



## Engaging Niagara's Development Industry: Improving the MOU & Development Approvals Process (DAP)

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018



## Table of Contents

### **Engaging Niagara's Development Industry: Improving the MOU and DAP**

<b>Introduction &amp; Methodology to Engage Development Industry.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Development Industry Observations/Findings.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Local Municipality Feedback Re. DEVELOPMENT Industry Observations/Findings .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Go-Forward Recommendations .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix - Mentimeter Survey Results + Development Industry Input/Observations.....</b>	<b>29</b>

## INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

## Introduction: Engaging the Development industry as Partners to Improve the MOU/DAP

In October, 2018, the Region of Niagara engaged Performance Concepts Consulting and Dillon Consulting to execute a facilitated consultation program with members of Niagara's development community. The focus of the consultation program was twofold:

- To identify improvement issues/opportunities concerning the “who does what” Memorandum of Understanding (the MOU) that informs and shapes the execution of Niagara's two-tier municipal development approvals process (DAP);
- To identify specific technical/operational improvement opportunities across DAP that do not fit within the broader parameters of the MOU.

The Performance Concepts/Dillon team worked closely with the Region's new Development Industry Consultant; a staff position created in 2018 with the express purpose of liaising with the development industry, the 12 local municipalities and the NPCA to improve DAP execution and manage the relationship between the industry and local government regulators. The Development Industry Consultant position is imbedded within the Region's Planning & Development Services business unit. The position is occupied by Jon Whyte, a former leader in the Niagara development industry with high credibility among industry and local government DAP participants.


This report sets out the consultation program undertaken by Performance Concepts/Dillon. The report also documents the development industry feedback concerning improvements to the MOU and the overall DAP model in Niagara. Finally, the report sets out specific recommendations and a prioritized action plan to improve the MOU and re-engineer a more effective, predictable and timely DAP service delivery model.

## Methodology Components of Development Industry Consultation:

1. Performance Concepts/Dillon review of Niagara MOU evolution/history and substantive issues informing the improvement dialogue.



2. Discussions with Region staff to gain their perspective on the issues associated with the MOU & the overall DAP model in Niagara.



3. Structured interviews/discussions with a small sample of development industry leaders & their professional consultants; with interviews designed to set the scene for an October 24th industry-wide workshop.



4. Preparation & execution of the October 24th half-day industry-wide workshop; featuring 30+ participants in 3 breakout sessions organized around a restructured MOU and DAP improvement areas.



5. A briefing session/roundtable discussion with senior Planning staff from the Region and the 12 local municipalities. The briefing/roundtable was focussed on industry observations/ideas offered at the October 24th workshop, as well as go-forward improvement opportunities that could feature Region/local municipal/industry collaboration.

## Evidence Based Input to Achieve MOU/DAP Improvements

Development industry interviews to identify culture, process and IT toolkit issues/opportunities



Performance Concepts/Dillon team's expert input to inform consultation model & substantive recommendations



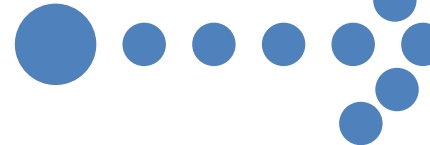
Mentimeter interactive polling evidence to establish "short list" of industry MOU/DAP improvement priorities



Region/local municipal expertise to inform go-forward improvement action plan re. MOU and DAP process pinch points



**Evidence-Informed Findings Re. MOU + DAP Improvement Opportunities**



**Recommendations to Achieve MOU/DAP Improvements**

## **DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS/FINDINGS RE. MOU & DAP PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT**

## Development Industry Observations/Findings Emerging from October 24<sup>th</sup> Workshop:

The half-day October 24<sup>th</sup> workshop provided significant insights around the current performance of the Niagara development approvals model.

The agenda for the workshops was structured as follows:

### Workshop Agenda

	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
10:00 to 10:30	<b>Brief Overview of The MOU</b> <i>A brief presentation to provide context on the MOU history and current status</i>
10:30 to 12:30	<b>Discussion on Improvement Opportunities (Break Out Session)</b> In small groups we will discuss the following 3 questions: <i>A. What suggestions to do you have to help signatories continue to meet MOU objectives?</i> <i>B. Where are the opportunities to improve consistency and predictability in the DAP?</i> <i>C. Where are the process/resourcing pinch points in the DAP that need to be addressed?</i>
12:30 to 1:15	Lunch will be provided
1:15 to 1:45	Towards a DAP Change Work Plan <i>We will discuss what improvements should be priority</i>
1:45 to 2:00	Next Steps and Closing

The agenda breakout sessions created a two-track discussion; a first track focused on the MOU and a second track focused on the overall performance of DAP in terms of consistency/predictability and process execution pinch points. The appendix to this report includes the workbook for the October 24<sup>th</sup> workshop; a tool designed to structure and inform the breakout session discussions.



## ***Engaging the Niagara Development Community Re. MOU + DAP***

As part of the development industry workshop's afternoon priority setting exercise, the online polling tool, Mentimeter was used to gauge participant opinion in an objective way. Using their smart phones, participants were able to provide their input anonymously to questions asked and see the results unfold on-screen. Three polling formats were used:

- Word cloud – Participants were asked to provide their thoughts on what is going well. One-2 word responses formed a word cloud participants could observe as it developed.
- Scaling – The key ideas raised by participants in break-out sessions was entered into the Mentimeter tool and participants were asked to rank what was most important on a 1-5 scale of agree to disagree:
  - What is most important from the perspective of culture?
  - What is most important from the perspective of consistency?
  - What is most important from the perspective of removing road blocks?
- Open ended responses – To conclude the session, participants were asked “What are the top 2 things you think need to be fixed?” The purpose of this question was to establish improvement priorities.

