

May 10, 2024

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Via Email

Provincial Land Use Plans Branch
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**RE: Proposed Provincial Planning Statement
ERO No. 019-8462**

UrbanSolutions Planning & Land Development Consultants Inc. (UrbanSolutions) provides expert land use planning advice and assists proponents secure the required municipal approvals for a variety of development projects throughout southern Ontario, and would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the Provincial Planning Statement via ERO No. 019-8462. We represent the owner of the property municipally known as 347 Centennial Parkway North in the City of Hamilton, which is located approximately 30 metres south of the future Confederation GO Station. In June 2023, our office provided a Letter in response to ERO No. 019-6813 regarding changes to the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan. This Letter is intended to support and add to the recommendations contained within the previously submitted Letter.

The above-noted property is designated as 'Mixed Use – High Density' on Schedule E-1 – Urban Land Use Designation of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan (UHOP) and as 'Neighbourhoods' on Schedule E – Urban Structure. The lands are also designated as 'Mixed Use – High Density', 'Pedestrian Focus Street', and are identified as being located within the 'Sub Regional Service Node' boundary on Map B.6.7-1 – Land Use Plan of the Centennial Neighbourhoods Secondary Plan. Within this node, the subject lands are located within a sub-area that permits building heights exceeding 15-storeys, as outlined on Map B.6.7-2 – Maximum Building Heights in the Node of the Centennial Neighbourhoods Secondary Plan. Additionally, the lands are identified as being located within the 'Confederation MTSA – GO Transit Station' on Appendix B – Major Transportation Facilities and Routes of the UHOP.

As the Province works to address the housing crisis currently facing Ontario, the structure and policies outlined within the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) will become even more critical to achieving higher densities and intensification across the various regions of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Accordingly, it is important that Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) achieve their role as strategic growth areas to be the focus of higher densities and intensification. Given their connectivity within and across municipalities, MTSAs are strong candidates for high-density mixed-use development to facilitate the creation of complete, transit-oriented communities.

In response to the proposed creation of the Provincial Planning Statement as well as the legislative changes through Bill 185, our team has provided a list of recommendations to be considered during the Ministry's review of the legislative documents.

Major Transit Station Areas

As stated in Section 2.3 of the proposed PPS, growth is to be directed to settlement areas with prioritization of intensification within strategic growth areas, including Urban Growth Centres and MTSA. Development in these areas provide a focus on investment in transit as well as other infrastructure to support forecasted growth and a diverse range and mix of housing options.

In Section 2.4.2 of the proposed PPS, MTSA are prescribed to accommodate a minimum of 150 residents and jobs per hectare for those that are served by the GO Transit rail network. This intensification target is insufficient given that MTSA are meant to act as key strategic growth areas. Development concepts which surround a major regional transit station typically result in much higher densities than what is currently considered by the proposed PPS. The maximum heights typically permitted for MTSA result in corresponding densities which are well over the prescribed 150 residents and jobs per hectare in the proposed PPS. Recognizing this, the City of Oshawa recently approved an MTSA-wide density target of 425 net people and jobs per hectare for its Central Oshawa MTSA as a part of its ongoing Integrated Major Transit Station Area Study. If there is concern with permitting densities in excess of 150 residents and jobs per hectare for smaller municipalities served by GO Transit stations, mitigating language could be included in Policy 2.4.2.2 to solely increase MTSA densities for the 'Large and Fast Growing Municipalities' identified in Schedule 1.

Given that a majority of regional growth will need to be directed to strategic growth areas like MTSA, the prescribed rate of 150 residents and jobs per hectare established by Section 2.4.2 is in need of an increase to better represent the intensification needed to facilitate the expected growth outlined by the Province. As it is anticipated that many other sites within MTSA will be developed, and that a majority of those sites will contain high density development, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the provincial growth targets and those which will be constructed in reality. As such, we recommend that the prescribed densities under Section 2.4.2 are all increased to accurately reflect the planned built form envisioned by MTSA.

Population and Employment Targets

One of the proposed changes to the PPS is the removal of Provincially-established growth targets which were traditionally applied through Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan. Instead, Section 2.1.1 of the Provincial Planning Statement states that planning authorities shall base population and employment growth forecasts on Ministry of Finance 25-year projections and may modify said projections as appropriate. Section 2.1.2 of the new PPS builds on this policy stating that notwithstanding policy 2.1.1, municipalities may continue to forecast growth using population and employment forecasts previously issued by the Province for the purposes of land use planning.

We have some concerns with this approach to growth targets in municipalities throughout the Province. For one, the wording of Policy 2.1.1 notes that planning authorities can modify the 25-year Ministry of Finance projections "as appropriate", rather than establishing population and employment targets which must be accommodated in order to meet anticipated demand. Under the proposed scenario, a municipality's desire to reflect accurate growth forecasting will be dependent on their overall desire for

development within their municipality. While some municipal governments do understand the important need for housing at this time, there are still many which allow political agendas to influence housing decisions. Accordingly, we strongly encourage the Provincial government to revise Policy 2.1.1 as follows, to establish firm population targets to be realized by planning authorities:

“Policy 2.1.1 - As informed by provincial guidance, planning authorities shall base population and employment growth forecasts on Ministry of Finance 25-year projections ~~and may modify projections, as appropriate.~~”

Further, the implementation of Policy 2.1.2 comes into question when considering a municipality which is continuing to forecast based on a previous population and employment projection issued by the Province, such as Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan. With the Growth Plan proposed to be revoked, clarity is required to confirm how a municipality would establish policies and intensification targets based on a Schedule which is no longer in effect or available to the public. Additionally, it is unclear how long the projections contained in the current Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan would be able to be relied on by municipalities despite changing demographics for the Province based on shifting immigration and other factors. Ultimately, we believe selecting a singular source to inform population and employment projections would provide the necessary clarity in implementation and consistency across the Province.

There is also concern with the authority who would ultimately interpret and distribute the provincial population projections to individual municipalities, as the policy is currently written to suggest municipalities would take on this responsibility. A system where municipalities are left to independently determine their own share of the anticipated growth lacks functionality. Often the private sector relies on prescribed population targets attributed to municipalities in order to demonstrate need for the development of housing or employment land uses. Without clear population targets for each municipality established, it becomes difficult to demonstrate need from a planning perspective. As noted above, municipalities vary in their perspectives on development and growth, and this variation could lead to inefficient distribution of growth based on municipal desires.

Recommended Changes to the Provincial Planning Statement

MTSAs require a consistent, suitable policy framework for the vital role they play in realizing the Province’s intensification targets. UrbanSolutions recommends the following changes to the proposed Provincial Planning Statement to achieve the vision for transit-oriented communities that MTSAs emphasize:

1. Modify Policy 2.4.2.2(c) to increase the proposed density target from 150 to 500 residents and jobs per hectare for Major Transit Station Areas served by the GO Transit rail network; and proportionately increase said targets for those served by subways, light rail, and bus rapid transit as outlined in Policies 2.4.2.2(a) and 2.4.2.2 (b), respectively; and,
2. Include the above noted revisions to Policy 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 relating to Population and Employment Targets and Forecasts formerly set out in Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan as part of the newly proposed Provincial Planning Statement.

As proposed, the aforementioned recommendations will strengthen the policy framework to provide clarity of implementation, ensure the goals and objectives of the Province are realized, and align with realistic growth and development outcomes. The balance of the proposed Provincial Planning Statement contains the appropriate range of policies to protect matters of provincial interest while also ensuring sufficient residential development is secured throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Kind Regards,
UrbanSolutions



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Principal



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Planner

cc. 347 Centennial Parkway Inc. (via email)