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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2020-INFO-83
Date: September 4, 2020

Subject:

Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (ERO Posting #019-1680) and Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (ERO Posting #019-1679), File No. L35-03 and D-12-01

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Council that the Province has now finalized [Amendment 1 to “A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe”](#) (the Growth Plan). It is now in effect as of August 28, 2020. The Province also released its final [Land Needs Assessment \(LNA\) Methodology](#) on the same date.

2. Background

2.1 In June 2020, the Province released for public comment proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and a revised LNA Methodology. The changes were open for public review and comment over a 45-day commenting period which closed at the end of July. The proposed changes were released through two Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) postings:

- a. Proposed Amendment 1 , [ERO Posting 019-1680](#); and
- b. Proposed LNA, [ERO Posting 019-1679](#).

2.2 At its meeting on July 29, 2020, Regional Council considered Commissioner's Report #2020-P-14 which recommended a Regional position on these ERO postings. Council's comments were forwarded to the Province on July 30, 2020 (See Attachment #1).

3. Overview of Changes

Growth Forecasts

- 3.1 Prior to Amendment 1, Schedule 3 to the Growth Plan provided population and employment forecasts across the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2041. Amendment 1 updates Schedule 3 with new population and employment forecasts and also extends the planning horizon year to 2051. Additionally, Amendment 1 removes the interim year forecasts to align with the Reference Growth Forecast included in the proposed Amendment. The Province indicated that the Reference Growth Forecast represents the most likely future growth outlook, based on extensive modelling and analysis. The new population and employment forecasts for Durham are 1,300,000 people and 460,000 jobs to 2051.
- 3.2 Durham's current population is approximately 700,000 with approximately 250,000 jobs. The Region must plan to accommodate 600,000 new residents and 210,000 jobs in the next 30 years to achieve the 2051 Growth Plan forecasts. The population growth rate would need to reach approximately 20,000 residents per year. At present, Durham is growing by approximately 10,000 persons per year. To achieve the employment forecast, Durham's employment would need to grow by 7,000 jobs per year, and according to the Region's annual Business Count, this could be up to a 40% increase over current annual growth.
- 3.3 The removal of the interim forecast years and the use of the Reference Forecast are consistent with Regional Council's July 2020 comments.

Forecasts as Minimums

- 3.4 Upper and single-tier municipalities that have been assigned population and employment forecasts by the Growth Plan are required to use the updated Schedule 3 numbers, or they may use higher forecasts if justified through a municipal comprehensive review (MCR).
- 3.5 This approach was not supported by Regional Council. The Region's concern was that this approach would allow municipalities to develop their own higher growth forecasts, that could have the effect of siphoning forecasted growth from underperforming municipalities.

Mineral Aggregate Operations

- 3.6 Amendment 1 originally proposed to delete Policy 4.2.8.2 a) of the Growth Plan that prohibits the establishment of new mineral aggregate operations, wayside pits and quarries (and accessory and ancillary uses) within habitats of endangered species and threatened species in the Growth Plan Area. Regional Council had recommended to the Province that it not delete the policy as this change could have eroded environmental protection of habitat of endangered and threatened species, particularly in communities that are outside the boundaries of the Greenbelt Plan. In the final Amendment, this policy was not deleted, as requested.

Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) in Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs)

- 3.7 Policy 2.2.5 of the Growth Plan was revised with respect to the planning of MTSAs within a PSEZ. Through the municipal comprehensive review, this policy amendment allows conversions of employment areas to non-employment uses within a PSEZ that is located within a delineated MTSA. The change provides further clarity to allow for mixed-use developments to be initiated within MTSAs and to encourage more transit-oriented development and intensification around MTSAs.
- 3.8 Regional staff and Council were supportive of these changes.

Alignment with Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2020

- 3.9 Changes have been made to align terms and definitions with the new PPS which came into effect on May 1, 2020. These changes were made to ensure that the Growth Plan reflects up-to-date references to the new PPS including definitions, planning horizons and consultation/engagement requirements to maintain consistency across the planning system. Regional staff had no concerns with these changes.