The Mentimeter participant feedback has been utilized by the Performance Concepts/Dillon team to inform our go-forward improvement recommendations around the MOU and the broader DAP model in Niagara. The complete Mentimeter results are presented in the Appendix to this report.

## **MOU Update & Restructuring: Industry Observations/Performance Improvement Ideas**

The Niagara MOU was drafted in July 2006 and updated in 2014 following meetings with planners and the development industry to identify areas for improvement. Signed by the Region, twelve local municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, the MOU includes the following sections:

- Part 1: Preamble – This section introduces the MOU and sets the context related to its goal and objectives.
- Part 2: Roles and Responsibilities of Signatories for Policy Planning and Implementation Planning – This section goes through each policy and implementation planning activity and sets out specific roles.
- Part 3: Consolidation of the Review of Planning Applications as they Relate to the Natural Environment – This section speaks specifically to the role of the NPCA in leading a streamlined one-window natural environment review.
- Part 4: Managing Relationships with Other Governments – This section speaks to the role of the Region in liaising with other levels of government and sets out topics for continuous improvement.
- Part 5: MOU Duration and Formal Review – This section sets up the formal review and dispute resolution process.

Industry representatives brought forward the following observations/advice concerning MOU improvement for consideration by the Region and the local municipalities:

- MOU should address the value of the “pre pre-consultation talk” between the applicant and the Region/local municipality re. the vision of the proposed project. From the point of vision-consensus moving forward, there should be a shared commitment to move the project through DAP in a timely/predictable fashion. It is not clear if/when (during the DAP process) “the talk” is actually happening. It is problematic when the genuine municipal senior staff “deciders” are not in the room for “the talk”, as opposed to junior planning staff

## ***Engaging the Niagara Development Community Re. MOU + DAP***

not in a position to commit to navigating the project through DAP. The need for a transparent shared commitment to high quality projects is especially relevant during public meeting processes.

- The MOU could speak to a “best practice” approach to pre-consultation; premised on successful pre-consultation case studies recommended by the industry.
- The MOU should mandate Region/local municipality processing time targets for each core DAP application category. An MOU commitment to target timeframe should endorse a “timeframe range” for the major component steps in the overall DAP process for each core application category. The MOU could include a municipal “best efforts” commitment to meet an overall timeframe “target range” 9 times out of 10 within each core application category.
- The MOU could endorse a one-window DAP processing model in each Niagara municipality. This organization design preference would see all Planning/Engineering staff regularly involved in DAP positioned within a single business unit whose leadership is committed to timely and high-quality execution of application review and approvals. **One Window reduces internal silos...**
- The MOU could recognize the value of delegated approvals to staff by Council for appropriate DAP categories such as Site Plan approval.
- The MOU could recognize the potential value of the Region delegating carefully scoped approval functions to local municipalities in order to streamline approvals.

## Streamlining DAP Beyond the MOU: Industry Observations/Performance Improvement Ideas

### High Level Observation: Significant Degree of 2-tier Complexity in Niagara Without DAP Standardization

DAP execution in Niagara involves the Region, 12 local municipalities, the NPCA and occasionally the Niagara Escarpment Commission. The Niagara DAP “conveyor belt” that moves any given development application forward through a regulatory review process to a final approval is in reality an assortment of 12 distinct local municipal conveyor belts. According to industry participants in the workshop, Niagara’s 12 DAP conveyor belts represent a daunting logistics challenge to applicants and their consultants. The 12 conveyor belts are not standardized, processing timeframes vary widely, and staff cultures are not necessarily as client-focused as the industry would expect given the economic benefits/employment value-added associated with their projects. In comparison, Halton Region’s DAP consists of 4 local municipal conveyor belts, Peel Region’s DAP features 3 local municipal conveyor belts, and the single-tier City of Hamilton has a single DAP process conveyor belt for each category of development application. The Niagara development industry emphasized the need to improve predictability, process standardization and overall timeliness of Niagara’s 12 DAP conveyor belts in order to remain competitive with the logistically less challenging DAP processes in Hamilton and the west GTA Regions.

**High Level Observation: DAP Cultural Divide Between “Client-Driven Partnership” versus “Impartial Regulatory Process”**

The existence of a cultural divide between the development industry and the Niagara municipalities was evident during the workshop. The industry considers itself to be the client of the municipalities; bringing significant economic and employment benefits to Niagara. The industry feels that municipal DAP officials often consider themselves to be representing the public interest by opposing or restricting valuable development projects.

The Performance Concepts/Dillon team notes there need not be a zero-sum game around municipal culture when executing DAP. Applicants can receive timely, consistently executed review feedback from municipal officials - who can balance the economic benefits of new development with a responsible due diligence review of projects that protects the public interest in balanced community building. The industry is factually correct in noting that DAP regulators need to produce timely approvals that support an affordable and diverse housing stock for Niagara; a key source of competitive advantage vis-à-vis the rest of the Golden Horseshoe municipalities. Win-win relationships between industry applicants and municipal regulators are possible and indeed necessary.

