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PLANNING FOR TOMORROW – 2009 REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE WORK PLAN

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated January 22, 2009, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Committee and Council endorse the Regional Official Plan Update Work Plan outlined in this report.
2. Notice be given of the Special Meeting of Council, to be held pursuant to Subsection 26 (4) of the *Planning Act*, on April 8, 2009, at 1:30 p.m., during the Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting, to hear submissions in regard to revisions that may be required to the Regional Official Plan.
3. Council authorise staff to proceed with notice and scheduling for the open house and statutory public meeting for the fall of 2009 to meet *Planning Act* requirements.
4. The Regional Clerk send this report and attachments as well as notices of future meetings and process to the Provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and to the local municipalities for their information regarding the Provincial conformity exercise.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline the work plan and next steps for a Regional Official Plan update based on work undertaken over the past two years through Planning for Tomorrow.

The purpose of the Special Meeting of Council is to hear submissions in regard to revisions that may be required to the Regional Official Plan. The duties of Council, pursuant to section 26 of the *Planning Act*, have been delegated to the Planning and Economic Development Committee by By-law R-1290-2002-067.

The objective of this final phase of Planning for Tomorrow initiative is to release a draft Regional Official Plan Update for public input and review in June 2009, with anticipated adoption by Regional Council late in 2009 to meet the conformity requirements of the Provincial Places to Grow legislation and Plan as well as provide updates to the Regional Official Plan regarding other Provincial initiatives.

3. BACKGROUND

Planning for Tomorrow has set the stage for a Regional Official Plan update

Since 2005, under the Planning for Tomorrow initiative, Regional staff has brought forward a series of research reports and presentations on all aspects of growth management. These reports include:

- York Region 2031 Land Budget – January 2009
- York Region 2031 Population and Employment Forecasts – January 2009
- Planning for Tomorrow – Refined York Region 2031 Forecast and Land Budget – September 3 2008
- Visualizing the Look of Intensification in York Region: Preliminary Report - June 11, 2008
- Comparative Analysis of Growth Scenarios - April 30, 2008

A full listing and the reports in PDF format are available on the Planning for Tomorrow portion of the Region's website. In the next few months additional reports will frame further growth management aspects including: intensification, natural heritage strategic directions and natural heritage trails, wellhead protection and Greenbelt conformity, an updated Greening and Securement Strategy, further details on Best Practices for New Communities and Regional centres and Corridors. These documents form the background work and discussion papers to support an update to the Regional Official Plan to bring the Regional Official Plan into conformity with the Provincial Places to Grow and Greenbelt Plans.

Besides background research papers, the three phases of public consultation with municipal Councils, stakeholders and special interest groups undertaken in 2006, 2007 and 2008 that have focussed the issues requiring attention in an updated Plan.

An updated Regional Official Plan

Since the Regional Official Plan was adopted and approved in the mid 1990's there have been many new Provincial planning initiatives (Greenbelt, Source Water Protection and Places to Grow, Metrolinx and Draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan) that have fundamentally changed the way planning occurs in the south-central Ontario. In the opinion of staff, production of a comprehensive update of the Regional Official Plan should allow a more comprehensive approach to inclusion of these initiatives in the Plan than a series of amendments.

As well a number of important Regional initiatives have advanced including the Sustainability Strategy, the Master Plans for Transportation and Transit and Water and Waste Water, the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, Natural Heritage Strategic

Directions and Best Practices for New Communities, as well as Regional Centres and Corridors. Other initiatives at the local municipal level, including the adoption of Energy Star minimum standards and the impact of LEED development and official plan updates currently in an advanced state by a number of municipalities can be better integrated into the overall Regional Official Plan context if a new plan is undertaken.

Regional Official Plan focussed on Sustainability remains valid

The main structure of the Regional Official Plan established in 1994 was focussed on the three themes of sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality. This focus on sustainability and the triple bottom line remains valid. The sustainability focus will be strengthened with a consistent approach throughout the Plan.



On balance, Regional staff is of the opinion that a redraft of the Regional Official Plan is a more appropriate way to proceed than a series of Amendments. The work plan following reflects this approach.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Planning Act requires the Regional Official Plan be reviewed at least every five years – 2009 is a five-year review update year

Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, requires that at least every five years, Council shall revise the Plan to:

- ensure that it conforms with Provincial Plans,
- has regard for matters of Provincial Interest and is consistent with Policy Statements; and
- if it contains policies dealing with areas of employment, including, the designation of areas of employment in the official plan and policies dealing with the removal of land from areas of employment, to ensure that those policies are confirmed or amended.

