

**FUTURE CALEDON DRAFT OFFICIAL PLAN – REQUEST OF DEFERRAL OF PORTIONS OF PLAN APPLICABLE IN RURAL SYSTEM AS SHOWN ON SCHEDULE E-1**

**SUBMISSION TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MARCH 19, 2024**

**BY JANE THOMPSON ARCWG MEMBER**

1. PUBLIC PROCESS: The public process began around 2019 with considerable public outreach including a survey and numerous public open houses to have input to policy development. The feedback from that process documented by WSP in October 2021 included the following Key Theme:
  - The Environment
    - Restore reputation as Greenest Town In Ontario
    - Preservation and enhancement of the Natural Heritage System is paramount
2. VISIONS AND POLICY DIRECTIONS: In February 2022 a Policy Directions Report was produced which confirmed the Vision and Policy Lens through which the OP was to be developed – *preserve and restore the natural heritage and water resources systems*. A draft official plan came out later that spring which maintained the elements of the 1978 Plan as amended and enhanced the policies protecting the natural heritage system.
3. FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE OF DIRECTION: By 2023, seemingly under mounting pressure for increased development in south Caledon, the focus shifted. In June 2023 a completely different draft OP emerged with a “development first” focus. The natural environment policies were curtailed to fit the practicalities of an urban growth agenda. Unfortunately, the new policy shift was not limited to the Urban System as it should have been. The same policies that were devised for the growth management lens are proposed to be applied to the Rural System, with additional less restrictive criteria borrowed from the Provincial Plans tacked on.
4. VISION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY ABANDONNED: The community vision and policy directions in relation to preserving the natural heritage system which have protected the 80% Rural area of Caledon for 25 years are proposed to

be abandoned. Instead a diminished set of components based on the ROP Core Greenlands now called Natural Features and Areas is proposed, with discretion to downgrade components of that designation without an amendment to the Plan. Linkages and corridors (now called Supporting Features and Areas) would be given optional protection on the basis of a case by case consideration. The notions of “avoid, minimize impact, mitigate impact or compensate” would be substituted for protection. As an overlay designation there would be no restriction on the uses permitted in the SFA designation beyond what the underlying designation provides. Where Provincial Plan criteria differ they would apply.

5. **VALLEY AND STREAM CORRIDORS ABANDONED:** The most significant victim of this new approach if adopted would be Valley and Stream Corridors. These are all included in the criteria for the EPA designation under the 1978 Plan, though many have not been mapped. Under existing policies if and when identified they are to be given full protection as if designated. Under the proposed Plan only valley and stream corridors that meet the criteria for Core Greenlands are included in a protective designation and they can be downgraded on a case by case basis.
6. **IMPORTANCE OF VALLEY AND STREAM CORRIDORS:** They contribute significantly to the natural features and areas that meet the criteria for protection under the current OP. They have a special significance in natural heritage planning because other natural features “follow the water”. They provide linkages and corridors and support woodlands, wetlands, habitat and fisheries. By protecting them the integrity of the system is better preserved. That is in addition to their inherent value as headwaters of the Credit River which contributes to the health of Lake Ontario, on which the majority of Ontario’s population depends for water.
7. **REGION OF PEEL WATER RESOURCES SYSTEM NOT PROTECTED:** In 2022 the Region of Peel Official Plan was approved including Schedule A-1. This map identifies the water resources features throughout the Region. Under current policies these features and their associated drainage areas are protected from development. Under the proposed Plan only a fraction of these features are protected by policy and even then not all have been

identified and mapped with their drainage areas. Unmapped features would not be treated as designated under the proposed Plan.

8. **MAPPING UPDATE NOT COMPLETE:** The ARCWG members have been seeking input from the CVC and the Region to confirm the identification of valley and stream corridors and their drainage areas. We have not been supported in these attempts. At present we are not satisfied that the updating of the Schedules in the ROP is complete or that they identify fully the drainage areas of valley and stream corridors. We have also asked for further input from CVC on the valley and stream corridors that are protected under the Current Town OP policies but have not received support for that request.
9. **WEAKENING OF STANDARDS:** In addition to this major shift in the natural environment policy framework the standards of protection of those features that are identified is significantly weaker. The tests are ambiguous, subjective and discretionary. They require expert evaluation on a case by case basis. In some instances they default to the criteria in the Provincial Plans that are minimum standards, well below Caledon's existing standards.
10. **CURRENT STANDARDS SPECIAL STATUS UNDER GREENBELT PLAN:**  
Caledon's current standards have Special Status under the Greenbelt Plan, having been established under the CCRS, a comprehensive resource policy study dating back to 2003. If these policies are repealed they cannot be regained under the current Provincial regime. As such Caledon currently has one of the best Natural Environment Policy frameworks in the Province. It is important to preserve it.
11. **PROPOSED ADOPTION- NEED TO DEFER RURAL POLICIES –** My request is that you separate the portion of the Plan that pertains to the Urban System and proceed with it separately from the remaining Rural System.
12. **LACK OF COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT -** This Plan is being presented to you as a finished product for adoption without offering you policy options to consider or an opportunity to discuss and have input to the policy development. Some of you may not have read it or if you did, like me you may not know what is intended by many of the

provisions. This is of particular concern in the Rural area where the preservation and protection lens has been lost.

