

# Memorandum

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2019

To: Members of Council

From: Bailey Loverock, Community Planner, Policy & Sustainability, Community Services

Subject: Proposed Amendments to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017

The purpose of this memo is to inform Council on some of the proposed Amendments to the Growth Plan released by the Province on January 15, 2019. The proposed legislation and regulations are posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #'s 013-4504, 013-4505, 013-4506 and 013-4507, respectively) requiring comments by February 28, 2019.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to allow municipalities greater flexibility to make changes to Official Plans to implement Growth Plan, 2017 policies. The policies aim to address barriers to building homes, creating jobs, attracting investments, and protecting the environment and agricultural land. The Minister is not considering making any changes to the policies in the other Provincial Plans, in connection with this proposal.

## **Background**

After the provincial election in 2018, the Province began looking at potential policy changes to planning legislation. In the fall, the Province held five consultation sessions with municipalities, the development industry, and other stakeholders to collect feedback regarding implementation challenges with the 2017 Growth Plan. Staff from the Region of Peel and Town of Caledon attended these sessions to provide feedback on local challenges with respect to the implementation of the 2017 Growth Plan. A common statement at these consultation sessions was for greater flexibility in local planning. The policy changes released build on the feedback provided to the Province at these sessions.

## **Proposed Changes**

Six key areas were addressed through the proposed amendments. Five of these topic areas were the focus of consultation sessions with the Province.

## **Employment Planning**

The proposal is to identify provincially significant employment zones that would receive enhanced protection for employment uses. These new provincially significant employment zones would see a higher level of protection against conversion compared with other employment areas. New policies would also allow upper-tier municipalities to designate employment areas at any time before the next municipal comprehensive review (MCR), including adding designations to local official plans.

## **Settlement Area Boundary Expansions**

With regards to settlement expansions, the amendment focuses on clarifying policy to focus on outcomes rather than specifying types of studies to justify the feasibility and location of settlement area boundary expansions. A new policy would allow municipalities to adjust settlement area boundaries outside the MCR process if there is no net increase in land within settlement areas, subject to certain criteria. Settlements within the Greenbelt area would not be considered. A policy would allow municipalities to undertake settlement area boundary expansions that are no larger than 40 hectares outside the municipal comprehensive review, subject to criteria. All lands that are added would be planned to achieve the minimum density target, could not be within the Greenbelt area, and would need to be fully accounted for in the land needs assessment for the next MCR.

## **Small Rural Settlements**

Rural Settlements are introduced, removing the previous definition of delineated build up areas. Rural settlements are long established communities that contain a limited amount of undeveloped lands that are designated for development. Rural settlements are not part of designated Greenfield area density calculations. Minor adjustments may be made to the boundaries of rural settlements outside of an MCR, provided they are not within the Greenbelt, in keeping with the rural character of the area, and subject to other criteria.

## **Agricultural and Natural Heritage Systems**

Proposed policies state that provincial mapping of the agricultural land base and the natural heritage system for the Growth Plan would not apply until it has been implemented in upper-tier official plans. During the period before provincial mapping is implemented in upper-tier official plans, the Growth Plan policies for protecting prime agricultural areas and natural heritage systems and features will apply to municipal mapping. Once provincial mapping is implemented in Official Plans, any additional refinements would only be able to occur through an MCR.

## **Intensification and Density Targets**

The proposal aims to simplify the growth targets that municipalities are to conform to. The Region of Peel would have a minimum intensification target of 60 per cent. Previous targets were 50 per cent intensification to 2031, and 60 per cent to 2041.

The minimum density target for designated greenfield areas within the upper tier municipality is planned to be minimum 60 residents and jobs per hectare, a reduction from the previous plan, which saw the target increasing to 80 residents and jobs per hectare.

## **Major Transit Station Areas (MTSA)**

MTSA policies would allow for a more streamlined approach that allows MTSA boundaries to be established sooner, ahead of an MCR.

## **Potential Town of Caledon Implications**

Town Policy Staff are still reviewing the implications of the proposed policy changes and will be preparing formal comments to the Province by February 28, 2019.

In the interim, the proposed changes intend to grant more flexibility to municipalities, affording options that can be utilized if desired. If approved, the Town would have the option to consider settlement boundary expansions no larger than 40 hectares outside of a MCR, or could continue to implement all expansion needs through the MCR process.

The Prime Agricultural Land mapping has significant implications for lands in Caledon. The mapping came into effect immediately upon release in February 2018. The proposed transition policies would allow for the mapping to be refined and come into effect after it is included in the Region of Peel Official Plan.

Revisions to intensification targets and Greenfield density will have an impact on growth and density in Caledon and will need to be reviewed through the Region of Peel Land Budget review. The full impact of these changes is currently being analyzed.

The proposed changes would allow for greater flexibility in conforming to the 2017 Growth Plan. Under previous policy, conformity was to be completed under one Municipal Comprehensive Review. Staff communicated to the Province that a staged implementation would allow important planning projects to move forward as they are completed, preventing significant delays.

## **Next Steps**

Town Staff will continue to consult with Regional Staff to coordinate comments on the draft policy and regulations ahead of the February 28, 2019 deadline. Staff will also look for an opportunity to meet with Provincial Staff to discuss the proposal in more detail prior to final comments being prepared.