
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 7-2021

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity – Planning and Development Services

Date: March 10, 2021

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Doug Giles, Acting Commissioner

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

Next month, the Region will be providing a “Joint Report” on all Official Plan matters. This remains the department’s largest project and is proceeding in a work-from-home setting with regular group meetings. Without a modern Official Plan, the Region is at a competitive disadvantage to other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.

The Joint Report will include Natural Heritage System options and the Regions’ land needs assessment (i.e. population and employment forecasts), among other things. Draft Official Plan policies will be provided for many sections. In the months that follow, the Region will seek feedback on these matters from the public, LAMs, and interests’ groups.

In February, Regional staff met individually with planning directors and staff from all 12 local municipalities. The purpose of those meetings was to provide a preview to key matters that will arise in the Joint Report and to get initial feedback. In March and April, local Councilor workshops are scheduled for the same purpose.

It’s critical that the Joint Report advance in April so that it can be broadly circulated to everyone interested so they may provide feedback. Other than natural heritage system options, staff will ask for the Joint Report materials only to be received by Council. No decisions will be sought. This is to allow the information to be circulated for ongoing consultation, followed by further reporting in summer and fall 2021.

Development Planning & Approval Services

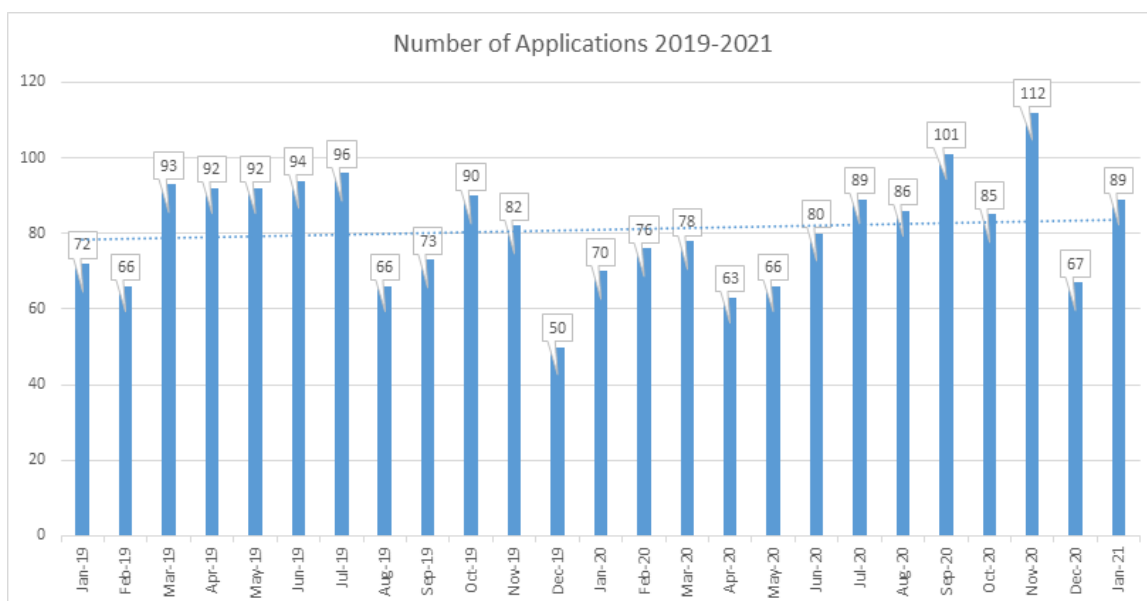
Current Status of Operations

Development Planning & Approval Services continues to adapt to ensure the delivery of core development review functions including: review and comment on all development applications from a Provincial and Regional perspective, coordinating and analyzing internal review/comments from Urban Design, Environmental Planning and Development Engineering for a “one-window” Regional response.

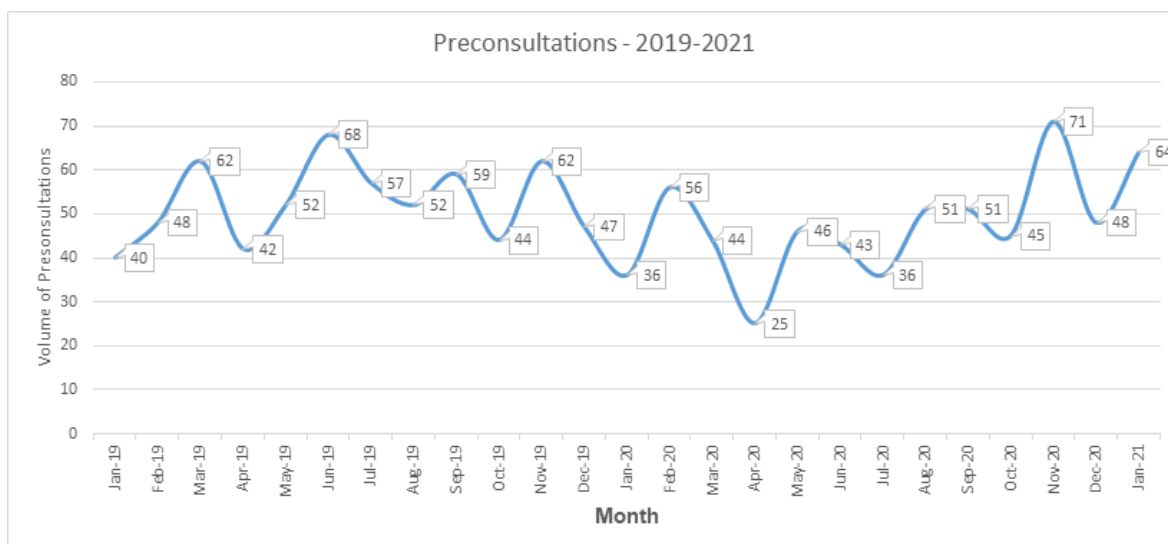
The following development volumes were received by the department during January 2021 (December 2020 data shown in brackets; February data was not complete at the time of writing this memo and will be reported on in April):