The cultural divide can be reduced/eliminated by the industry and municipal staff across Niagara participating together in process improvement projects; especially when these projects build trust and a professional appreciation of the business and regulatory priorities/pressures faced by each side of the DAP partnership.

**Towards Optimal Pre-consultation & Timely Designation of a “Complete Application”**

Development industry participants in all 3 breakout groups at the October 24<sup>th</sup> workshop noted that pre-consultation was not delivering the full range of expected benefits envisioned by municipalities – guidance and certainty around technical submission requirements for a complete application. The industry notes that municipal staff are coming to pre-consultation meetings without being technically prepared, nor having undertaken a site visit. The absence of “decider” senior Planning staff at pre-consultation is a concern. Industry representatives contend Staff do not always provide specific terms of reference for required studies, and fail to scope or waive studies as appropriate for non-contentious projects. A timely pre-consultation checklist of requirements is preferred to a delayed formal pre-consultation letter. Industry representatives cited numerous examples of technical requirements being added to the “complete application” checklist well after the pre-consultation meeting. A couple of Niagara local municipalities that commit a definitive schedule for application review (at the pre-consultation stage) were acknowledged with approval by the industry. The industry strongly supports pre-consultation in principle, and is interested in working with Niagara municipalities to refine pre-consultation in order to generate the full range of expected benefits.

Designation of a “complete application” by the municipality processing the application is a critical DAP process step. The question of whether technical studies should be provided/reviewed by staff before or after a “complete application” designation is a matter of interpretation and debate among planners and development industry stakeholders across the province. This issue is important because the “complete application” designation turns on the legislated timeframe clock for “no decision” appeals to the new LPAT, that has replaced the OMB. Workshop participants indicated that a Niagara-wide consistent approach to deeming an application is appropriate for local municipalities and the Region.

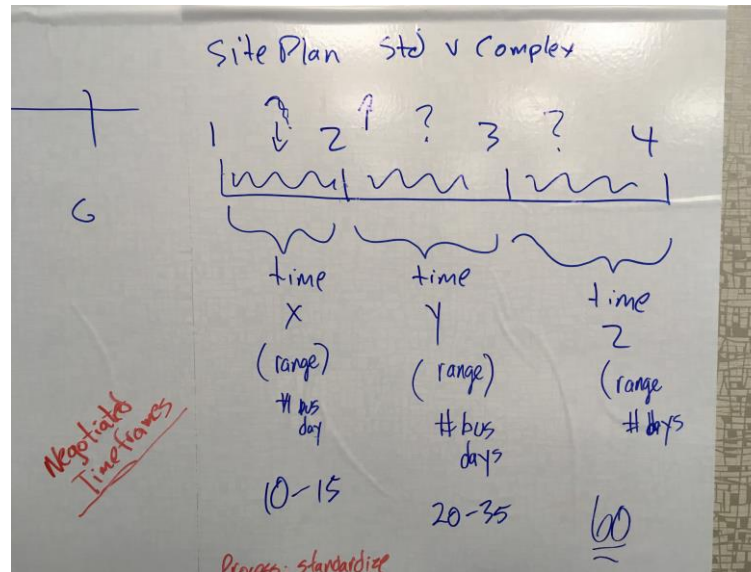
### **DAP Timeframe Targets & Importance of a Predictable Application Processing Schedule**

Consistency and predictability of application processing is an over-riding concern of the industry. Development project financing by banks/lenders is contingent on the application progressing in a timely fashion through a number of DAP milestones on the way to building permit issuance. DAP “conveyor belt” processing delays can, and do, cause genuine cash flow hardship for development firms with finite financial resources. The industry supports the design/development of timeframe targets for core DAP application categories. The figure below (a Site Plan example) captures the essential design requirements for targets. Targets should address the # of processing business days when the municipality is in control of the file. Targets should address each core processing milestones (numbered 1-4 in the figure below). When the file is returned to the applicant for submission corrections/refinements the timeframe clock turns off. The clock turns back on when the applicant re-submits the necessary information. Currently there are no commonly agreed to timeframe targets across Niagara for processing core DAP application categories such as Site Plan. This reality means there are either no municipal timeframe targets or as many as 12 different local municipal timeframe targets. The industry believes this absence of consistency/predictability is a central problem in a Region with 12 local municipal DAP conveyor belts. Like the local municipalities, the Region does not have transparent processing timeframe targets for its roles in DAP application review.

The industry is supportive of transparent DAP timeframe reporting via an online public portal. This portal would report on the progress of active applications in each local municipality (versus timeframe targets). The portal would categorize application processing status as “green light” for on-time, “yellow light” for minor delays versus targets, or “red light” for major delays. The comparative status of any/all applications’ DAP milestone progress (across the 12 Niagara local municipalities) would be available, as would the process pinch point agency for “yellow light” or “red light” delayed applications.

## Need for DAP Timeframe Targets

Rough workshop sketch diagram covers the basics...# business days to actually move through each processing milestone (1-4) should be monitored against a range-defined targets (x/y/z). Currently there are no common commitments across Niagara re. processing timeframe targets.



Beyond the design/implementation of timeframe targets for each core DAP application category, the industry is strongly supportive of processing timeframe schedules for each individual application. These application-specific schedules should include a predictable/standard number of public consultation check-in points across; with the same number of check-in points across all the applications in a given DAP category. In this scheduling approach, no application will face unpredictable/non-standard delays due to political/public resistance associated with additional meetings.



