



## Brant County Council Report

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**To:** To the Mayor and Members of Brant County Council  
**From:** Jennifer Boyer, BES, M.Sc., MCIP RPP, Senior Policy Planner  
**Date:** August 4, 2020  
**Report:** RPT-20-85  
**Subject:** Official Plan Work Plan Update & Proposed Amendment to the Growth Plan Forecasting to 2051  
**Purpose:** For Information & Direction

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### Recommendation

Whereas staff have provided feedback to the Province on the Proposed Amendment 1 to Schedule 3 - Provincial Growth Forecasting to 2051 and Land Needs Assessment Methodology to assist with the completion of the County's Municipal Comprehensive Review; THAT report RPT-20-85 be received as information;

AND THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the revised Official Plan schedule and work plan to ensure the County meets conformity to the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022.

### Key Strategic Priorities

1. Sustainable and Managed Growth
2. Healthy, Safe and Engaged Citizens

### Financial Considerations

None at this time.

### Background

The Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (G.G.H.) was released on June 16, 2020 for review with comments due by July 31, 2020.

The proposed amendment includes changes to the population and employment forecasts for all municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and revises the horizon year for planning from 2041 to 2051. Other policy changes include amendments to align with the *Provincial Policy Statement* now in effect as of May 1, 2020.

The purpose of the review was to revisit the last 15 years of the original Growth Plan forecasts: analyze past trends in economic and demographic data; revisit the current snapshot of municipal planning; and draw on feedback from municipalities and stakeholders.

Report PD-20-14 was presented to PDC on March 3, 2020 summarizing the proposal by the Province to revise Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan, and an overview of consultation workshops attended by staff with the Ontario Growth Secretariat in February 2020.

The Province indicated in February they would release an Amendment to the Growth Plan and Land Needs Assessment methodology by no later than summer 2020. Both revisions are critical to the County's New Official Plan and the ongoing technical studies for the Municipal Comprehensive Review. Any further delay to the release of this information would hamper the proposed schedule as changes to land needs and forecasting would require revisions to technical studies already completed, resulting in further delay to the New Official Plan schedule and result in additional consulting costs.

## **Report**

### **Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan**

The Province has updated Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan for population and employment forecasts and extended them to the year 2051. This horizon is consistent with long-range planning approach of the previous Growth Plan and better aligns with the land supply requirements of the new 2020 *Provincial Policy Statement*.

To ensure coordinated growth, transportation networks, economic development and the achievement of Complete Communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Province provides projected population and employment forecasts for all municipalities in the GGH. These growth forecasts are used by the County to complete our Growth Management Strategy and Residential and Employment Land Needs Assessment which is part of our Municipal Comprehensive Review for the New Official Plan.

It is proposed that municipalities use baseline forecasts noted as the "Reference Scenario" or the "High Scenario" that are specifically determined through the Municipal Comprehensive Review background review and technical study provided by the Province. Municipalities may also test alternative growth assumptions, but must justify the population and employment trends specific to local conditions. Lower forecast scenarios for population are not permitted, and a municipality cannot 'cherry pick' growth forecasts for population and employment.

The County's consultant (Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.) has prepared a White Paper summary for their clients on the Proposed Amendment for future population and employment growth and long-term urban land needs assessments generally across the GGH. The White Paper is attached to this report to be used as background information.

### **Land Needs Assessment**

The growth forecasts and planning horizon date are a critical input into the Land Needs Assessment (LNA) methodology that municipalities use to determine the quantity of residential and employment land required. The Province has proposed new LNA which would revise the current draft Guideline, and provide more of a less prescriptive, outcome-based approach to assessing residential and employment land requirements to 2051. It is more of a streamlined approach to land budgeting, and recognizes more local needs and differences with Outer Ring municipalities compared to urban settlement areas.

These considerations ensure that sufficient and appropriate mixes of land are available to accommodate:

- All housing market segments and housing options.
- All types of employment to reflect a changing economy.
- All infrastructure services that are needed to meet Complete Communities.

Land Needs Assessment is part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review, which will make recommendations for the County's Growth Management Strategy and Official Plan policies. This process involved dialogue between the municipality, stakeholders, developers, the public and the Province during consultation for the New Official Plan. If approved by the Minister, the new LNA methodology would replace the existing methodology and municipalities would need to ensure that it is used in assessing the quantity of land needed to accommodate their forecasted growth to the horizon of the Growth Plan as per the policies of the Plan.

