

January 3, 2023

Julianna Zhuo
Municipal Services Office - Central Ontario
16th floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Dear Julianna,

The City of Barrie appreciates the Province of Ontario's decision to re-open the commenting period on its Official Plan. This re-opening provides the City with an opportunity to provide additional context to the Official Plan that may be helpful to the Province. The purpose of this letter is to highlight how Barrie can support the Province to help it achieve its goal of building 1.5 million homes in the next ten years.

Barrie has been in the enviable position as a single-tier municipality to plan and deliver on thousands of new housing units through strong planning and a collaborative working relationship with the development community. I believe Barrie can contribute to the affordable housing challenge in Central Ontario area and the Province, by developing beyond our currently planned population and employment growth. To deliver on our shared objective of the housing targets that have been established and the potentially for an even higher level of growth, Barrie will require three things:

1. Maintaining our single-tier status to allow for efficient and timely decision making
2. Funding for the required infrastructure such as the expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Facility that is required to service growth under the stringent standards established by the Lake Simcoe Protection Act; and
3. The ability to add building stock through sufficient lands within our boundaries in the growth period.

Maintaining a Single Tier Status

As a single-tier municipality, the City of Barrie provides all of the water, wastewater, transportation, transit, community and environmental infrastructure and services directly. Barrie City Council leads the planning and delivery of the capital projects and services through an efficient single-tier decision making body, with a focus on planning for our future as a vibrant and complete medium-sized, urban community.

The September 27, 2022 Municipal Benchmarking Study published by the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) ranked Barrie number one as the most efficient, helpful and cost effective municipality across the GTA for getting new housing developments approved. Barrie was number one, based on the three categories that affect housing affordability: planning features, approval timelines and government charges. As a single tier municipality, Barrie has the advantage of requiring fewer levels of approvals than municipalities in a two-tier structure reducing the cost and timelines for housing construction. It also allows for efficient and prudent decision making for growth in collaborative manner with the development community.

A two-tier system inherently brings with it added complexities and costs including intermediary charges, approvals from multiple committees and Councils, and wrangling based on competing interests represented at the upper tier councils. In regard to policy development, development of official plans and the pursuit of affordable and adequate supply of homes in a multi-jurisdictional environment generally results in longer timelines, higher development charges, and difficulties in the allocation of infrastructure capacity amongst competing communities.

Funding for the Expansion of Infrastructure

To achieve the Province's housing targets in a timely and effective manner, the City of Barrie needs to increase the capacity of its Wastewater Treatment Facility as well as other growth related infrastructure. Barrie's Wastewater Treatment Facility is subject to the most stringent requirements in Ontario through the Lake Simcoe Protection Act passed in 2008. The Wastewater Treatment Facility expansion related projects are budgeted at a total of \$268 million. The City is concerned that the changes brought about through Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 will have an unintended but adverse impact on the City's ability to recover the growth related costs of this substantial project. Unlike some municipalities in the GTA, Barrie's reserve levels and tax base are not in a position to absorb additional unplanned portions of the cost of growth.

It is also important to note that while the upgrades are being implemented, the Class Environmental Assessment for the next phase of expansion has also been initiated. This will plan the next phase of the expansion from 76 MLD to 96 MLD and service an estimated population of 260,000. The cost of the expansion to 96 MLD is estimated at an additional \$165 million (in 2022 dollars), based on the 2019 Master Plan. These current and future upgrades are necessary to deliver on the Province's housing targets while meeting the stringent requirements of the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

Servicing Lands within Barrie's Boundaries

The City of Barrie has been very successful working with our development community partners to plan for the infrastructure required to build thousands of new homes within our boundaries. In fact, the City of Barrie believes that there are further opportunities to contribute to the Province's goal of building 1.5 million homes in 10 years.

Servicing the lands within our own boundaries is where Barrie excels. Barrie has been a willing partner in discussions of extending services to our neighbouring communities. The map attached to this letter as Appendix "A" identifies the location of water and wastewater/sanitary sewer services infrastructure within Barrie and with close proximity to Barrie's boundaries with its neighbours of Springwater, Oro-Medonte, Essa and Innisfil.

However, each time, those discussions with our neighbours have dissolved and not produced results. As a result, Barrie can't effectively service lands outside our boundaries and the only real opportunity to add to housing stock is with the lands within the City's limited boundaries. This is aligned with Barrie's One City, One Vision, One Plan approach to its Official Plan.

The City also holds lands outside of its boundaries to serve the recreational needs of our growing population. These include lands surrounding a large portion of Little Lake in Springwater and the 118 acre Barrie Community Sports Complex in Springwater. Past City Councils approved the acquisition of these lands in recognition of Barrie's leading role in the provision of recreational opportunities for the Greater Barrie Area. These lands are illustrated in the maps attached as Appendix "B" and "C" respectively to this letter.

