
Subject: Comments on the Province of Ontario's Draft Environment Plan

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Recommendations

1. That staff comments on the Province of Ontario's proposed Environment Plan, *Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations*, as outlined in Appendix A to Report PDS 8-2019, **BE ENDORSED**; and
2. That a copy of Report PDS 8-2019 **BE CIRCULATED** to the Local Area Municipalities.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of staff comments on the Province's proposed Environment Plan, *Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations*.
- On November 29, 2018, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks posted the draft Environment Plan on the Environmental Registry for a 60-day consultation period (closing January 28, 2019).
- On December 21, 2018, a Memorandum was circulated to Regional Council to advise of plans to coordinate staff-level comments on behalf of the Region.
- A submission was made to the Province that included staff comments from Planning and Development Services, Public Works, and Public Health and Emergency Services. Several Local Area Municipalities also provided input, which was incorporated into the submission.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial considerations associated with commenting on the draft Environment Plan.

Analysis

Overview

Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations is a broad environmental plan that contains proposed actions in the following areas:

- Protecting our Air, Lakes and Rivers
- Addressing Climate Change
- Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities & Keeping Our Land and Soil Clean
- Conserving Land and Greenspace

The Environment Plan sets a target to reduce Ontario's emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, in line with Canada's 2030 target under the Paris Agreement. Examples of proposed actions to meet this target include creating emission performance standards for large emitters, and creating a four-year \$400 million Ontario Carbon Trust fund to leverage private investment in clean technologies. This is intended to fulfill the Province's obligation under the *Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018* to establish greenhouse gas reduction targets for Ontario and to prepare a climate change plan.

General Comments

Staff generally support many of the Plan's proposals in principle. However, various facts within the Environment Plan related to Ontario's contribution to climate change may be misinterpreted by the public and undermine efforts to take action on climate change due to insufficient context. Recommendations are included within the submission to address these concerns.

In addition, the proposed actions in the Environment Plan lack sufficient detail for fulsome consultation. Staff have requested to be included in any subsequent consultations addressing implementation details and timelines that affect municipal operations.

Detailed comments are included in **Appendix A** and examples are highlighted below.

Protecting our Air, Lakes and Rivers

Staff support proposals in this chapter, such as continuing work to restore and protect our Great Lakes; building on the Ministry's monitoring and drinking water source protection activities to ensure that environmental impacts from road salt are minimized; and reviewing the Province's water taking policies, programs and science tools. Staff also support proposals to improve municipal wastewater and stormwater management and reporting. Staff recommend addressing low impact development techniques in the Environment Plan, finalizing ongoing provincial reviews of stormwater management

guidance documents, updating the F-series procedures, and committing funding to projects such as sewer separation.

Addressing Climate Change

In addition to regulating large emitters and establishing the Ontario Carbon Trust, the Environment Plan includes proposals to increase climate resilience for households and communities. Examples include undertaking a provincial climate impact assessment and vulnerability assessment for key sectors; developing information tools to help homeowners protect their homes from flooding; modernizing the Building Code to improve resilience; reviewing the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance Program to incorporate climate resilience; and reviewing land use policies for climate resilience.

Staff generally support the proposals for climate resilience for household and communities, but recommend that the Province's impact assessment include health implications and impacts on vulnerable populations. In addition, the Province should support municipalities to undertake risk-based impact assessments at the local level given the diversity of Ontario's communities. Any updated land use planning direction on climate change adaptation should provide sufficient flexibility to address varying climate change impacts across municipalities. Staff also recommend addressing renewable energy and exploring incentives for new development, such as community district energy. The Environment Plan also confirms the Province's commitment to implement all-day GO Rail service to Niagara, which staff acknowledge and appreciate.

Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities & Keeping Our Land and Soil Clean

Staff support proposals in this chapter, such as expanding green bin collection systems in large cities and to relevant businesses; developing a proposal to ban food waste from landfill; developing a plastics strategy; reducing illegal dumping; moving to a producer responsibility model; and exploring options to recover resources from waste. Staff provided information regarding Niagara Region's waste management programs and initiatives, and identified a number of considerations and recommendations with respect to the Province's proposals. Examples of staff recommendations include establishing targets with respect to expanded green bin collection, and considering public spaces and community events as a sector to target for organics collection.

Conserving Land and Greenspace

Staff support proposals such as improving the resilience of natural ecosystems; improving coordination of land use planning and environmental approval processes; and protecting the environment from invasive species. Staff note that further scientific research is required to support increased resilience of natural ecosystems, and increased funding should be provided to stewardship conservation programs.

Alternatives Reviewed

The alternative would be for Council not to endorse staff comments on the proposed Environment Plan. This is not recommended, as it is important for Niagara Region's position to be considered in the development of the final plan.

Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS 22-2018 Climate Change Framework

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Appendices

Appendix A

Staff Comments on Draft Environment Plan

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