

**Committee of the Whole Meeting
July 20, 2020**

Report #PD-2020-23

**Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

Recommendation

That report #PD-2020-23 be received;

And further that staff be directed to provide staff report #PD-2020-23 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing through the Environmental Registry of Ontario and to the County of Simcoe as the Town's formal comments on Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Objective

The objective of this report is to provide Council with information regarding Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, focusing on the changes that have the greatest relevance to the Town of New Tecumseth, and their impacts.

Background

On June 16, 2020, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing posted a notice seeking feedback on Proposed Amendment 1 (Amendment 1) to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan). Amendment 1 as described by the Province includes changes to the population and employment forecasts, the horizon year for planning, and other policies to increase housing supply, create jobs, attract business investment and better align with infrastructure.

The Growth Plan is one of the Provinces key land use plans that provide policy direction to municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). It was originally passed in 2006 and was recently comprehensively reviewed and updated in 2019. It builds upon on the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) to help establish a unique land use planning framework for the GGH that supports the achievement of complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment, and social equity. It integrates land use planning, infrastructure planning and investment as well as demographic, economic growth and health considerations.

The Growth Plan provides population and employment growth forecasts for all upper/single-tier municipalities within the GGH and for each lower-tier municipality within the County of Simcoe (County) through Schedules 3 and 7 respectively. The plan requires that the Province review the forecasts contained within Schedule 3 every three

years in consultation with municipalities. Amendment 1 aims to achieve this policy requirement as well as address a series of other matters.

As part of the review exercise, the Province is also consulting on a proposed new land needs assessment methodology, that principally impacts the work of the County and their ongoing municipal comprehensive review (MCR).

Comments and Considerations

The following provides a summary of Amendment 1 and the new land needs assessment methodology, with a particular focus on those changes that will impact the Town and its land use policies:

1. Revision to the growth forecasts for the GGH;
2. Modification to the mineral aggregates resources policy to permit aggregate extraction in the Habitat of Endangered and Threatened Species outside of the Greenbelt;
3. Modification to Provincially Significant Employment Zones policies for Major Transit Station Areas;
4. Modifications to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020; and,
5. Modification to the Land Needs Assessment Methodology.

Each is discussed in greater detail below.

1. Revisions to the Growth Forecasts for the GGH

Key within the Growth Plan are the planning horizon and the population and employment growth forecasts applicable to same as outlined in Schedules 3 and 7 of the plan. Each municipality is required to use these forecasts when planning and managing growth. The current planning horizon extends to 2041, and applies once these forecasts have been included in the County Official Plan through the MCR. Until that time, the 2031 forecasts apply to all planning matters within the Town i.e. population of 56,000 and employment of 26,500.

Through Amendment 1, the Province has released three growth scenarios to 2051 for comment that provide population and employment forecasts as follows: a Reference Forecast which is believed to be the most likely scenario, as well as both high and low scenarios. Once approved, the chosen scenario would replace the existing Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan. It is also intended that Schedule 7 of the Growth Plan would be removed. Schedule 7 provides population and employment forecasts to each lower-tier municipality in the County, which were incorporated into the County Official Plan through the County's last Official Plan review. These forecasts will continue to apply until the County MCR (to 2051) is complete. As such there is no longer any need for a separate Simcoe Schedule in the Growth Plan.

The three scenario's have been derived from a technical report prepared by Hemson Consulting, noting that the most significant driver of population growth within the GGH continues to be immigration, as a large proportion of all immigrants to Canada settle in the region. A copy of the technical report can be found [online](#).

The table below summarizes the population and employment forecasts for the County (less Barrie and Orillia) in each of the three scenario's as compared to the 2031 and 2041 forecasts in the current Growth Plan:

Scenario	Population	Increase from 2031	Employment	Increase from 2031
Forecast to 2031	416,000	-	132,000	-
Forecast to 2041	497,000	81,000	152,000	20,000
Reference Forecast to 2051	555,000	139,000	198,000	66,000
Low Forecast to 2051	540,000	124,000	188,000	56,000
High Forecast to 2051	571,000	155,000	210,000	78,000

Notwithstanding the final Schedule 3 forecast to 2051 to be chosen by the Province, Amendment 1 also proposes to allow upper/single-tier municipalities to plan for higher growth forecasts than those provided in Schedule 3 through an MCR. Amendment 1 provides that the 2051 forecasts are to be treated as “minimums” and not “targets”. As such all upper/single-tier municipalities within the GGH will be required to update their official plans (by July 1, 2022) to accommodate at least the 2051 forecasts for population and employment.

The proposed change that would treat the population and employment forecasts as “minimums” and not “targets” is significant and could potentially have a considerable impact on the Town.

The extension of the Schedule 3 forecasts to 2051 extends the MCR planning horizon from 20 years to 30 years. The Province notes that this is to ensure a sufficient supply of land for growth in an effort to support the development of complete communities, economic development, job creation and housing affordability in the GGH. Town staff are of the opinion that the proposed extension of the planning horizon to 2051 will create pressure for extensive urban boundary expansion(s) in the Town.

New Tecumseth has historically been one of the fastest growing municipalities within the County, with the potential for significant settlement area expansion(s) due largely in part to the substantial amount of agricultural and rural land that surround each settlement area, housing affordability relative to municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and the proximity of the Town to employment areas in the GTA. It is expected that the Town, particularly Alliston, will continue to be a focus for growth within

the County. As Council may recall, Alliston is identified by the Growth Plan as one of five (5) Primary Settlement Areas in the County and is directed by Provincial and County policy to accommodate a large percentage of the County's growth. Furthermore, given the presence of full municipal servicing in Beeton and Tottenham relative to the number of settlement areas across the County with full municipal services, Town staff expect that if there is a demonstrated need for urban expansion to 2051 to accommodate the 2051 growth forecasts, lands in New Tecumseth would be considered favourably by the County. As such, should the forecasts be extended to 2051 using any of the scenarios noted above, staff recommend that the Province provide municipalities with the ability to phase the designation of any urban expansion lands to ensure that development occurs in a comprehensive, logical manner.

