels of land identified by the City of Hamilton and Niagara Region to the Greenbelt Plan's "Protected Countryside" designation. Protected Countryside policies would apply to both public and private land in these four new areas.

Addressing Climate Change

The proposed changes would:

- Require upper- and single-tier municipalities to incorporate climate change policies in their official plans, consistent with the objectives of the province's Climate Change Strategy and greenhouse gas reduction targets.

- Encourage municipalities to develop greenhouse gas inventories, emission reduction strategies, and related targets and performance measures.
- Require municipalities to undertake more comprehensive stormwater management planning for their settlement areas and for major developments and to examine their infrastructure for weaknesses associated with climate change.
- Encourage the use of green infrastructure and require low-impact development techniques that include integrating green space in design strategies, landscaping with native plants, and using natural water systems to generate less runoff from developed land.
- Enhance policies to align with those in the Provincial Policy Statement regarding planning for resilient infrastructure.

Integrating Infrastructure

The proposed changes would:

- Direct planning authorities to take an integrated approach to land use and infrastructure planning.
- Include mapping of planned, conceptual, and existing transportation corridors, as well as major ports and intermodal hubs.
- Include mapping of the region's higher order transit network, including priority transit corridors.
- Clarify requirements in the Growth Plan to protect infrastructure corridors and support the movement of goods.
- Encourage the placement of linear infrastructure together in the same areas or corridors, where appropriate.

Improving Plan Implementation

The proposed changes would:

- Align with other provincial initiatives which complement the land use planning framework in the region (e.g., the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy and source water protection plans).
- Clarify in the Growth Plan how municipalities allocate and plan to accommodate their forecasted growth to ensure opportunities for intensification, support for transit and the development of complete communities are maximized.
- Require in the Growth Plan that only those upper- and single-tier municipalities in the outer ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe without urban growth centres would be eligible for alternative targets for intensification and greenfield density.
- Municipalities would have to revisit their existing targets. Revised policies would also require that any alternative target for a municipality be publicly requested by its council.
- Require upper- and single-tier municipalities to measure and report on implementation.
- Update and streamline the Niagara Escarpment Plan's policies and land use designations and align them with those found in the other plans and the Provincial Policy Statement.

NEXT STEPS:**Implications of Proposed Amendments on Regional MCR**

As outlined in a May 9, 2016 Markham staff report, Regional staff were anticipated to bring forward a Preferred Growth Scenario to Regional Council in June 2016 based on a Region-wide residential intensification target of 40% as directed by Regional Council. As a result of the Province's proposed amendment to increase the intensification target to 60% from 40%, Regional Staff will instead be reporting in June on the implications of the proposed higher intensification target on their MCR work, including a revised timeline for bringing forward a Preferred Scenario. Markham staff will continue to monitor the progress of the Regional MCR work and provide updates to Council as appropriate.

Commenting on Draft Policy Amendments

Staff will be reporting to DSC with detailed comments on the proposed amendments in September 2016. Staff will also continue to monitor the progress of the Regional MCR work and provide updates to Council as appropriate.

Appendix 'A': [Link to 'Shaping Land Use in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Proposed Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plans](#)

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