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November 21, 2021

Minister Steve Clark
Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing
17th Floor – 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
Delivered via email: PlanningConsultation@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Clark,

Re: Comments from the City of North Bay: ERO Posting 019-4419 “Proposed Additional Delegation of Planning Decisions”

As a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) in the Province of Ontario, I am pleased to provide my comments on your Ministry’s consultation regarding the Proposed Additional Delegation of Planning Decisions (ERO 019-4419).

I have been a professional planner for over 18 years and am currently employed as the Manager of Planning and Building Services in the City of North Bay. I oversee a team of planning & building staff, including two (2) Registered Professional Planners and one (1) candidate member. Our planning staff are responsible for all aspects of planning including reviewing all development applications, advising Council on provincial planning matters, special studies & projects and long-range municipal planning. The City of North Bay currently delegates the approval of Site Plan Control Agreements, including requests to reduce or release Site Plan Control and Subdivision/Condominium securities.

The proposed amendments would make changes to the Planning Act to expand the matters that municipal Councils may delegate to help streamline planning decisions. This authority could include delegating decisions for temporary use by-laws, the lifting of holding symbols, and other minor zoning by-law amendments, subject to criteria established through Official Plan policies. It would be up to each municipality to determine whether to exercise this proposed new authority and the types of minor zoning by-law amendment decisions to delegate.

The City of North Bay is supportive of the proposed expanded opportunity to delegate additional Planning Act decisions to a Committee of Council or an individual who is an officer, employee or agent of the Municipality. It is expected that expanding the list of planning decisions Councils can delegate will help improve service standards across municipalities.

Delegation of minor and routine approvals will not only improve processing time for these items but also other applications as Councils will have less volume of applications going to them for decisions. Leaving much of the technical implementation details with municipal staff and focusing Council time on big picture strategic considerations will help both the municipal sector

and the province advance their collective priorities on major housing and economic development initiatives.

Additional Recommendations

It is our understanding that the proposed delegation of additional planning matters would not alter any notice or public meeting requirements or limit appeal rights. It also would not change the requirements under the Planning Act for land use planning decisions to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and to conform or not conflict with provincial plans.

The Province should provide additional guidance and greater clarity with respect to what constitutes a minor zoning by-law amendment and consider whether all aspects of the public meeting requirements should apply in these situations. Continuing the need for public meetings for minor zoning by-law amendments may not result in any time savings as it is likely that these meetings would occur at a Council level, with Council continuing to assume decision making authority.

The City of North Bay recognizes that throughout Ontario, there are many different sized Municipalities with different resources and staffing levels. The recipient of the delegated authority should be a qualified person such as a Registered Professional Planner (RPP). Appropriate oversight for planners making these decisions should exist by way of adequate authorities provided to the regulator of professional planners in Ontario, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

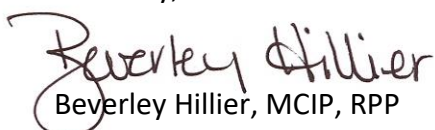
In addition to these items, I also encourage the Ministry to address the current two-year ban on minor variances under Section 45, sub 1.3 and 1.4 which indicates that an application for a minor variance is prohibited within two-years of a zoning by-law amendment unless Council allows it.

This extra layer of approval can be streamlined by allowing Councils to delegate the authority for an exemption to this ban (i.e. staff be allowed to grant the ability for a proponent to seek a minor variance through the Committee of Adjustment).

Overall, I commend the government for taking steps to streamline the planning approvals process in the Province of Ontario. I welcome measures to expand delegation and look forward to their implementation among municipalities in Ontario.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss these comments in more detail please contact me at Beverley.hillier@northbay.ca or 705-474-0400 ext 2403.

Sincerely,



Beverley Hillier, MCIP, RPP
Manager, Planning & Building Services
City of North Bay