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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development  
Report: #2024-INFO-51  
Date: August 30, 2024

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**Subject:**

New Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 On August 20, 2024, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) issued the new Provincial Planning Statement (new PPS), which takes effect on October 20, 2024 (Attachment #1). Release of the new PPS is the culmination of a review of the former Provincial Policy Statement that began in April 2023. This report provides an overview of key policy changes found within the new PPS.
- 1.2 In addition to issuing the new PPS, the province has requested feedback on specific planning matters in process that should be addressed through a transition regulation under the Planning Act ([ERO 019-9065](#)). The Region's new Official Plan (Envision Durham) was adopted by Council on May 17, 2023, and is based on the directions provided under the former Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan, not the new PPS. The province has yet to approve Envision Durham. However, Regional staff have provided comments on the Minister's Draft Decision and have also met with MMAH staff to help support the Minister's approval of Envision Durham.

1.3 If Envision Durham does not receive Ministerial approval prior to the new PPS coming into effect, it will not be in conformity with in-effect provincial plans and policies. Regional staff have communicated to provincial staff the need to approve Envision Durham before the new PPS comes into effect, as well as the importance of approval prior to the proclamation of Bill 23 for the Region. The proclamation date for Durham is not known at this time but is anticipated before the end of the year. Once Bill 23 has been proclaimed, the Regional Official Plan will become the official plan for the lower-tier municipalities; it is imperative that the area municipalities be working with Envision Durham, as a base to update their respective official plans. Regional staff will forward a copy of this report to MMAH staff as a reminder of the importance of the approval of Envision Durham prior to both the new PPS coming into effect (October 20, 2024) and Bill 23 proclamation for Durham Region.

## **2. Background**

2.1 The former Provincial Policy Statement, issued under the Planning Act, is a statement of the government's policies on land use planning. It gives policy direction on issues such as:

- efficient use and management of land and infrastructure;
- provision of housing, including affordable housing;
- protection of the environment and resources, including farmland;
- economic development and job creation;
- appropriate transportation, water, sewer and other infrastructure; and
- protection of people, property and community resources from natural or human-made hazards.

2.2 On April 6, 2023, the province released a proposed new PPS intended to replace the former Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan). The proposed new PPS would combine the former Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan into a single document, while introducing a number of foundational policy shifts. Regional Council provided comments on this initial proposal through Report [#2023-P-19](#).

2.3 Key Regional comments on the proposed new PPS included requests that the province:

- provide direction on developing population and employment forecasts, based on a common timeframe and methodology;

- maintain requirements for settlement area boundary expansions to be considered only through a municipal comprehensive review;
  - continue to support intensification targets within municipal official plans;
  - uphold agricultural systems planning;
  - discourage residential lot creation in prime agricultural areas and limit lot creation on rural lands; and
  - reassess permissions for light industrial, manufacturing and small-scale warehousing within Strategic Growth Areas.
- 2.4 In response to feedback from the initial consultation period, the province released an updated proposed new PPS on April 10, 2024. This update included requirements to utilize Ontario Population Projections, prepared annually by the Ministry of Finance (MOF), as a base for long-term planning, additional criteria for settlement area boundary expansions, a requirement to use an agricultural systems approach, and removal of policies that would allow lot creation in prime agricultural areas. Regional Council provided comments on this updated proposed new PPS through Report [#2024-COW-18](#).
- 2.5 This report presents the final new PPS as released on August 20, 2024 (no longer open for consultation).

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 An overview of the Proposed Provincial Planning Statement was provided in Report [#2023-INFO-29](#) in April 2023.
- 3.2 Regional comments on the Proposed Provincial Planning Statement were provided in Report [#2023-P-19](#) in June 2023.
- 3.3 Regional comments on the updated Proposed Provincial Planning Statement were provided in Report [#2024-COW-18](#) in May 2024.

