



To: Mayor and Council
From: Karl Grenke, Manager of Development Services
Date: May 23, 2024
Committee of the Whole Date: May 27, 2024
Title: Bill 185- Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act

- For Direction
- For Information
- For Adoption
- Attachments

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives Report #2024-067, titled “Bill 185 – Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act” for information.

Purpose: To provide Council with information regarding recent changes to the Planning Act, Development Charges Act, Provincial Policy Statement and other applicable provincial legislation and policy.

Background: On April 10, 2024, the Province introduced Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, which contains changes to fifteen statutes, including key land use planning and development related legislation, including the Planning Act and Development Charges Act. The same day, a revised 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) was also released. On May 23, 2023, staff reviewed an earlier PPS draft with Council and provided comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and housing as it related to the proposed key themes including natural heritage, land use compatibility and growth management planning.

The 2024 draft Provincial Planning Statement largely contains minor changes from what was proposed last year. If and when it is adopted by the Province, it will replace *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* and the *Provincial Policy Statement, 2020*.

The government’s stated intention with Bill 185 and the 2024 PPS is to, “cut red tape and support municipalities to build more housing faster to reach the government’s goal of building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031”.

The last few years have been a period of unprecedented change in Provincial direction on matters of land use planning, development, and municipal regulatory powers, with the Province bringing forward at least 10 related bills in the past three years, in addition to proposed land use policy and other changes. These changes are proposed before some of the previous changes have been fully implemented, and in a couple of cases, reverse previous legislative changes.

Analysis and Options: Town staff have taken the opportunity to review the proposed Bill as well as summaries and analysis provided by legal firms and other stakeholders. This section summarizes the key changes to the PPS and applicable legislation and provides commentary on how they may impact the Town.

1. Proposed Changes to Planning Act

Settlement Areas Expansion and Appeals

The Town's Settlement Area includes all lands within the current boundaries of the Town, except for the Development Reserve areas identified in the Official Plan comprising the southeast end of Lorne Street and the Gallipeau Centre frame lands. Currently, a municipality can only identify a settlement area expansion or new settlement area following a Comprehensive Review of the Official Plan that strategically assesses the community as a whole. The *Planning Act* also provides that an applicant cannot appeal a decision by Council on an official plan amendment or a zoning by-law amendment application that would expand or alter an in-force settlement area boundary.

Bill 185 proposes a change that would allow a private applicant to appeal the approval authority's refusal or non-decision so long as the proposed boundary expansion does not include any lands within the Greenbelt area. This new appeal right is paired with new PPS criteria for the assessment of proposals for settlement area boundary expansions. The draft PPS also does not propose size limitations for boundary expansion proposals. The effect of this change would transfer ultimate decision-making authority on growth management from local government to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Pre-Consultation

Currently under the *Planning Act*, municipalities have the right to *require* pre-consultation on an application for official plan amendments, zoning by-law amendments, site plan approval and draft plans of subdivision. If a municipality has deemed a planning application to be incomplete, the applicant had 30 days to make a motion to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) to dispute the determination.

Bill 185 proposes to remove the municipal authority's ability to require pre-consultation and instead would allow applicants to bring a motion to the OLT to determine the requirements for a complete application at any time after the application fee has been paid or pre-consultation has begun. In our experience, an effective pre-consultation is in the interest of the developer as well, as it provides a structured opportunity to establish and confirm technical requirements to support an application at the outset and identify technical issues relating to every applicable department. Done effectively, this would result in a smoother process and ultimately save costs for the applicant. If this Bill passes as presented, staff will continue to encourage pre-consultations.

Third Party Appeals on Zoning and Official Plan Amendments

Bill 185 proposes to amend regulations under the Planning Act to prohibit third party appeals (i.e., by members of the public) for Official Plans, Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-Laws and Zoning By-Law Amendments. The province previously removed third party appeals for subdivisions and minor variances. Appeals would only be permitted by the applicant, Minister, public bodies and specified persons (generally utility companies that made submissions).

Third party planning appeals can add considerable time and cost to a contested application, and this change appears set to address that. Staff are of the view that an efficient, well

resourced appeal tribunal is an important part of a public and accessible planning process and note that the creation of an independent land use tribunal was intended, in part, to divert such matters from the court system. The removal of appeal rights may result in planning matters being litigated in Superior Court.

Fee Refunds Revoked

Bill 185 repeals the refund mechanisms introduced by Bill 23 to the *Planning Act* relating to zoning by-law amendment applications and site plan applications whereby if applications were not processed within very tight timeframes set by the province, municipalities would have to return the application fees. As a consequence, many municipalities adjusted their processes to frontload application requirements before deeming an application complete and starting the clock, and conflicts around that milestone have typically offset any improvements in processing timelines. While the Town of Smiths Falls has not yet been in position to refund a planning application, we note that there are many reasons why a zoning or site plan application can take longer than the prescribed time, including factors outside the control of the municipality. Also, some applications are sometimes delayed by mutual agreement of proponent and municipality to allow for issues to be resolved without rushing a decision to Council.