Before revising the official plan, the *Planning Act* requires that consultation take place with the approval authority (in this case MMAH) and public bodies with respect to revisions that may be required. Subsection 26 (3)(b) of the *Planning Act* further requires that a special meeting of Council, open to the public, be held to hear submissions in regard to revisions that may be required.

Notice of the Special meeting of Council must be given for two consecutive weeks, not less than 30 days prior to the meeting.

While many meetings have been held on the Planning for Tomorrow initiative, Council, through its delegate, Planning and Economic Development Committee (delegation Bylaw R-1290-2002-067), must convene the Special Meeting required by Subsection 26 (3)(b) of the Act.

It is therefore recommended that Notice be given of a Special Meeting of Council on April 8, 2009 at 1:30 p.m., during the Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting, pursuant to Section 26 (4) of the *Planning Act*. Notice of the Special Meeting will be placed in local newspapers in York Region and the Toronto Star, the weeks of February 15 and 22, 2009, resulting in a notice period in excess of the 30 day minimum required under the *Planning Act*.

Regional Legal Services staff has been consulted with regard to the five-year review notice provisions and concurs with this approach.

4.2 Proceeding with an Updated Regional Official Plan – Draft Work Plan is aggressive and timelines tight

In order to undertake the preparation of an updated Official Plan there are a number of strategic milestones that must be met. These include:

- Commencement and ongoing consultation with internal Regional technical staff, external Provincial staff, agencies and local area municipalities in York through the establishment of a series of Technical Advisory Committees (TACs).
- Policy drafting and review involving the internal Regional TAC under the coordination of staff of the Long Range Planning Branch.
- Mapping and Geomatics input to support policy directions.
- Requirements for giving notice and holding the Special Meeting of Council (discussed in Section 4.1 above) as well as an Open House and Statutory Public meeting to be scheduled for the fall of 2009.

If work proceeds without major issues (including the commitment of sufficient staff resources from Regional departments to assist in review of existing policies and drafting of new policies), these milestones can be met and a draft of an updated Regional Official Plan can be released by Council for public review in June 2009.

The updated Regional Official Plan will then be reviewed by the Province, agencies, local municipalities and stakeholders over the summer and early fall of 2009. The Open house and Statutory Public Meeting would be held in late September and October respectively, with a report back to Committee and Council and potential adoption of the updated Regional Official Plan by Council in December, 2009.

Any delays, additional consultations or emergence of major issues could delay finalisation of the Plan to early 2010.

4.3 Ongoing extensive review with Stakeholders

Stakeholder consultations have been ongoing during the past three years as part of Phases 1 through 3 of Planning for Tomorrow. Over this time, there have been numerous meetings with stakeholders through town hall meetings, municipal councils, special interest groups including UDI (now BILD), environmental groups, teachers and students and provincial and municipal staff technical meetings.

The process of bringing forward additional policy papers (as detailed in section 4.4) and drafting an updated Regional Official Plan is the final element of the Planning for Tomorrow initiative. While review and discussions with stakeholders will be ongoing, more focussed review will take place over the summer and early fall, with presentations to local municipal Councils starting in September. This ongoing consultation will likely lead to subsequent drafts of the Proposed Regional Official Plan and lead to the statutory meeting required by the *Planning Act* in approximately October, 2009 and adoption of the new Official Plan potentially in late 2009. Following adoption, the Regional Official Plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval. Regional staff is anticipating that the time taken by MMAH may be shortened through ongoing consultation with Provincial Ministries and other stakeholders before adoption to permit a timely issuance of a decision by the Minister.

First Nations consultations will also take place using the expanded contact list developed by Regional staff in consultation with the Province and protocols established through other Regional initiatives including the Individual Environmental Assessment for the Southeast Collector.

As well as the stakeholder involvement, Regional staff will ensure that ongoing discussions are reflected on the Region's website and in blast emails to the extensive stakeholder list, at critical points.

A more detailed timeline of the work plan elements, showing adoption of the updated Regional Official Plan in December 2009 is appended as *Attachment 1*.