### **4. New Provincial Planning Statement**

- 4.1 The new PPS generally upholds the draft policy changes that were proposed in April 2024. Minor additions/clarifications include:
- strengthening policy to require (rather than encourage) municipalities to support intensification and establish intensification targets;
  - strengthening policy to require municipalities to consider the impact of development on the long-term economic viability of employment uses;

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- re-introducing the definition of significant for the purposes of cultural heritage resources and archaeology;
  - updating the definition of on-farm diversified uses to include energy generation, transmission and energy (battery) storage systems; and
  - clarifying permissions around creating additional residential units in prime agricultural areas to require that one additional unit be within or attached to the primary unit and additional residential units do not include farm worker housing.
- 4.2 With the repeal of the Growth Plan, municipalities will no longer be required to plan to specific population and employment targets. When creating a new or updating an official plan, municipalities will be required to have enough land designated to meet projected needs for at least a 20-year horizon, but not more than 30-year time horizon, as informed by MOF Population Projections.
- 4.3 The Region previously expressed concerns related to this approach because MOF projections use historical growth rates and do not account for opportunities for significant development potential in Durham, both greenfield and land available for intensification potential within strategic growth areas. As such, MOF projections have been consistently below Growth Plan forecasts and may not be sufficient to meet ambitious provincial housing targets for large and fast-growing municipalities. Furthermore, MOF projections are only published at a regional level, and they do not include employment. Despite the province amending policy to require the use of MOF projections, the need for the Region to have a key role in the forecasting and managing of growth remains the same because of our role in the provision of infrastructure, namely roads, transit, water, and wastewater.
- 4.4 The new PPS has removed the requirement for municipal comprehensive reviews, so municipalities can consider settlement area boundary expansions at any time. There is also no limitation on the ability of landowners from applying for such expansions. The Region previously requested that the province reconsider allowing requests for settlement area boundary expansions to happen outside of a municipal comprehensive review and maintain a standard methodology for the conduct of settlement area boundary expansions. Concern remains with potential invitation of speculation and ad-hoc submissions, lengthy appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT), and unnecessary challenges to long term servicing and infrastructure planning.

- 4.5 Various policies within the Greenbelt Plan refer to policies of the former Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan. To account for when the former Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan are revoked, a consequential amendment to the Greenbelt Plan was made on August 15, 2024, so that the policies of the former Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan will continue to apply where the Greenbelt Plan refers to them to maintain existing protections for the Greenbelt. Specific references to the policies in the Greenbelt Plan have not been detailed in the Amendment.
- 4.6 The new PPS now explicitly includes waste management as critical infrastructure, which it did not in its draft form. This addition recognizes the necessity of integrating waste management infrastructure into land use planning and is reflective of the services the Region provides to the community.

## **5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- 1.1 - Protect, preserve and restore the natural environment, including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails, and farmland.
- 1.5 - Expand sustainable and active transportation.
- 2.1 - Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- 2.5 - Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
- 3.1 - Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business.
- 3.5 - Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries.
- 4.1 - Revitalize community housing and improve housing choice, affordability and sustainability.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 In April 2023, the province initiated a housing-focused policy review of the former Provincial Policy Statement. The result of this review was the release of a new PPS on August 20, 2024. The new PPS comes into effect on October 20, 2024, at which time the former Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan will be revoked.
- 6.2 Regional Council has provided feedback to the province at each stage of consultations on the new PPS. While the province has responded to feedback, including not proceeding with proposed policies for lot creation within prime

agricultural areas and strengthening intensification policies and employment area land use compatibility policies; concern remains with the removal of Growth Plan population and employment forecasts and relaxed requirements for settlement area boundary expansions.

- 6.3 A copy of this report will be forwarded to the MMAH as a reminder of the importance of the approval of Envision Durham, in a form that is as close as possible to what was adopted by Durham Regional Council on May 17, 2023.
- 6.4 Regional staff will keep Committee and Council apprised of any relevant transition provisions related to the new PPS.

## **7. Attachments**

Attachment #1: [Provincial Planning Statement, 2024](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Colleen Goodchild, Director of Planning  
for Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE  
Commissioner of Planning and  
Economic Development