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**Subject:** Statutory Public Meeting for Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 18 (Northwest Welland Urban Boundary Expansion)

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, October 14, 2020

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## Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 23-2020 **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That Report PDS 23-2020 **BE CIRCULATED** to the City of Welland.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide information for the Statutory Public Meeting for Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 18 (ROPA 18), which is being held in accordance with prescribed requirements of Section 17 of the *Planning Act, 1990*, and to collect comments from the public. No recommendations or approvals are sought at this time.
- The City of Welland has submitted an application for a Regional Official Plan Amendment for the expansion of the City's urban boundary known as the Northwest Welland Expansion (NWE) area. This report also provides information on the local Official Plan Amendment 24 adopted by the City in relation to the same matter.
- The Region has directly supported Welland's work program to consider the NWE and secondary plan process since 2017, with the intent that the process would feed into the Region's new Official Plan per the requirements of the *Growth Plan, 2017*.
- As a result of changes to the *Growth Plan, 2019*, Welland has advanced its request to expand the City's urban boundary for the NWE area in advance of the completion of the Region's Official Plan, by submitting a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) application and adopting a Local Official Plan Amendment (OPA 24).
- The City is proceeding with this application pursuant to Section 2.2.8.5-2.2.8.6 of the Provincial Growth Plan and is seeking multiple, concurrent 40 ha expansion requests ahead of the completion of the Region's new Official Plan. The Region may consider multiple 40 ha expansions so long as the proposal meets the applicable policies of the Growth Plan.

- The Region deemed this application to be complete in July 2020. On September 24, 2020, the Region circulated information to prescribed agencies and advertised this public meeting in newspapers having general circulation surrounding the study area.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The cost to process ROPA 18 have been accommodated within the Planning and Development Services Department 2020 Operating Budget.

The Region may incur costs as a result of the development of these lands in accordance with the NWE Secondary Plan. This information will be provided through a future report related to the recommendation on the NWE Secondary Plan.

## **Analysis**

ROPA 18 has been initiated by the City of Welland to add approximately 190 hectares of land known as NWE into the urban settlement area as Designated Greenfield Area and Built-Up Area, as applicable.

The amendment study area affects land generally running along Quaker Road and bound by the Town of Pelham and City of Thorold to the north, the rear lot lines of properties along Niagara Street to the east, Niagara College Welland Campus to the south and Line Avenue and Clare Avenue on the west.

Appendix 1 shows the Study Area Map.

## **Background**

The Region has directly supported Welland's work program to consider the NWE expansion and secondary plan process since 2017. Regional staff participated in establishing the Terms of Reference for the project, the selection of the successful consultant, participated on a steering committee and committed to provide financial assistance via the SNIP planning grant.

When the work plan started in 2017, the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan)* only permitted municipalities to consider urban boundary expansions as part of the Region's municipal comprehensive review (MCR). In Niagara's case, the MCR is the new Regional Official Plan (ROP) which is targeting a 2021 completion. The Region agreed to the City's NWE work program on the basis that the required supporting information to justify a boundary expansion and secondary plan would feed in to the Region's MCR/new ROP in 2021.

The *Growth Plan* was amended in May, 2019 to include new policies which allow for consideration of urban boundary expansions of 40 ha in advance of a municipal comprehensive review, subject to specific criteria. The Province later clarified through a November 12, 2019 letter that an upper-tier municipality may consider multiple 40 ha expansions so long as the proposal meets the applicable policies of the *Growth Plan*. The Province also confirmed that the Region is the approval authority for 40 ha boundary expansion applications in accordance with Section 17 of the *Planning Act*, 1990.

### ***Process Timeline***

The Region met with the City on several occasions in September and October, 2019 to discuss the ROPA requirements for the NWE area expansion under the new *Growth Plan, 2019* policies. The City submitted a partial application for a Regional Official Plan Amendment for the NWE in November, 2019. This application was deemed incomplete.

The City, Region and City's consultant met in January, 2020 to discuss the additional requirements to complete the application. The remaining information was submitted in July, 2020. The application was subsequently deemed complete in accordance with the Region's complete application policies.

### ***Regional Official Plan Amendment***

The City is proceeding with this application pursuant to Section 2.2.8.5-2.2.8.6 of the *Growth Plan* and is seeking multiple, concurrent 40 ha expansion requests ahead of the completion of the Region's new OP (i.e. pre-MCR).

The ROPA application includes the following technical reports:

- Planning Justification Report and Scoped Planning Justification Report
- Transportation Impact Study
- Functional Servicing Study
- Stormwater Management Report
- Natural Heritage Study/Environmental Impact Study
- Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Agricultural Impact Assessment
- Financial Impact Assessment

This technical information will be used to evaluate the NWE as well as the associated Northwest Welland Secondary Plan.

Of the total study area, approximately 31 hectares are protected environmental features within Natural Heritage System and 58 hectares of the area is currently occupied by existing uses and designated as Built-Up Area on Schedule A of the City's Official Plan

and the Province's Built Boundary Mapping. Therefore, approximately 102 hectares of the amendment area will contribute to future designated greenfield area for development.

The proposed amendment consists of mapping changes to re-designate the NWE study area to Urban Area and add a site specific policy area to recognize the expansion area.

A copy of draft ROPA 18 is included as Appendix 2.

### ***Welland's Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 24***

Welland adopted OPA 24 on December 17, 2019 and circulated the notice of adoption on December 26, 2019. This local amendment relates to the expansion of the urban boundary and amends the City's Official Plan policy related to boundary expansions.

OPA 24 relies on the approval of ROPA 18 in order to demonstrate conformity with Regional and Provincial policy. Therefore, the Region has retained approval authority for this OPA and will be modifying the amendment to be consistent with the ROPA. The Region will process the ROPA and OPA 24 concurrently and will bring both amendments forward for Council's consideration at the same time.

### ***Next Steps***

The Region is collecting comments from the public, prescribed agencies and other stakeholders. Any comments received prior to the authoring of this report are included in Appendix 3. Additional comments may be submitted at or following the public meeting. These comments will be reviewed and addressed prior to making a recommendation on this application.

The Region continues to work with the City on the Northwest Welland Secondary Plan.

### ***Alternatives Reviewed***

The *Planning Act, 1990* requires that public consultation be conducted as part of all amendments to municipal Official Plans. Notice has been provided for this Statutory Public Meeting as required by the legislation.

### ***Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities***

This proposal has the potential to support the following Council strategic priorities:

- Healthy and Vibrant Communities
- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning

## **Other Pertinent Reports**

PDS 6-2020 - City of Welland Application for Regional Official Plan Amendment

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### **Submitted by:**

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*This report was prepared in consultation with Isaiah Banach, Manager of Long Range Planning, and reviewed by Doug Giles, Director of Community and Long Range Planning.*

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1	Study Area Map
Appendix 2	Draft ROPA 18
Appendix 3	Public and Agency Comments