### **Response by the County of Brant to the Province of Ontario**

The County of Brant has provided feedback to the Province (MMAH, OGS) with the assistance of our consultant with respect to the Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow. Please see the attached presentation slide deck for further explanation on the growth forecasts related to the County of Brant. Below are planning staff's comments:

#### **Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan**

- **The proposed change of extension of the Growth Plan horizon from 2041 to 2051 is acceptable** - In terms of land use planning and to determine a up to 25 year of land supply, the additional planning horizon of an additional 10-years will assist the County with infrastructure planning, growth management and a proper phasing of development strategy.

These proposed amendments by the Province will result in additional work to tweak the growth forecasts for the County's MCR, but timing is of an essence. The County has reiterated the importance of having these growth forecasts finalized as soon as possible, or it will result in further delay to completing our New Official Plan.

- **The County of Brant is Tracking to the Revised High Scenario up to 2051 (High Scenario, Mock B)** – Based on review of County historical growth trends, active residential and non-residential development applications as well as anticipated longer-term residential and non-residential development pressures, it is staff's opinion that the County of Brant is tracking more closely to the High Scenario to the year 2051, rather than the Reference Scenario for Population and Employment Forecasts. The proposed High Scenario is less than the original 2019 Growth Plan Schedule 3 forecasts.

The range of forecast growth between the proposed low and high scenario is very narrow for the County of Brant. For the revised numbers, 2041 range is within 2,000 people and by 2051 within 3,000 people.

It is planning staff's opinion that the proposed high scenario should only represent the maximum upper range rather than a target number with respect to long-term population and employment growth to be used in Official Plans across the GGH.

If the population and employment forecasts appear to be tracking above the High Scenario to 2051 either at the GGH level or more locally in the near-term, the Province will have an opportunity to revise the Schedule 3 growth forecast in accordance with the scheduled five-year review of Schedule 3 to the Growth Plan. Furthermore, municipalities will have an opportunity to amend their OP accordingly in accordance with their scheduled 10-year OP review process.

- **High Growth Forecast Alternatives are problematic** - Permitting an "open-ended" higher growth forecasts through the Municipal Comprehensive Review may be problematic, particularly those that are experiencing relatively stronger near-term growth pressure for residential development compared to non-residential development. The County of Brant is not recommending open ended forecasts.

A key purpose of Schedule 3 in the Growth Plan is to provide guidance with respect to the region-wide long-term population and employment growth potential across the GGH as a whole as well as for each of the respective upper-tier or single-tier municipalities. It is recognized that the High Scenario represents an ambitious upper range for long-term population and employment growth across the GGH to the year 2051.

### **Review of 2020 Technical Report (Hemson Consulting Ltd.)**

The background report provided by the Province for the growth forecasting ("Hemson Report") provides higher forecasting which tests the Reference Scenario. For Outer Ring municipalities like the County of Brant, this High Scenario is only marginally higher than the Reference Scenario for the Population Forecast. For the Employment Forecasting, the County is below their growth targets and the High Scenario is actually lower than the original Schedule 3 Growth Plan (2019) targets.

### **Forecast Housing Growth by Type**

The 2020 Technical Report projects an increase of only 1,000 additional high-density (i.e. apartment units) in the County of Brant between 2016 and 2051. At the present time there are over 2,000 high-density units within the development approvals process across the County of Brant, which are anticipated to be constructed before 2041. Accordingly, it is staff's opinion that the 2020 Technical Report understates the long-term demand for high-density households for the County of Brant.

### **Employment Forecast by Type**

- **Rural Employment** - The 2020 Technical Report projects no increase of jobs related to Rural Employment (RE) between 2016 and 2051. It is staff's opinion that there is potential for rural employment growth across the County of Brant over the long-term (i.e. to the year 2051). This includes all jobs located on lands outside of the County's urban settlement areas of Paris, St. George and Burford, including rural Employment Areas.

- **Population-Related Employment** - Staff's general observation is that with the significant population growth anticipated for Paris and St. George there will likely need to be a significant increase in commercial space. Currently, there is limited vacant building space within both St. George and Paris.

