

May 10, 2024

Via Email Only

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3
PlanningConsultation@ontario.ca
MFPB@ontario.ca

**RE: Joint Comment Submission – Simcoe Area Planners
Provincial Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Posting & Bill 185 Legislation
ERO Posting Number 019-8462 - 2024 Proposed Provincial Planning Statement
ERO Posting Numbers 019-8369, 019-8370, 019-8371**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) consultation on the above noted legislative proposals to assist with increasing the supply of housing in Ontario through the Cutting Red Tape to Build New Homes Act 2024.

The County of Simcoe professional planning staff have collaborated with lower-tier and single-tier municipal planning staff to consider common themes of interest related to the above noted ERO Posting. As professionals tasked with managing unprecedented growth in a region that is also blessed with a vast array of natural and cultural heritage, the undersigned planning leaders from the Simcoe Area municipalities remain committed to working with the province to implement a planning system that both builds more homes and creates complete communities. We offer the following to the Province as a collective submission from municipal planning professionals with the intent of improving a complex system which is in need of thoughtful and effective renewal. The following professional opinions do not reflect the municipal comments that may be submitted separately by each municipality.

Common Key Themes of Interest:

1. Removal of Mandatory Pre-Consultation
2. “Use it or Lose it” Provisions
3. Settlement Area Boundary Expansions (and Permitted Appeals)
4. Employment (and Definition of Employment Area)
5. Housing

We offer the following comments regarding the above common key themes of interest for your consideration:

1. Removal of Mandatory Pre-Consultation:

We are supportive of the proposed removal of the fee refunds previously brought in through Bill 109 since there is no indication as to how that has assisted in the goal of achieving more housing. The permission to implement a mandatory pre-consultation by-law has been in the Planning Act since 2006. It is a long-established practice which municipalities across Ontario have instituted. Through the recent Bill 109 implementation, some municipalities have established enhanced pre-consultation processes which have been extremely valuable to provide greater clarity and certainty to the

development industry, resulting in better quality applications and faster timelines. The practice of pre-consultation provides clear direction to potential applicants, serving as a venue to proactively outline key information and application requirements at the outset of a project, thereby helping the review process run more efficiently and expeditiously. As a best practice, some of our municipalities have also developed study terms of references to support greater submission efficiencies by providing clear expectations regarding study and report content. While we trust many of our development stakeholders will continue to see the value of pre-consultation to inform their applications, we are concerned that the proposed removal of this mandatory requirement will likely result in the submission of applications with insufficient information to make timely decisions. This will lead to further delays to development approvals and potentially more refusals of applications.

2. Use it or Lose it:

It is encouraging that the Province is giving municipalities the tools they need to ensure infrastructure and resources are directed to the projects that are prepared to move forward by offering this mandatory lapsing of Site Plan Approval where a development has not proceeded within 3 years. We encourage the Province to continue moving ahead with its efforts to enable municipalities to implement zoning with conditions.

3. Settlement Area Boundary Expansions (and Permitted Appeals):

As part of the long-term planning process for accommodating population and employment growth, numerous municipalities across Simcoe County are required to go through the extensive planning process of expanding a settlement area boundary. This process is an extensive technical review considering many factors such as avoidance of significant natural heritage features and areas, avoidance of prime agricultural land where possible, and ensuring the expansion lands can be adequately serviced with municipal sewer and water in a cost effective and efficient manner. Allowing appeals in this highly technical process will protract the process of approving a settlement area boundary expansion. Municipalities cannot afford the expense and time of defending our very technically based decisions on settlement area boundary expansions.

The no appeals on settlement area boundary expansions have been in effect in the Province of Ontario since 2006. This is a long-standing Planning Act provision which has worked effectively to allow growing municipalities across the Province to ensure the settlement boundary expansion process is based on good land use planning and sound technical evaluation. It also provides the opportunity to tie infrastructure with these boundaries.

4. Employment (and Definition of Employment Area):

The definition of Employment Area refers to “clusters”, (excluding stand-alone offices) and does not address large, single users, like warehouses, distribution centres and single user assembly operations. There are 444 municipalities across Ontario and most of those municipalities are small and medium sized towns and cities. This is the case for the municipalities across Simcoe County. Offices form an important part of our employment fabric. In Canada’s knowledge-based economy, we require as much support as possible to allow stand-alone offices to locate within employment areas. This is a very important policy directive that should be supported by the Province. Please consider the unintended consequences of excluding stand-alone offices from being able to locate within employment areas and how this proposed exclusionary policy may harm the ability for small towns and cities across Ontario to facilitate new employment growth in our communities which is vital to their survival.

On the other hand, there should be similar protections for warehousing uses that are being pushed to convert to other uses.

5. **Housing:**

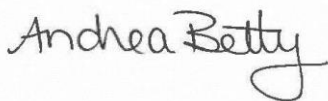
We applaud the Province's willingness to be bold in adapting the land use planning system to help with housing affordability. As professionals, we remain willing and hopeful that the Province will continue efforts to ensure the emphasis on housing does not eclipse other key elements of community building. Elements such as creating complete, sustainable, climate change resilient communities, and preservation of the natural environment and agricultural/rural land base will ensure that we build more homes in communities Ontarians will enjoy living and working in.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into these ERO Postings prior to proclamation. We trust these comments are helpful.

Sincerely,



Jill Lewis, MCIP RPP
Senior Planner
City of Orillia



Andrea Betty, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning & Community Development
Town of Penetanguishene



Andria Leigh, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning & Growth
Town of Innisfil



Andrea Woodrow, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning & Development
Township of Severn



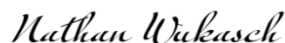
Jennifer Best, MCIP RPP
Director, Planning & Building
Town of New Tecumseth



Ian Sugden, MCIP RPP
General Manager of
Development Services and Engineering
City of Orillia



Maryann Hunt, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning & Development
Township of Tiny



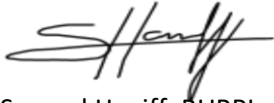
Nathan Wukasch, MCIP RPP
Senior Planner
Town of Collingwood



Jennifer Stong, BA, CPT
Planner
Township of Ramara



Kristin D. Pechkovsky, MCIP RPP
Planning Program Supervisor
County of Simcoe



Samuel Haniff, BURPL., MCIP RPP
Manager of Planning
Township of Essa



Dan Amadio, MCIP RPP
Manager of Planning
County of Simcoe



Amy Cann, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning & Building
Township of Clearview



Nathan Westendorp, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning/Chief Planner
County of Simcoe