**Critical Importance of Improving the Back-end of DAP (Engineering Review to Registration)**

Draft plan approval of a sub-division application may encompass a relatively large number of future lots. A number of economic factors will determine an applicant's decision on when/how many lots to bring forward for the "back-end DAP" detailed engineering review/development agreement production/registration process. The timeliness of the "back-end DAP" process is critical for applicants, who have made the business decision to proceed as quickly as possible to obtain a building permit and initiate construction. For the Region and local municipalities, the workload associated with the post-draft plan back-end of DAP is challenging. A 200-unit draft plan of sub-division approval may well generate 4 repeat cycles (e.g. 50 units each) of the back-end DAP process. The race-to-registration is in fact the most critical DAP process component for applicants, since lots/houses can be pre-sold with committed closing dates after draft plan approval. Process deficiencies or resourcing shortages in the post-draft plan race-to-registration can cause serious disruptions to the applicant's business model; including legal risks if closing dates are unduly delayed. Predictable municipal timeframes are critical, especially since the Region and the local municipality are both involved in detailed engineering drawings review.

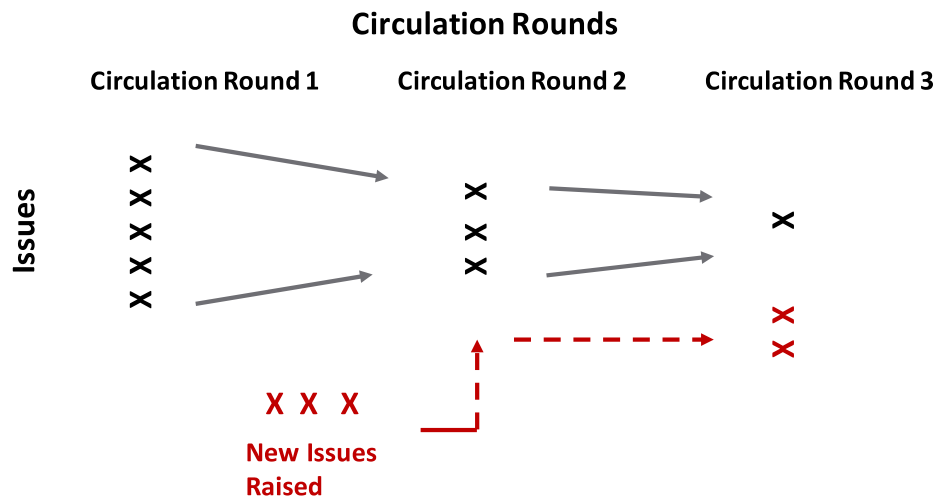
Workshop participants have noted that the higher performing local municipalities in Niagara place the "back end of DAP" processing responsibility with engineering staff as opposed to planning staff. Engineering staff are seen to possess strong logistics skills and the substantive technical expertise needed to move the file forward through engineering drawings reviews, financial securities calculations, and final registration detail. In some cases, these engineering staff operate within a one window organization structure devoted to timely application processing. Development participants have noted these staff are often in short supply and face workload capacity challenges given the volume of back-end DAP review cycles per draft plan approval. Development industry workshop participants strongly support a consistent/predictable engineering-led "back-end DAP" process; consistently executed across all Niagara municipalities.

### **Improving Efficiency of DAP Technical Circulations to Achieve Technical Approvals**

The ideal technical circulation process identifies any/all technical deficiencies in the initial review of the submitted application package. Technical comments are consolidated by the file planner, reviewed for internal consistency, and then provided to the applicant for action/re-submission. Subsequent rounds of technical review ensure the original technical issues are resolved prior to application approval being granted. However, industry representatives report that new technical issues are often raised after the original round of review has already been completed. According to the industry, the net result is a “dribs and drabs” ad-hoc introduction of technical concerns during subsequent review cycles, and an unfairly stretched timeline for completing the overall series of reviews.

Performance Concepts notes that this “dribs and drabs” problem is cited by development industry representatives across the Golden Horseshoe and Ottawa as a near-universal DAP process execution problem. A possible remedy is the production of a consolidated memo of technical issues requiring remedy at the end of the initial circulation. This memo would require municipal staff to ensure any cross-disciplinary discrepancies among staff are resolved prior to the applicant receiving comments. This would free up applicants from the onerous task they now face of trying to resolve these technical discrepancies themselves amongst agencies or internal municipal business units.

## Technical Circulation “Drips & Drabs” Problem



### Eliminating DAP Process/Resourcing Pinch Points

Workshop participants noted that the most serious DAP pinch points occur during the post-draft plan race-to-registration. Examples of back-end Dap pinch points include the following:

- The number of required engineering drawing review cycles are a concern.
- The MOE approvals were also noted as a significant process delay. Having MOE approvals delegated to a Regional and/or a local municipal PEng. could reduce the MOE delay. This delegation occurs in numerous municipalities across the Golden Horseshoe and Ottawa.
- Relatively minor technical issues that delay construction across the winter season; creating major timeframe pinch points and significant cash flow burdens. Later-in-the-season technical issues must be resolved more quickly. A municipal cultural problem at its root.
- The real-estate final steps around registration are often slow/delayed because planning staff are not always knowledgeable about the detailed requirements.
- Development agreement design/production features an excessive number of conditions that are often redundant or unnecessary. Condition standardization/consolidation is desirable.
- Resourcing shortages versus workload causes slowdowns. Engineering fees should be used to fund the necessary staff to deal with the “volumes multiplier” challenge of multiples bundles of a single draft plan’s approved units proceeding through registration.