Staff are also concerned that allowing upper/single-tier municipalities to plan for growth that is higher than the Schedule 3 forecasts is opposite to the purpose of the Growth Plan, which is to provide a sustainable, long-term framework for where and how growth should occur across the GGH. Staff are concerned that this proposed amendment would reduce the effectiveness of the Growth Plan. The Town is already experiencing significant growth pressures both in terms of legacy applications before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) as well as new proposals under the 40ha settlement area expansion policy framework of the current Growth Plan. The County MCR will be critical in managing this growth over the horizon of the Plan, as staff expect there to be significant pressure on the County to consider the allocation of additional population to municipalities like the Town where growth pressures are high.

See recommendations 1 - 4 below.

2. Mineral Aggregate Resources Policy

The current Growth Plan prohibits the extraction of mineral aggregate resources in habitats of endangered species and threatened species. Proposed Amendment 1 seeks to remove this prohibition and permit aggregate extraction in these areas.

While there are few areas identified in the Town's Official Plan where mineral aggregate resources are found, staff have concerns with this approach both as it relates to the Town and across the GGH, and the resulting loss of endangered and threatened species habitats.

Conservation Authorities across the GGH are jointly making a submission to the Province on Amendment 1 through Conservation Ontario. The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) have indicated that they have significant concerns with this proposed modification as it is neither balanced or science-based, and that if habitats of endangered species and threatened species are open to aggregate extraction that it could represent a significant loss to the watershed's Natural Heritage System. Staff reached out to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority but did not receive a response.

See recommendation 5 below.

3. Modification to Provincially Significant Employment Zones policies for Major Transit Station Areas

The proposed modification would permit conversions of employment areas identified as Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs) and located within Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) until the next MCR.

The modification in this case has no impacts on the Town. The employment area around Alliston is designated as a PSEZ, however the Town does not have a MTSA within this area that would be affected by the proposed policy change. As such staff have no concerns with the proposed modification.

4. Modifications to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020.

Amendment 1 proposes changes to some of the text of the Growth Plan, including definitions, to align with the PPS and in particular, stronger language around engagement with indigenous communities.

Harmonizing language between the PPS and Growth Plan will ensure that the PPS and Growth Plan are aligned, which makes policy implementation easier at the local level. Further, staff are currently developing an Indigenous Consultation Policy which aims to improve communication between the Town and the local indigenous communities. As such staff have no concerns with the proposed modification.

5. Modifications to the Land Needs Assessment Methodology

In addition to the proposed amendments to the Plan, the Province is consulting concurrently on a proposed new land needs assessment methodology (methodology) for the GGH. The methodology outlines the steps necessary for the County to assess residential and employment land needs to 2051. The methodology is also used to determine whether there is a need for any settlement area boundary expansion for employment or community area purposes, the latter of which is all other settlement area land outside of employment areas.

The proposed new methodology attempts to recognize that municipalities have diverse needs, and provides the key factors to be considered as municipalities plan to ensure that a sufficient and appropriate mix of land is available in order to accommodate:

- all housing market segments, to avoid supply shortages;
- market demand;
- various employment types; and,

- all infrastructure services that are needed to meet the complete communities objectives to 2051.

The proposed methodology adds consideration of "market demand" as a criteria in determining land needs, consistent with recent changes to the PPS which also referenced "market demand" in planning for future growth. The proposed methodology would also not preclude upper/single-tier municipalities from considering alternate assumptions about community and employment growth to the horizon of the Plan. Completion of the land needs assessment is a critical component of the County MCR.

Staff are generally supportive of the revised land needs assessment methodology as it provides for a more flexible and simplified approach, however staff would support any detailed comments provided by the County. With input from Council, staff will work closely with the County through their MCR as they work to complete the land needs assessment and determine population and employment forecasts for the Town to 2051. Staff would suggest however that Provincial direction is needed as to how market demand is to be balanced with other Growth Plan objectives such as higher density, intensification, transit supportive and walkable communities, affordable housing, etc.

See recommendation 6 below.

Summary

Based on the discussion above, staff recommend that the following comments be provided to the Province through the Environmental Registry of Ontario:

Recommendation 1 - that the Reference Forecast be carried forward into the Growth Plan as the most likely scenario for growth;

Recommendation 2 - that the Province continue to prohibit LPAT appeals on municipal growth management decisions to ensure that development is aligned with local municipal growth plans as established through a MCR;

Recommendation 3 - that the Province provide municipalities with the ability to phase the designation of any settlement area boundary expansion lands to ensure that development happens in a comprehensive, logical manner;

Recommendation 4 - that the Town does not support the proposed changes to policies 2.2.1 and 5.2.4 of the Growth Plan which would allow the use of higher growth forecasts than those contained in Schedule 3 of same;

Recommendation 5 - that The Town supports the concerns of the NVCA and suggest that the Province permit municipalities to prohibit mineral aggregate extraction within natural heritage systems through Official Plan policy; and,

Recommendation 6 - that the Province provide direction as to how market demand is to be balanced in the completion of a land needs assessment, with other Growth Plan objectives such as higher density, intensification, transit supportive and walkable communities, affordable housing, etc.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations as a result of this report.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Schilling', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Tim Schilling, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Policy Planning

Approved By:

Blaine Parkin, P. Eng., CAO

Department:

CAO

Status:

Approved - 16 Jul 2020