



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To:	Council
From:	Barbara Koopmans, Commissioner, Planning and Development
Date:	October 7, 2019
Report No:	PD-038-19
Subject:	Proposed Changes to the Provincial Policy Statement
Recommendation:	THAT Report PD-038-19 be received for information; AND THAT staff be directed to submit comments as outlined in Report PD-038-19 to Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; AND THAT staff be directed to continue to monitor the proposed changes to the Provincial Policy Statement and report back to Council as required.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The government is consulting on proposed changes to the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), which are intended to help increase the supply of housing, support jobs and reduce barriers and costs in the land use planning system. This report provides a summary of the proposed PPS changes, and brief commentary is also provided in regard to:

- a) Policies that are supported because they will enhance the Town's local decision making and future strategic growth; and/or
- b) Policies that require additional information/clarification from the Province in order to fully understand proposed changes.

REPORT

Background

Earlier this year, the province announced the "More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan". The vision of the Action Plan includes the cutting of red-tape to make it easier to build the right types of housing in the right places, and to make housing more affordable. The Action Plan includes a series of coordinated changes across a wide array of provincial legislation and Plans, including the Planning Act and the Growth Plan.

A Provincial review of the PPS was also completed to support the “Housing Supply Action Plan”. Proposed changes to the PPS were made available for public review and input on July 22, 2019. The deadline for submitting comments regarding proposed changes to the PPS is October 21, 2019.

The PPS provides direction on matters of provincial interest is the foundation for land use planning in Ontario. According to the Planning Act, a decision of Council in regard to a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS. Municipalities are the primary implementers of the PPS through policies in their local official plans, zoning by-laws and other planning related decisions.

Discussion

Proposed changes to the PPS are intended to support the government’s overarching “Housing Supply Action Plan”, and help achieve the following land use planning related goals and priorities:

- Encourage the development of an increased mix and supply of housing
- Protect the environment and public safety
- Reduce barriers and costs for development and provide greater predictability
- Support rural, northern and Indigenous communities
- Support the economy and job creation

The following is a summary of proposed changes to the PPS as they relate to the Province’s goals and priorities, with comments from Milton staff that should be provided to the Province as a result of our local review.

It should be noted that the Halton Area Planning Partnership (HAPP) has also completed a collective review of proposed changes to the PPS, and a joint response on behalf of HAPP has been submitted to the Province. The following comments from Milton staff are in addition to the HAPP joint response.

1. Increasing the Mix and Supply of Housing

Proposed changes to the PPS policies would:

- Increase land supply requirements for municipalities as follows:
 - Increase planning horizon from 20 to 25 years for employment areas, and
 - Increase housing land supply from 10 to 12 years.
- Allow higher minimum requirements for serviced residential land (5 years) for upper- and single-tier municipalities;
- Update provincial guidance to support land budgeting (i.e. Projection Methodology);

- Introduce the need to evaluate market needs in the consideration of new development and land use planning matters;
- Increase flexibility for municipalities related to the phasing of development and compact form;
- Add flexibility to the process for settlement area boundary expansions (e.g. allow minor adjustments subject to specific tests, highlight that study requirements should be proportionate to the size/scale of development);
- Require transit-supportive development and prioritize intensification, including potential air rights development, in proximity to transit, including corridors and stations;
- Support the development of housing to meet current and future housing needs, and add reference to housing options;
- Support municipalities in achieving affordable housing targets by requiring alignment with Housing and Homelessness Plans; and
- Broaden PPS policies to enhance support for development of long-term care homes.

Milton Comments:

- a) Staff are generally in support of policy changes that will increase local decision-making abilities outside of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive review, specifically in regard to boundary expansions.*
- b) Staff are also generally in support of policy changes that will:
 - i. Increase the supply of ALL types of housing for various socio-economic needs (including single-detached residential);*
 - ii. Encourage ALL types of mixed-use development (including mixed-use employment areas); and*
 - iii. Better integrate land use and transportation planning.**
- c) While it is recognized that reference to “the market” has also been introduced in recent amendments to the Growth Plan, Staff remain concerned that there is little in the way of guidance material in relation to defining and implementing the term ‘market-based’. If this language is maintained, clarification is required to ensure that a ‘market-lens’ will be used to evaluate new development in association with other key planning matters (as identified in the PPS). Cross reference to all other housing policies that must be considered in the evaluation should be made to provide clarification.*

2. Protecting the Public Safety

Proposed changes to the PPS policies would:

- Enhance direction to prepare for impacts of a changing climate;
- Enhance stormwater management policies to protect water and support climate resiliency;
- Promote the on-site local reuse of excess soil;
- Maintain current policies related to natural and human made hazards which directs development away from hazardous areas including flood-prone areas in order to protect public health and safety, while work by the Special Advisor on Flooding is underway;
- Maintain current policies that require municipalities in southern Ontario to identify natural heritage systems, and provide flexibility as to how to achieve this outcome; and
- Maintain protections for the Greenbelt.

Milton Comments:

Staff are generally in support of the above policy changes, and particularly those changes that will prepare for impacts of a changing climate and support climate resiliency.

3. Reducing Barriers and Costs

Proposed changes to the PPS policies would:

- Require municipalities to take action to fast-track development applications for certain proposals (e.g. housing);
- Allow mineral aggregate operations to use rehabilitation plans to demonstrate that extraction will have no negative impacts;
- Align policies and definition of cultural heritage with recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act;
- Refocus PPS energy policies to support a broad range of energy types and opportunities for increased energy supply;
- Direct large ground-mounted solar facilities away from prime agricultural and specialty crop areas; and
- Make minor changes to streamline development approvals.

Milton Comments:

Staff are generally in support of the above policy changes, and particularly those changes that will streamline development approvals and fast-track development applications that are in-line with our local growth and development priorities and strategic directions.

4. Supporting Rural, Northern, and Indigenous Communities

Proposed changes to the PPS policies would:

- Allow flexibility for communities by clarifying perceived barriers to sewage and water servicing policies for lot creation and development in rural settlement areas;
- Enhance municipal engagement with Indigenous communities on land use planning to help inform decision-making, build relationships and address issues upfront in the approvals process; and
- Enhance agricultural protections to support critical food production and the agricultural sector as a significant economic driver.

Milton Comments:

Staff are generally in support of the above policy changes, and particularly those changes that acknowledge the unique insights and perspectives of our indigenous communities and recognized their important role in land use planning.

5. Supporting Certainty and Economic Growth

Proposed changes to the PPS policies would:

- Encourage municipalities to facilitate conditions for economic investment, and at the time of official plan review or update, assess locally-identified employment areas to ensure designations are appropriate;
- Provide municipalities with greater control over employment area conversions to support the forms of development and job creation that suit the local context (current and future); and
- Provide stronger protection for major facilities such as manufacturing and industrial uses where non-employment uses are planned nearby (i.e. buffering uses from new sensitive uses).

Milton Comments:

Staff are generally in support of policy changes that will increase local decision-making abilities outside of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive review, specifically in regard to employment conversions.

Financial Impact

None arising from this Report.



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Respectfully submitted,

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Commissioner, Planning and Development

For questions, please contact: Nancy Reid, MES, MCIP, RPP Phone: Ext. 2332

Attachments
None

CAO Approval
Andrew M. Siltala
Acting Chief Administrative Officer