Pinch points are also caused by culture issues. Phone calls/e-mails should receive a response within a 24-hour customer service standard timeframe. Technical processing issues can often be resolved/negotiated verbally, without rigid written “must do” correspondence. This type of “correspondence first” rules driven culture reduces flexibility to resolve problems and causes undue delays. Talk-first as opposed to write-first problem-solving is the preferred path of development participants in the workshop.

### **The Role of the Regional & Local Municipality File Planners as System Navigators**

DAP is a complex horizontal service delivery channel involving multiple agencies, Region business units and local municipal business units. The complexity requires a system navigator or “Sherpa” to work with the applicant to achieve timely approvals versus transparent target timeframes. The DAP “Sherpa” is typically the file planner at the Region and/or the local municipality. The file planner must be more than a paper pusher. The file planner must resolve process pinch points, and secure consensus around any contentious technical issues. File planners must also ensure conformity with policy requirements, and manage the public consultation process in a fair/balanced fashion. Development industry workshop participants note that planners do not receive logistics training in file/project management as part of their academic preparations (which is devoted to policy/theory and technical land use matters). Workshop participants contend that file planners in Niagara are not executing the necessary project management discipline to delivery timely DAP processing. This discipline would require them to “crack the whip” with internal colleagues and other agencies when file processing timelines are lagging. Municipal DAP workflow software solutions are often not implemented at the required level of detail to support the file planner is meeting mandated timeframes; some internal DAP business units may not be populating this software at all (e.g. Engineering staff working outside a One Window org structure). Industry workshop participants have noted the challenge faced by file planners is also cultural; they are not convinced that planners truly understand the business/cash flow implications of delays in DAP processing versus the targeted timeframe for a project. Additional training (beyond academic/professional planner certifications) for file planners could/should include MBA-type project management and logistics training.

## **LOCAL MUNICIPALITY FEEDBACK RE. DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS/FINDINGS**

## **Local Municipality Feedback Re. Development Industry Observations/Findings:**

Following the October 24<sup>th</sup> development industry workshop, Performance Concepts/Dillon met November 2<sup>nd</sup> with staff from the Region and the 12 local municipalities to brief them on the feedback/advice offered by the development industry participants. The Region and local municipal staff engaged in active listening and provided a number of noteworthy observations:

- Many of the DAP process execution challenges in Niagara have been raised by development industry representatives in the GTA and other parts of the province. These challenges, for the most part, do not come as a surprise to Region and municipal staff.
- Niagara features a relatively large group of local municipalities (for the population served). Therefore, it is not unexpected for there to be diverse approaches to DAP application review and processing. DAP standardization must be balanced against unique local circumstances and conditions.
- There is widespread support for MOU updates and improvements that will move Niagara closer to a transparent “who does what” delineation of responsibilities in the two-tier Niagara development approvals system created by the Province.
- Continuous improvement opportunities for DAP (beyond the MOU) should be actively pursued in cooperation with the development industry. These continuous improvement opportunities should address issues associated with Region/local municipality performance, as well as opportunities to improve the quality/consistency of development application submissions from applicants.
- Support for creation of DAP process improvement teams composed of Region/local municipal/industry representatives to address high priority DAP process issues and pinch points.

## **GO-FORWARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE MOU + DAP PERFORMANCE ACROSS NIAGARA**



## Go-forward Recommendations to Improve MOU + DAP Performance Across Niagara:

### 1. MOU Improvement Recommendations

Based on the workshop with the development industry, it is recommended that the following be considered as opportunities to strengthen the existing MOU.

#### Make it Top of Mind

Given the expressed desire by both the development industry and Region/local municipal staff to make improvements and to build-in more understanding and consistency in the way policy and implementation planning is done in Niagara the following specific suggestions are offered as ways to make the MOU a regular top of mind reference document:

- Consider including context on an overall Vision for Niagara Region and positioning the MOU as an important tool to implement the Regional and local Strategic Plans, Official Plans, and other key guiding documents. This would support the importance of the MOU in achieving the desired future in Niagara Region.
- Add clarity to the MOU on the important roles of all participants involved in achieving an effective system including regional and local planning staff, regional and local engineering staff, elected officials and the development industry. This would set the stage for improved understanding of the working relationships between all involved.
- Include a visual/infographic that provides a picture of how the MOU fosters an integrated and seamless planning system. An “at a glance” infographic could provide a reference tool that could be valuable in keeping the MOU commitments top of mind.
- Make the MOU part of the on-boarding process for new staff involved in policy and implementation planning work. New members of local and regional planning and engineering teams should be introduced to the MOU and see it as their guide book on what working together looks like in Niagara Region.

## ***Engaging the Niagara Development Community Re. MOU + DAP***

- Take the opportunity that the recent municipal election offers to increase all Niagara Councils' awareness of the MOU. With a number of new members across various Councils, the MOU update could present an opportunity for ongoing education related to planning and development issues across the Niagara.

