
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 15-2020

Subject: Regional Official Plan Update
Date: October 14, 2020
To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Doug Giles, Director Long Range and Community Planning

New Regional Official Plan Update

The purpose of the memo is to provide an update on the status of components for the New Regional Official Plan and related projects.

On August 28, 2020, the Province revised key planning guidance and policies that are required to be implemented through the New Regional Official Plan, being:

- updated population and employment numbers to 2051;
- substantially revised land needs assessment methodology; and
- new policies and methodology relating to market demand for housing, which impacts the way the Region will assess urban boundary expansions.

As a result, background reports related to the New Regional Official Plan require further updating. This will affect the analysis and recommendations in relation to:

- the allocation of population numbers;
- housing mix and affordability;
- land needs and urban boundary expansion; and
- greenfield density and intensification targets.

Background

In 2019, after an RFP procurement process, the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) was retained to conduct in-depth analysis of housing and affordable housing in Niagara based on the 2041 population and employment numbers provided by the Province. This analysis provided the base data for the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) and was to be used for the housing strategy component of the Regional Official Plan. The modelling behind the analysis was

sufficiently detailed and the results identified affordable housing requirements and core housing need at the regional and local area municipality level, as well as considered submarkets, income levels and job categories. The results were discussed with and shared with Local Area Municipalities and data has been made available to the public. The data and analysis are valuable, but are no longer current after the 2051 population and employment numbers were released.

New Regional Official Plan

The deadline for approval of the Regional Official Plan is December 2021 (15 months) and the deadline for conformity per Provincial direction is July 1, 2022 (21 months). The revised Provincial planning guidance and policies outlined above have come at a critical point in the preparation of the New Regional Official Plan, as a majority of the background work is concluding and the process is moving into the stage of consultation and drafting of policy.

In order to complete the analysis and conform with Provincial guidance and planning policy, it is necessary to retain a consultant to continue the work undertaken and produced by CANCEA – and due to recent procurement measures put in place by Council, an RFP procurement process will now have to be initiated for this purpose. It is noted that an RFP procurement for this purpose was unanticipated by Planning staff, as a contract extension to CANCEA would otherwise have been permitted in accordance with Regional procurement policy.

As a result, the timeline for projects and decisions outlined above will be pushed out to March/April 2021. If these timelines cannot be met, projects and decisions will be pushed out beyond this date and have an impact on other Regional Official Plan components. Also, this delay may impact the ability of planning staff to contribute information required to inform the updates to the Water-Waste Water Master Plan and the DC Background Study and By-Law.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Doug Giles
Director Community and Long Range Planning