Transition

3.10 Housekeeping modifications were made to the Growth Plan transition regulation (O. Reg. 311/06) to facilitate implementation of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow, including the following:

- Updates conformity requirements to reflect Amendment 1; and
- Where the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal has completed a hearing, but has not yet issued a decision on a matter of conformity with the Growth Plan, those decisions are required to conform with the Plan as it read prior to the enactment of Amendment 1.

3.11 Amendment 1 came into effect immediately upon its release, on August 28, 2020.

3.12 In its comments, Regional Council asked the Province to extend the deadline to bring the Region's Official Plan into conformity with the updated Growth Plan, from July 1, 2022 to July 1, 2023. Although the Provincial process to review, consult, release and update the forecasts and the LNA methodology took nearly a year, a corresponding extension to the mandated conformity deadline was not granted. Regional planning staff are taking all steps and working diligently to meet the July 1, 2022 conformity deadline.

Land Needs Assessment Methodology

3.13 The market-based [Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) was released on August 28, 2020.

3.14 In July 2020, Regional staff supported a simplified LNA Methodology, but expressed concern over the removal of the detailed steps, assumptions, data, and process. The draft methodology released in June was only a basic and high-level overview of what needed to be considered through the process. Concern was expressed regarding the high degree of variance in how municipalities across the GGH would undertake their respective LNAs.

3.15 Regional Council recommended that the Province expand the proposed LNA to include detailed steps, assumptions, data sources and processes. The final LNA methodology expands on what was proposed in June 2020 and provides additional detail regarding the steps and sequencing of the LNA process.

3.16 The approved Methodology requires municipalities to use:

- the growth forecasts contained in Schedule 3 of the Plan (or an alternate growth scenario);
- the intensification and designated greenfield area targets, or alternative targets as may be approved by the Minister; and
- A Place to Grow policies as the basis for assessing the need for land.

3.17 Although an “alternate growth scenario” may be developed for the LNA that **exceeds** the forecast for an upper or single tier municipality in Schedule 3, it may only be used if an increase can be justified in light of demonstrated growth trends in the municipality.

3.18 The LNA methodology clearly states that **lower** projections for population, dwellings by type or employment are not permitted. The Province’s concern is that a lower projection would lead to housing affordability issues and land shortages. Providing a market-based supply of housing while conforming to the Plan is a main objective of the Province for the LNA.

3.19 Through the Region’s municipal comprehensive review, staff will assess whether an alternative growth forecast is justifiable. Preliminary indications are that a higher forecast would not be justified.

3.20 Each upper- and single-tier municipality in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is required to consider urban land need to 2051 for two types of Areas:

- **Community Areas:** Areas where most of the housing required to accommodate the forecasted population will be located, as well as most population-related jobs, most office jobs and some employment land employment jobs. Community areas include delineated built-up areas and designated greenfield areas.
- **Employment Areas:** Areas where most of the employment land employment jobs are (i.e. employment in industrial-type buildings), as well as some office jobs and some population-related jobs, particularly those providing services to the employment area. Employment areas may be in both delineated built-up areas and designated greenfield areas.

3.21 The result of the LNA is a total quantum of land needed at the upper- or single-tier municipal level, taking into consideration employment area conversions prior to proposing a settlement area boundary expansion. The Region initiated the process for consideration of employment area conversions in [June 2020](#).

- 3.22 Upper- and single-tier municipal staff are to involve Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff in their municipal comprehensive review and land needs assessment work at various stages to ensure that the necessary components are addressed. However, it is noted that the ministerial staff review of draft municipal land needs assessment materials does not denote any approval status, nor is it intended to preempt the municipality's established processes for seeking council endorsement of outcomes. It remains a requirement that the Region must also forward a draft of its Growth Plan conformity document to the Ministry 90 days before the required public meeting, which Regional staff have identified as an issue in being able to meet the July 1, 2022 conformity deadline.
- 3.23 Finally, Regional Council in its comments to the Province took the opportunity to reiterate previously expressed concerns regarding the 10-hectare hard cap that exists in the Growth Plan on the maximum size of urban boundary expansions in settlement areas within the Greenbelt, (e.g. Port Perry, Uxbridge, Cannington, Sunderland and Beaverton). Amendment 1 did not change this policy and, therefore, the 10-hectare hard caps continues to be in force.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan came into effect on August 28, 2020 and includes a 2051 population and employment forecast for Durham to be used for the purposes of calculating land needs, as part of the Region's municipal comprehensive review.
- 4.2 The Province also finalized the LNA methodology for use by upper and single-tier municipalities.
- 4.3 The conformity date for completing the Region's MCR is July 1, 2022. The ongoing changes to Provincial Policy has impacted the ability of all GTA Regions to complete their MCRs within the prescribed conformity date of July 1, 2022, but Regional staff will be taking all steps necessary to meet the deadline.
- 4.4 Later this fall, the Planning and Economic Development Committee will be provided with a report on the framework to the new Regional Official Plan, as the next step in Envision Durham, the Region's municipal comprehensive review.