13. STAFF/MACDONALD REPORT: You have a 13 p. staff report and a 10 p. Natural Environment appendix in support of a 450 p. Plan. The report was released Friday so you have had only 4 days to consider it. Most staff reports I have reviewed over the years include a summary and often attach the review comments from public agencies. They have not been included for you or me to consider in this report. It seems that the review and consideration of agency comments and internal reviews were done at the staff level.

*“It is noted that Regional and Conservation Authority staff have been thoroughly involved and have provided numerous comments on the new policies, with all of these comments considered by the Town. A rigorous internal review process was also undertaken to ensure that the policies in the draft new Official Plan are concise and meet the required policy tests.”*

MacDonald p.10

There is no record on the public website that any reports, discussion or debate occurred at Planning and Development Committee or at Council on the policies of this proposed Official Plan.

14. PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTATIONS: Although there have been many of these, no committee discussion or debate takes place at these meetings. It does not appear that any direction from Council was sought coming out of those presentations.
15. RURAL POLICY OPTIONS: What about the option to maintain the current standards and protect all the same components of the Natural Heritage system. What about including Valley and Stream Corridors in the NFA designation. What about removing the discretion to disregard the NFA designation based on proponent studies. What about higher protection for linkages and corridors. These are only a few of the options that could be considered.
16. WHY NEED RURAL POLICY LENS: The Urban System policies will be implemented by Secondary Plans. They provide a chance to establish land

uses and further studies will be required for development proposals. The Town can identify and protect important features on a case by case basis in that process.

17. RURAL SYSTEM –ZONING BASED IMPLEMENTATION- What would your zoning look like. Mr. MacDonald says all Planning Act applications will be screened for natural features.(p.7) Are all developments to be subject to site specific zoning amendments or site plan approval? If not how are natural features and areas considered under a zoning framework? Farmers and local businesses are not going to be happy about hiring consultants on every improvement they want to make. How do you define the limits of a feature and then determine whether it should be avoided, mitigated or compensated. When do you require an EIS. Who decides whether a SFA provides sufficient support to a protected feature that it should be protected. This is not normally part of a zoning regime.
18. NEW REGIME IN ONTARIO: This plan makes numerous references to involvement of CVC in the review of proposals. You no longer have CVC to review proposals to identify features and recommended protection measures. The Town will not have the expertise of the Region on matters such as the Greenlands System, water and waste water services, which you will need to consider on a case by case basis for Rural development proposals.
19. NEW TOWN RESPONSIBILITIES: The effect of the new regime is that responsibility for the protections implemented by the CVC and the Region now become the responsibility of the Town. Has the Town budgeted for and is it ready to hire experts in ground water, surface water, natural heritage etc.?
20. NEED TO INCORPORATE CVC DATA INTO PLAN: Right now there is a lot of data and expertise available from CVC to identify features for protection and to guide development away from such features. In Rural area would be a much more effective and efficient to update the protective designation of natural environment system components and restrict development in such locations.

21.ROLE OF AGGREGATE RESOURCES COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP- We are just beginning our review of relevant issues including the adequacy of environmental policies in relation to aggregate proposals. We are asking for the opportunity to provide you with policy options to consider. You retain the decisions making authority as to what policy regime you adopt. We believe there are options you should consider to not only maintain the current natural environment standards but to fill gaps and strengthen them in accordance with what the Community has envisioned.

#### CONCLUSION:

MACDONALD REPORT: This appears to be the only planning opinion you have received on the proposed Plan.

At p.3 it states: *"...an opportunity existed to further strengthen the natural environment policy framework in the Official Plan..."*

That opportunity was not taken by Meridian Planning or by staff. Here is the opinion stated by Mr. MacDonald:

*"It is my conclusion that the NES policies in the draft new Official Plan fully conform to the ROP, the Provincial Plans that apply, and are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement."*

Neither the content of the report nor the conclusions speak to maintaining or strengthening the framework of the existing Official Plan. They confirm that this Plan only meets the minimum standards set by the Province. I would dispute whether they meet the overall intent of the ROP, which is to promote protection of the entire Greenlands System on Schedule C-1 and the Water Resources System identified on Schedule A-1. I also question whether the Core Greenlands System is actually protected as required under the ROP.

The proposed Plan does not implement the Vision or the Policy Directions that the Community established and that were to be the basis of the new Plan – ***the preservation and enhancement of the Natural Heritage System is paramount.***

MY ASK: That you take a step back and separate the Rural policies from the Urban System policies. That the Urban policies go ahead separately and that you hold the rural policies for further study pending completion of the Supplementary Aggregate Resources Policy Study.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Part D and related schedules be amended to apply only within the area of the Urban System as shown on Schedule F-1

AND THAT Parts A, B, C and F and related schedules and amended Part D and related amended schedules of the proposed Plan be adopted by council and forwarded to the Region of Peel for approval;

AND THAT the balance of the proposed Plan be deferred pending further study and completion of the Supplementary Aggregate Resources Policy Study and any resulting proposed Official Plan amendments.

AND THAT staff be directed to consider and recommend to Council the appropriate form of by-law for adoption of Parts A,B,C, and F and related schedules, and amended Part D and related amended schedules on this basis.