- Planning Applications (includes zonings, subdivisions, site plans, etc.) – **43** (31)
- Engineering Applications (includes servicing reviews, site plans, etc.) – **22** (13)
- Private Septic Applications – **24** (23)
- Pre-consultations – **64** (48)

The total volume of applications (89 excluding pre-consultations) represents a 33% increase from the December 2020 pre-holiday decline (67 applications). Further, the January 2021 applications volume exceeded the January volumes for the previous two years (72 in 2019 or 24% increase; 70 in 2020 or 27% increase) as shown in the graph below.



Pre-consultations experienced a 33% increase from the December 2020 volume (48 development proposals), which also mirrors the development applications' post-holiday increase. As previously reported, while there was a decline in pre-consultations at the early stages of the pandemic due to the shutdown, with the lowest volume for 2020 of 25 proposals received in April, volumes have continuously increased to typical levels. January 2021 pre-consultations exceeded the January volumes for the previous two years (40 in 2019 or 60% increase; 36 in 2020 or 78% increase) as shown in the graph below. Also, the January 2021 volume represents the third highest volume over that period.



Notes:

- a) March 2020 – Lockdown imposed mid-March resulted in beginning of volume decline due to pause in pre-consultation meetings
- b) April 2020 – First full month in lockdown resulted in lowest volume of 25 over past two years
- c) May 2020 – Volumes began return to normal levels as local area municipalities moved to virtual pre-consultation meetings

Infrastructure Planning & Development Engineering

Current Status of Operations

Development Engineering

We are continuing to respond to development applications with engineering comments, legal agreements for road works, and processing Environmental Compliance Approvals (ECA) under the Transfer of Review program for new sanitary and storm sewers. Additionally, we are continuing with Stormwater Management (SWM) review, Transportation review/meetings, and Water & Wastewater (W&WW) review/meetings as it relates to development applications and inquiries. We are working on the SWM Guidelines Project with Wood

Consulting Engineers and assessing schedule/deliverables to adapt to current situation. We are participating in the MECP sessions on the proposed changes to the Consolidated Linear Infrastructure ECA Process for the entire sanitary or stormwater management system. Once fully implemented this will result in changes and new processes for all local municipalities and the Region for the two-tiered sanitary (wastewater) system and stormwater management system in Niagara.

Infrastructure Planning

We are commencing the 2021 W&WW Master Servicing Plan (MSP) Update project with GM Blue Plan in consultation with W&WW team and Local Municipalities. This is an important project for the Region and all local municipalities with urban water and sanitary sewer services. It will require significant effort, analysis, and consultation with the majority of work to be completed by end of 2021/early 2022. The resulting growth capital water and wastewater projects are an essential input for the Development Charges Background Study and By-law update.

Collectively, there are ongoing corporate wide-efforts to coordinate long range planning/growth with infrastructure planning projects (2021 W&WW MSP update) and the upcoming Development Charges Background Study & By-law update.

Development Industry Liaison

We are continuing with the review of the potential build out scenarios for the urban areas in collaboration with planning group. This is necessary for the 2021 W&WW MSP update to evaluate servicing implications and supporting infrastructure. We are leading the development application process for the Linhaven and Gilmore Long Term Care (LTC) Redevelopment Projects and coordinating with St. Catharines and Fort Erie, respectively, as well as the MTO, and other review agencies to ensure that site plan application can be approved and the timelines associated with this project remain on track (Government funding is tied to this as well). Participating with development industry meetings (NHBA) to understand impacts and restrictions from COVID to residential development industry and housing stock.

Private Sewage/Septic Systems Program

The Private Sewage System group (responsible for Part 8 of the Ontario Building Code) is continuing to receive and respond to septic permit applications, inspections, development applications, special requests and complaints.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Doug Giles, MES, BUP
Acting Commissioner, Planning and Development Services