### **Include a Clear and Collaborative Process Commitment in MOU**

Clarity and consistency were expressed as strong desires from those participating in the development industry workshop. Discussion with the municipal planners identified that with a two-tiered system and 12 unique local municipalities it is unrealistic to expect that the development process will be the same in every Niagara location. While executing identical DAP processes across 12 municipalities is not realistic, nor even desirable, the MOU can be a vehicle to commit to a common DAP streamlining initiative that is clear and collaborative, as well as respectful of the different roles of development proponent and regulator. The following recommendations could be reflected generally in the MOU; with specifics to be worked out as part of the proposed DAP improvement workshop series.

- Include commentary in the MOU on how local and regional staff will work in collaboration with the development industry to achieve desirable development outcomes. This could include elements of a customer service commitment or service delivery standards on the part of municipalities and quality expectations for applications.
- Consider including processing time or ranges of times that all parties could work toward and/or a process for developing application specific schedules collaboratively with applicants.
- Consider including a mechanism/framework for measuring time frames so that all parties are accountable to their commitments.

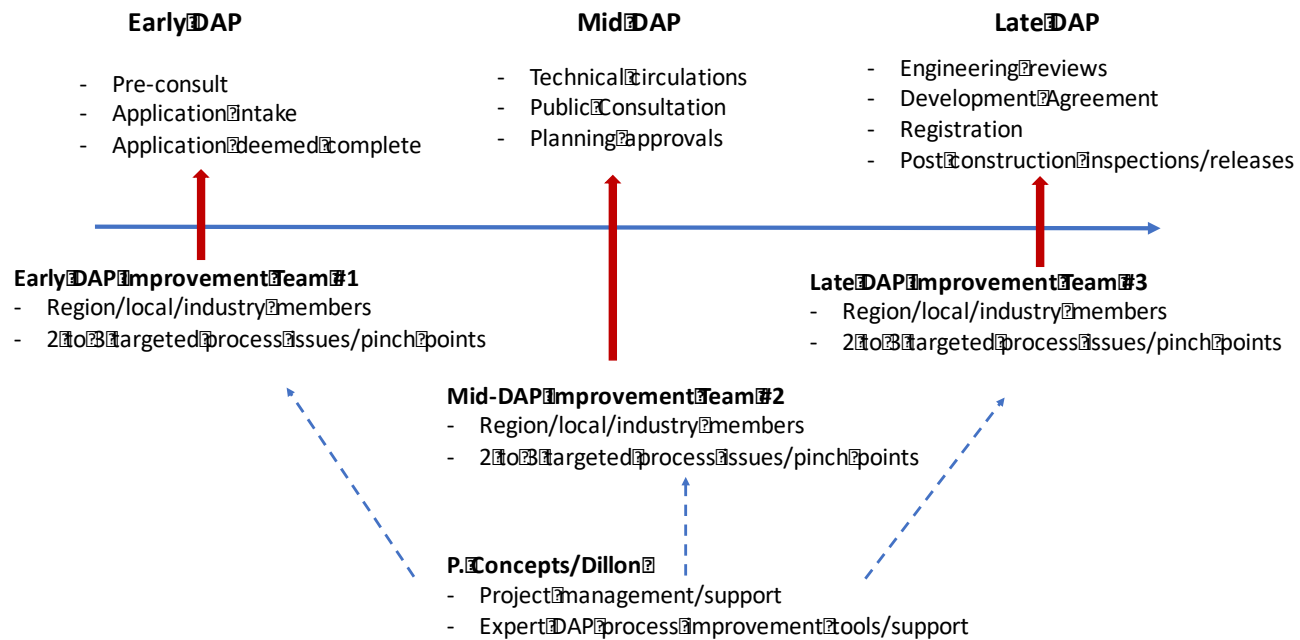
### **Focus on Continuous Improvement in MOU**

It is understood that a Process Improvement Team including representatives from the Region, local municipalities and the development industry worked together following the 2014 MOU update to learn from each other and make improvements. The 2014 MOU lists some of the topics that were part of the improvement discussions. This type of ongoing collaborative effort is an important part of continuous improvement. It is recommended that a framework and process for continuous improvement be embedded strongly in the MOU such that there is an explicit commitment to maintain a culture of municipalities and development industry applicants learning from each other and improving the process of working together on development issues and applications in Niagara. An MOU commitment to adopt/promote continuous improvement should include a mechanism/scorecard that measures and reports results based improvements. Some of the topics/issues for continuous improvement discussion have already come out of the October 24<sup>th</sup> development industry workshop and the November 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion with local planners (as discussed in this report). Other continuous improvement actions/ideas may arise on an ongoing basis.

## **2. Development Approvals Process (DAP) Improvement Recommendations Beyond the MOU**

## Create an Ongoing Continuous Improvement Model Featuring Development Industry Participation

The following figure sets out a recommended process/model for DAP continuous improvement.



Three DAP continuous improvement teams should be created, with a designated team assigned to each of early/mid/late DAP process phases. Each of the continuous improvement teams would feature dedicated staff resources from the Region, a selected sub-set of 3-4 local municipalities, and 2-3 development industry representatives. The teams would target 2-3 process pinch points/improvement opportunities for

analysis and process re-engineering/streamlining. The targeted pinch points/issues for investigation can be universal across all DAP application categories or specific to a particular DAP application category (e.g. Site Plan). Organization design and IT tool solutions should be considered in combination with process re-engineering. Performance Concepts/Dillon would support all three teams via overall project management and advice re. process improvement tools/techniques.