4.4 A series of Policy Reports in the coming months will establish additional Regional Official Plan directions

At the present time, additional work is being undertaken relating to an Agricultural land review, natural heritage strategic directions, best practices and fiscal impact. In January, further reports were advanced on land budget and population and employment forecasts. These policy sections will be incorporated into the draft official plan at the earliest opportunity.

The complete list of additional policy reports and their anticipated timing includes:

- Forecasts January
- Land Budget January
- Intensification February
- New Communities Best Practices March
- Greenbelt/Wellhead March
- Natural Heritage System April
- Natural Heritage Trails May
- Centres & Corridors March/April
- Agriculture Review May

The purpose of these reports is to tie together the Planning for Tomorrow work and conclusions leading to policy formulation, which will bring the Regional Official Plan into conformity with both the Places to Grow and the Greenbelt Plans.

4.5 Coordinating with local Official Plan reviews and Growth Plan Conformity initiatives

The Region's role in Growth Management includes distribution of forecasts, allocation of the overall land budget and establishment intensification policies, among others will assist local municipalities in their ongoing growth management work.

At the present time, East Gwillimbury, Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill are undertaking individual growth management or Official Plan updates which are anticipated to be adopted in late 2009 to 2010. The majority of this work is well-advanced, and Regional staff continues to be involved in these local undertakings and discussions of Regional forecasting and land budget exercises with out local counterparts.

Ongoing coordination of planning policy and forecasting is required to ensure that any issues between the Regional Official Plan and local plans are fully discussed and managed. The local municipal Technical Advisory Committee has been meeting and will continue to meet for the duration of this ROP update work.

5. Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026, York Region's strategic plan for the future, establishes the overall vision and direction for Regional Council. As well, Council has adopted the Sustainability Strategy and the Natural Heritage Directions Strategy. Further work is being undertaken on New Communities Criteria and Best Practices that will determine a new way of proceeding with development. The preparation of an updated Regional Official Plan will permit the strengthening of these linkages in the Regional Official Plan document.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Policy development and Regional Official Plan update being undertaken with existing staff complement

As with the balance of Planning for Tomorrow, the Regional Official Plan update work is to be undertaken with the existing Regional staff complements from the Planning Department as well as other departments.

The Region is currently undertaking a detailed 25 year fiscal and economic analysis to assess the transportation, water and sewer and human services costs associated with the amount of growth anticipated to occur in the Region by 2031. The fiscal and economic analysis will include an evaluation of long range capital expenditures and revenues, operating costs, tax levy impacts, reserve fund and debt requirements.

7. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal official plans are required to conform to the Regional Official Plan and to Provincial Plans as well. A number of local municipalities are undertaking official Plan updates and growth management exercises. Regional has been meeting to coordinate Regional forecasting and land budget work with local municipalities. This dialogue will continue.

8. CONCLUSION

Policy documents and the public consultation over the past 3 years form the background work and discussion papers to support an updated Regional Official Plan.

A series of staff reports will be brought forward in the next few months which will further serve to focus the issues and policy directions. Regional staff recommends that an updated Regional Official Plan be prepared based on the work plan attached to this report. This will result in the release of a draft of an updated Regional Official Plan in June 2009, followed by consultations in the summer and fall 2009 and adoption by Regional Council late in 2009.

The Regional role in growth management includes leadership in the distribution of population and employment forecasts, establishment of land budget and intensification targets among others to assist local municipalities to achieve conformity with Regional and Provincial Planning documents. Ongoing coordination of planning policy and forecasting is required to ensure that any issues between the Regional Official Plan and local plans are fully discussed and managed. The local municipal Technical Advisory Committee has been meeting and will continue to meet for the duration of this ROP update work.

Section 26 of the Planning Act, requires that at least every five years, Council hold a special meeting of Council to obtain input on the aspects of the plan requiring review.

It is recommended that notice be given for a Special Meeting of Council to be held April 8, 2009, at 1:30 p.m., during the Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting pursuant to Subsection 26 (3)(b) of the *Planning Act*. Notice of the Special Meeting will be placed in local newspapers in York Region and the Toronto Star, the weeks of February 15 and 22, 2009, resulting in a notice period in excess of that required under the *Planning Act*.

Regional staff also recommends that Council authorise staff to proceed with notice and scheduling for the open house and statutory public meeting for the fall of 2009 to meet *Planning Act* requirements.

For more information on this report, please contact John B. Waller, MCIP, RPP, Director Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1525.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is included with this report.)