Conclusion

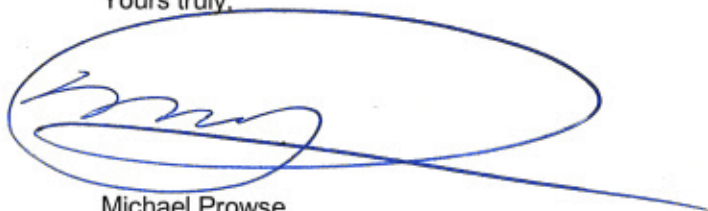
The City's New Official Plan will provide clarity of the urban structure needed for better planning of a complete community, provide certainty for investment, and introduce a level of policy direction that ensures residents, businesses, and the City share an aligned vision for Barrie's future. The significant

transformation that Barrie is undergoing as it matures into a vibrant medium-sized community is facilitated by having an appropriate supply of land that the City can directly service, the necessary funding to build the infrastructure required to service those lands and the ability to provide cost-effective and timely decision-making as a single-tier municipality.

In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to provide additional context for our new Official Plan and to offer our support to contribute to the Province's goal of providing affordable housing for our residents today and into the future.

Given the significance of this issue, we are available to meet with you at your earliest convenience.

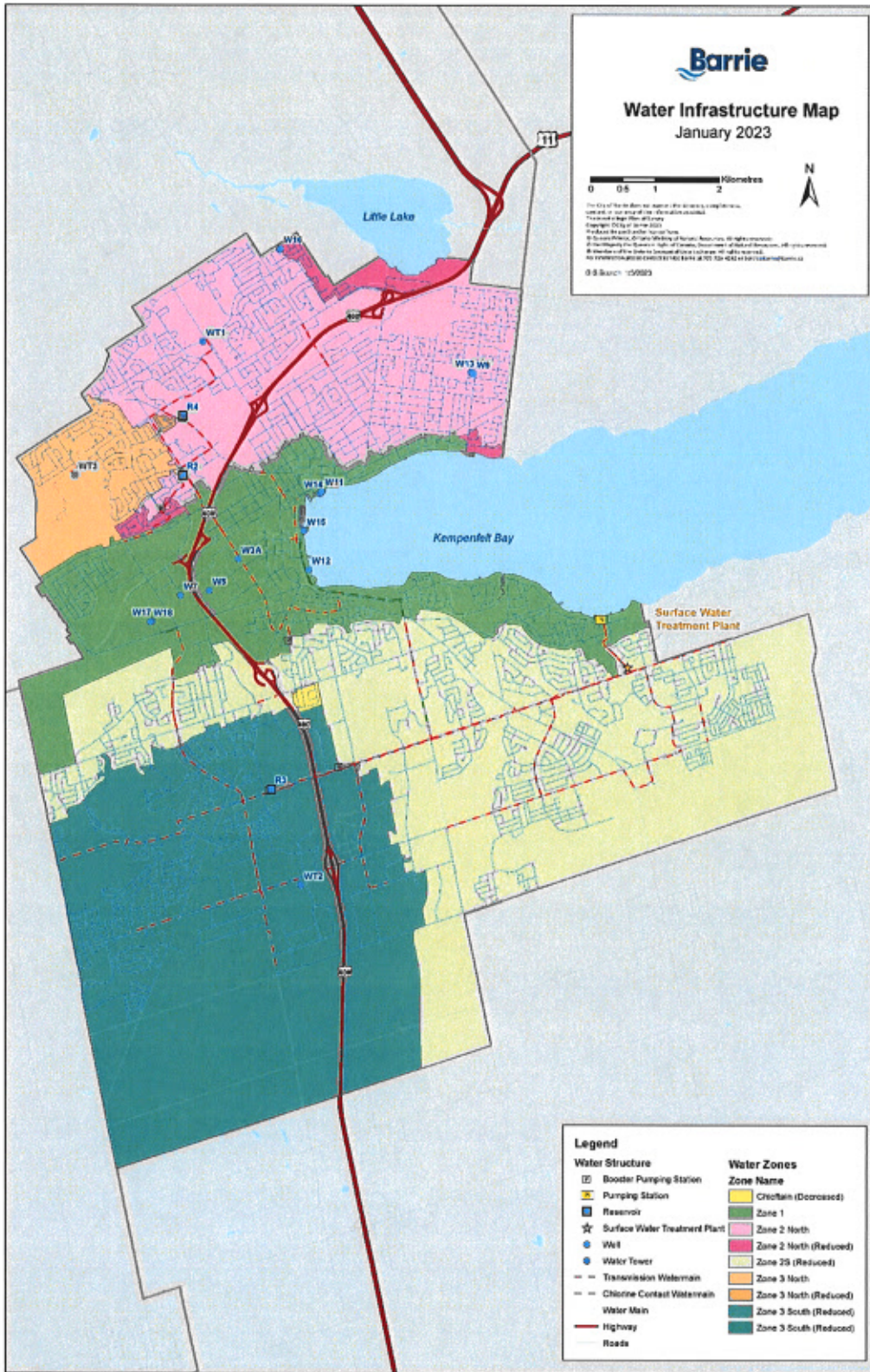
Yours truly,



Michael Prowse
Chief Administrative Officer/ City Manager

Appendix "A"

Water Infrastructure Map



Appendix "A"

Sanitary/Wastewater Infrastructure Map



Appendix "B"

Little Lake Area Lands Owned by City of Barrie



Legend

-  City of Barrie Owned lands
-  City of Barrie boundaries

Appendix "C"

Barrie Community Sports Complex