The three improvement teams would work on the first round of 2-3 selected DAP issues/pinch points for a 3-month period. The Mentimeter interactive polling results from the October 24<sup>th</sup> Workshop should inform each improvement team's selection of targeted issues/pinch points. At the conclusion of each team's 3-month reviews, findings should be reported to a Steering Committee of senior staff from the Region/12 local municipalities for approval and implementation directions. Team recommendations would not be strictly binding on any of the participant municipalities, but good faith around willingness-to-implement would be assumed. Two additional 3-month cycles of continuous improvement work by each team would continue be executed during 2019. The overall exercise would then be subjected to a value-for-money "stress testing" review to determine whether/how to move forward with a more permanent model.

The recommended continuous improvement model should be finalized and resourced staffed in early/mid Q1 2019. The DAP issues/pinch points for review should be finalized by the end of Q1. The first three continuous improvement reviews should be executed in Q2 2019.

## **APPENDIX 1 – MENTIMETER INTERACTIVE POLLING RESULTS RE. MOU/DAP IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES**

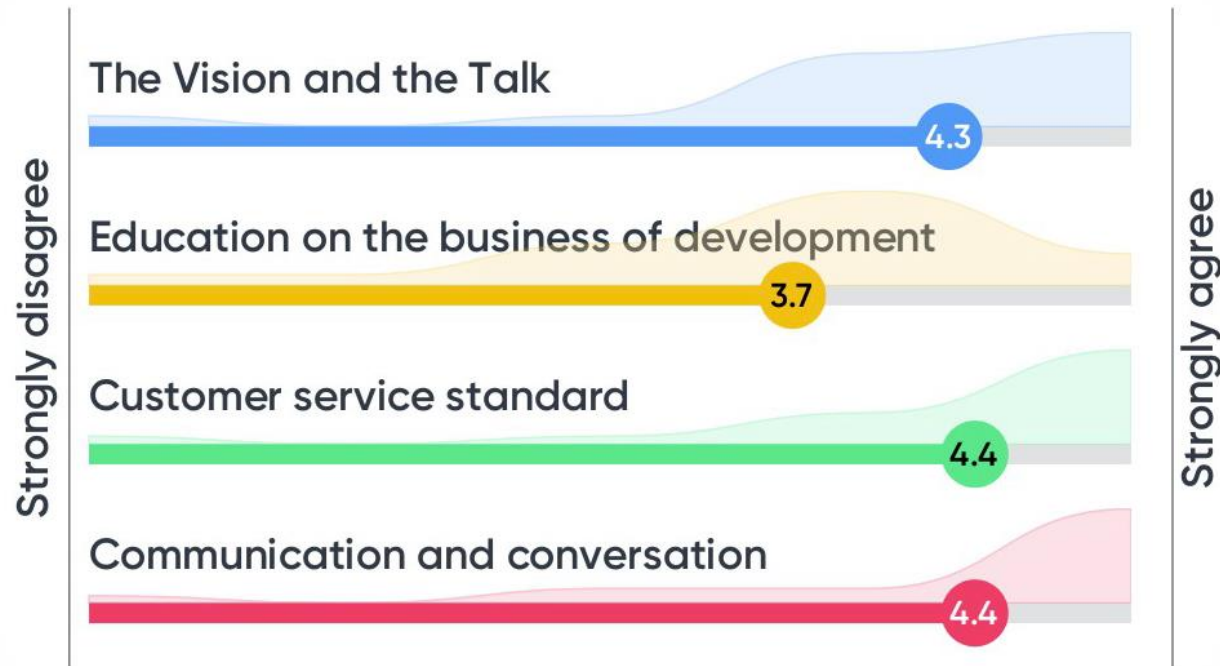
Tell us about what has been working right...