5. Attachments

Attachment #1: Durham Region's Response to Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

(ERO Posting #019-1680) and Proposed Land Needs
Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for
the Greater Golden Horseshoe (ERO Posting #019-1679) (2020-
P-14), dated July 30, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development



July 30, 2020

The Honourable Steve Clark
 Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
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Dear Minister Clark:

**The Regional
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 of Durham**

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RE: Durham Region's Response to Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (ERO Posting #019-1680) and Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (ERO Posting #019-1679) (2020-P-14), Our File: L00

Council of the Region of Durham, at its meeting held on July 29, 2020, adopted the following recommendations:

- “A) That Report #2020-P-14 of the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development be endorsed and submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as Durham Region's response to Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Postings #019-1680 and #019-1679 regarding Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow, 2019 and proposed changes to the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Key comments and recommendations are that the Province:
- i) Update Schedule 3 of A Place to Grow to implement population and employment forecasts as proposed in the Reference Forecast that includes a 2051 population forecast of 1,300,000 and a 2051 employment forecast of 460,000;
 - ii) Include only a 2051 total population and employment forecast in the updated Schedule 3 of A Place to Grow (referred to as “Mock B”) and not provide the interim forecasts for 2031 and 2041;
 - iii) Not proceed with the amendment to A Place to Grow that allows municipalities to develop their own higher growth forecasts, which could result in the siphoning of growth from other municipalities across the GGH and exacerbate the challenges for underperforming municipalities;

- iv) Not proceed to delete Policy 4.2.8.2 a) ii of A Place to Grow, as this change could erode environmental protection of habitat of endangered and threatened species, particularly in communities that are outside the boundaries of the Greenbelt Plan;
 - v) Amend its municipal comprehensive review conformity date from July 1, 2022 to July 1, 2023 to account for the impacts caused by the continued changes to Provincial Policy and the remaining outstanding Provincial decisions;
 - vi) Expand the proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology to include detailed steps, assumptions, data sources and processes that will align with the latest amendments to A Place to Grow;
 - vii) Remove the requirement under subsection 17 (17.1) of the Planning Act which requires municipalities to provide a copy of the proposed Regional Official Plan (or Amendment) to the Minister 90 days before notice is issued of a public meeting and/or open house to help expedite the completion of the Region's municipal comprehensive review;
 - viii) Reconsider, as part of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow, the existing hard cap of 10 hectares for Settlement Area Boundary Expansions within the Greenbelt Plan Area. Instead, municipalities should be permitted to consider larger Settlement Boundary Expansions to support the long-term viability of small urban settlements, subject to the completion of a servicing capacity study, and provincial approval through an MCR process; and
 - ix) Reconsider, as part of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow, additional permissions to expand rural employment areas to accommodate new employment opportunities and provide the ability to establish new rural employment areas, subject to certain conditions such as availability of servicing, protection of the natural heritage system and ensure compatibility with surrounding uses; and
- B) That a copy of Report #2020-P-14 of the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development be forwarded to Durham's area municipalities for their information."

Please find enclosed a copy of Report #2020-P-14 for your information.

Ralph Walton

Ralph Walton
Regional Clerk

RW/uf

- c: S. Bickford, Acting Director, Growth Management Strategic Policy,
Innovation and Partnerships Branch, Ontario Growth Secretariat
- N. Cooper, Clerk, Town of Ajax
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- D. Leroux, Clerk, Township of Uxbridge
- C. Harris, Clerk, Town of Whitby
- B. Bridgeman, Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development