The current Population-Related Employment (PRE) base, especially in St. George is not adequate to serve the potential growth anticipated. Accordingly, it is staff's opinion that the 2,000 PRE growth identified for the County of Brant from 2016 to 2051 is insufficient to allow for enough opportunity for commercial growth. It is also important to note that a small portion of PRE will be needed in Employment Areas across the County and a large portion will also be assigned to work at home employment and institutional employment.

**Employment Land Employment** - It is planning staff's opinion that the 2020 Technical Report overstates Employment Land Employment (ELE). Watson is targeting 43% of County-wide growth as ELE compared to 82% as per the 2020 Technical Report.

### **Implications to the County of Brant**

Comments were due to the Province on the Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan by July 31, 2020 in which the County of Brant provided. We await for the Province's decision on the proposed amendments, but we are moving ahead with completing the draft Municipal Comprehensive Review based on these growth forecasting assumptions.

Municipalities are to use the selected growth forecasts when updated, or use higher forecasts as determined through their MCR to meet the conformity deadline of July 2022. To implement the Growth Plan, upper- and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe are required to calculate the amount of land they will need for development until the Growth Plan horizon which has been revised from 2041 to now an additional 10 years, to 2051.

The Province has stated that there will be *no extensions* to meet the July 1, 2022 date for conformity to the Growth Plan. Municipalities must complete their Municipal Comprehensive Review and have their Official Plans approved by the Province prior to this date. As 2022 is election year, both for the Province and Municipalities, it is important that the County has the New Official Plan submitted to the Province for final review by Q4 2021 to make this timeframe.

### **Official Plan Work Plan & Schedule**

Our New Official Plan is behind schedule by five (5) months due to: COVID-19; the cancellation of our spring public engagement events; the amendment to the Provincial Growth Forecasting; and revisions to the Land Needs Assessment methodology. The ability to complete the Municipal Comprehensive Review and a New Official Plan by December 2021 is a tight timeframe. This timeframe has been communicated to the Province.

However, during this time period staff have been working with our consultant on the Municipal Comprehensive Review technical studies, discussing site-specific requests with landowners and consultants, prepping for engagement events, and writing background thematic Discussion Papers for consultation purposes.

The revised Official Plan work plan outlines the next steps in the project schedule and completion of technical studies to ensure we meet our timelines to the Province. Staff also have a meeting scheduled with the Ontario Growth Secretariat on August 12, 2022 on the proposed Growth Forecasting and our New Official Plan timelines. We will be asking for an extension up to a year to the July 1, 2022 conformity date.

### **Monthly Updates to Committee**

It is the intent for staff to resume monthly updates to Committee on the Official Plan work plan and Municipal Comprehensive Review technical summaries and recommendations moving forward. This will ensure the project is kept on track and deliverables are met to ensure the county's conformity date with the Province. Next month (September) staff will bring a report that outlines the thematic Discussion Papers to engage the public and stakeholders; proposed engagement events and virtual processes; along with some draft summaries related to Residential and Employment Growth Forecasting Analysis.

### **Interdepartmental Considerations**

The New Official Plan, coordination of public engagement and technical background studies of the Municipal Comprehensive Review are being fully coordinated with other County departments for their input and analysis. The proposed amendment to the Provincial Growth Plan Forecasting affects other departments and their objectives in Corporate Services, Operations and Finance. The New Official Plan is also being coordinated with master plans such as the Transportation Master Plan, Master Servicing Plans, Corporate Asset Management and Financial Plans.

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**Reviewed by:** Mat Vaughan, BES, MPLAN, MCIP, RPP, CMM3, Director of Planning

**Submitted by:** Pam Duesling, MAES, MCIP, RPP, Ec.D., CMM3, General Manager of Development Services

### **Attachments**

1. Official Plan Work Plan & Schedule (v.3 August 2020)
2. County of Brant MCR – Growth Plan Forecast Update Presentation
3. Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. White Paper on the Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow  
*Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden*

### **Resource Materials**

1. Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe - <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1680>
2. *Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for a Place to Growth: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* - <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1679>

**Copy To:**

1. Heather Boyd, Director of Council Services, Clerk
2. Senior Management Team
3. Mark Eby, Director of Infrastructure
4. Heather Mifflin, Director of Finance / Treasurer

**In adopting this report, is a bylaw or agreement required?**

By-law required (No)

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk (No)

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? (No)