Mentimeter



## Whats most important - Culture

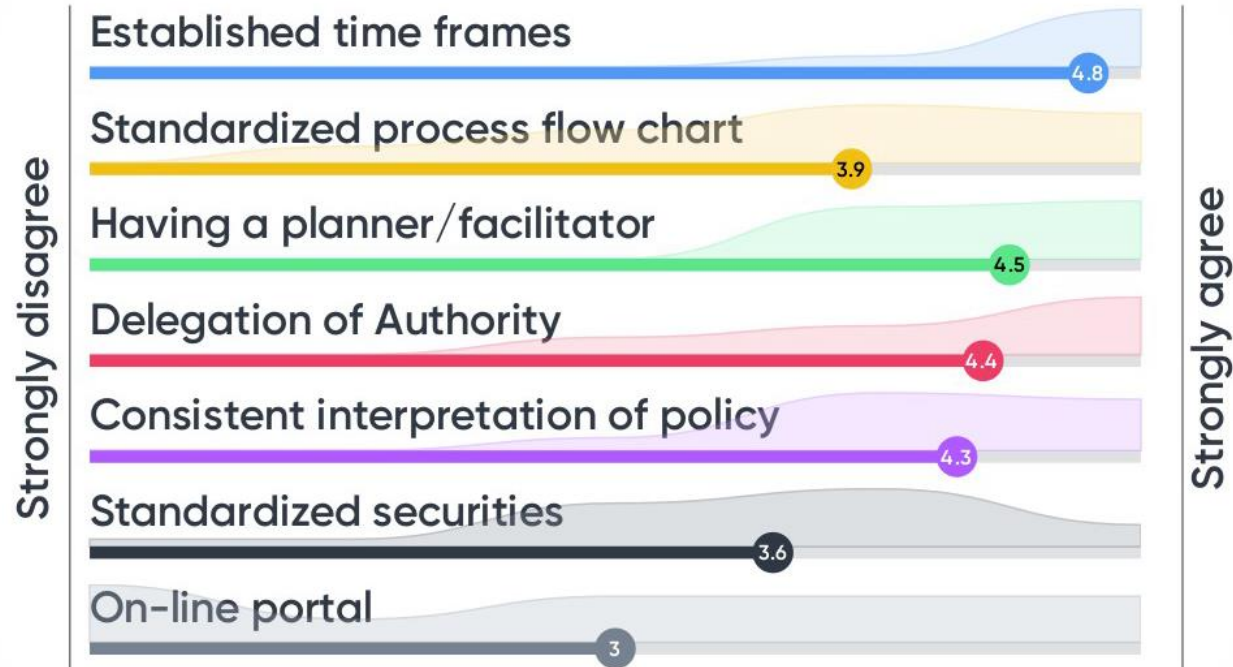
Mentimeter





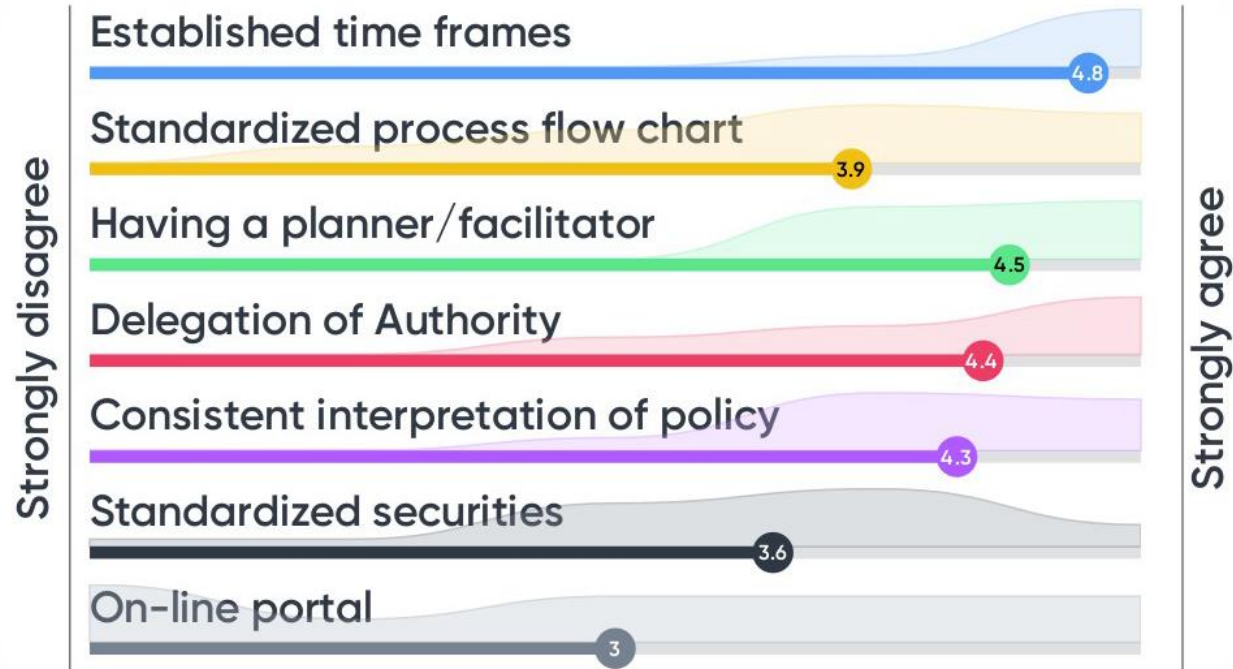
## Whats most important - Consistency

Mentimeter



## Whats most important - Consistency

Mentimeter



## Whats most important - Choke Points

Mentimeter



## What are the top 2 things you think should be fixed?

Mentimeter

1.) Culture Change 2.)  
Standardized check list

communication and  
accountability.

1. Timelines 2. Working with the  
developer not against

Response times ie. calling  
back Dribs and Drabs

consistency in approach  
across region timing of  
apptocaks incl. back end  
registration

planning culture - need great  
emphasis on servicing the  
client accountability

broader interpretation of  
policy

- pre consultation- on same page with staff and  
process involved to get to end goal and buy in -  
accountability on timelines

Predictable schedule Go/no  
go determination as early as  
possible

## What are the top 2 things you think should be fixed?

Mentimeter

Customer service training with response targets and having a planner that is a facilitator or project manager, main person pushing the file and problem solving.

1) Delegation of authority 2) clear timeline and guidelines

Effective communication - pick up the phone.  
Reasonable Timelines for providing comment.

Willingness to collaborate/ not be rigid on rules and process.  
Be nimble Respect for timeframes

Consistency with all agencies involved in the process  
Customer service

1) delegation of authorities 2) clear timeline and guideline

Stick to a schedule be responsible to answer questions be pro active communicate

Terminate NPCA and control priorities Have a facilitator review applications to reduce the number of conditions and meet deadlines

1. I want to have a meeting with staff before I get a requirement in writing that may cause a blockage 1. The development industry should provide input into policies affecting development

## What are the top 2 things you think should be fixed?

 Mentimeter

Accountability and experience of staff.

Transparency - there should be open sharing of information and processing status.

Planners need to be proactive planners need to solve problems not just identify them stick to time lines