Public Notice Requirements

Bill 185 proposes to allow notice of new planning applications, development charges, and community benefit charges on a municipal website if no local newspaper is available. While the Town of Smiths Falls is currently serviced by a print newspaper, many rural municipalities are not, and this allows them to satisfy statutory notification requirements.

Exemptions from the Planning Act for Universities, Community Facilities and ARUs

Bill 185 proposes new sections of the Planning Act that remove certain institutional and residential uses from Planning Act regulation (zoning and site plan approval):

- New section to exempt publicly assisted universities and colleges from Planning Act requirements;
- Authorize regulations that would exempt schools, hospitals and long-term care homes from the Planning Act;
- Authorize regulations that exempt Additional Residential Units from Planning Act requirements, provided they meet prescribed criteria (currently undefined).

The purpose of these changes is to speed up construction of these development types through removing municipal control or jurisdiction. Most institutional uses are regulated through other governing standards, however the ability for the municipality to address specific land use or development issues of a site or neighbourhood is unknown. The impacts of the proposed provisions regarding Additional Residential Units is also unknown until we know what the prescribed criteria contains. This proposed legislation would counteract zoning provisions that in some cases are seen to be overly restrictive on Additional Residential Units.

Use it or Lose It

Bill 185 introduces several provisions intended to incentivize projects with approval to proceed to construction:

- Require municipalities to establish lapsing dates for subdivision approvals, with a minimum of three years, unless otherwise set out in legislation. Currently,

municipalities *may* establish lapsing dates. As Smiths Falls already does so, the practical impact of this change is negligible. Draft plans of subdivision approved on or before March 27, 1995 must also be registered within three years of the legislation, or the draft approval is lost.

- Allow municipalities to establish lapsing provisions for site plan approvals, whereby approval is withdrawn if a building permit is not issued within the legislated timeframe of three years (or otherwise, if specified by regulation).
- New subsection of the Municipal Act that allow municipalities to adopt a policy regarding the allocation of water and sewage capacity. Such a policy may include criteria used to determine how capacity will be allocated and when allocation would be withdrawn (ie. if a development does not proceed). While some municipalities already use a similar approach through reports to council, Bill 185 would provide statutory authority for allocation decisions to be guided by policy. Decisions under the allocation policy are to be assigned to municipal staff and are proposed to be final. Historically, the Town has not allocated capacity in this way, however Council may wish to explore these approaches to manage growth and system capacity.

Other changes to the Planning Act and related legislation

Bill 185 proposes several other development related legislative changes that would appear to have limited impact on Smiths Falls in the short term, however have broader planning and development implications:

- Removal of upper-tier planning authority from several regions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area.
- Prohibition of minimum parking requirements for new developments around protected major transit stations and in other areas where minimum densities are prescribed. The Minister will also be able to make regulations in the future potentially prescribing other areas relating to minimum parking requirements.
- New framework for Minister's Zoning Orders requiring a demonstration of why the normal municipal process cannot be used as well as information on Indigenous engagement and public consultation.
- Amendment to Section 106 of the Municipal Act (bonusing). The section prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly providing assistance to manufacturing or any other industrial or commercial enterprise. *Bill 185* proposes a regulation to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC) to deem an incentive necessary or desirable and authorize the incentive subject to whatever restrictions are deemed necessary.

2. Proposed Changes to Development Charges Act

Eligible Capital Costs

Subsection 5 of the *Development Charges Act* establishes rules that must be followed when calculating a proposed development charge, one of which is that “the capital costs necessary to provide the increased services must be estimated.” What may be included as a “capital cost” is then set out in subsection 5(3) of the legislation. Bill 23, adopted in 2022 amended subsection 5(3) to exclude certain study costs, as well as the cost of undertaking the development charge background study itself, from the list of eligible capital costs. Bill 185 proposes to reverse that deletion, thereby allowing municipalities to include study costs in the calculation of their development charge rates.

Repeal of Mandatory Phase-In

Bill 23 previously amended the *Development Charges Act, 1997* to require a reduction in the maximum development charge that could be imposed in the first four years that a new development charge by-law is in force. For the first year, the eligible development charge would be discounted by 20%, and that discount would reduce by 5% each year until the full development charge rate applies. The mandatory “phase in” applied to all development charge by-laws passed on or after January 1, 2022, which includes the in-effect by-law in Smiths Falls. Bill 185 proposes to delete the above-summarized “phase-in” requirements and proposes transition rules for development charge by-laws impacted by this change.

Expiry of Frozen Rates

Bill 108 (More Homes, More Choices Act, 2019) introduced the concept of a “freeze” of development charge rates, which means that the development charge would be calculated and “frozen” at the date a complete application for zoning by-law amendment or site plan approval (whichever is later) is filed. The “freeze” would apply regardless of the development charge rate that is in effect at the time of the issuance of a building permit, whereby the charges (usually higher) were previously calculated at permit issuance. Currently, the “freeze” applies so long as the permits are pulled and the applicable development charge is paid within two years of the approval of the applicable planning application. Bill 185 proposes to reduce this time to 18 months, thereby encouraging development to proceed quicker following approval.

3. Proposed Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

Alongside the suite of legislative changes referenced above, the Province also released a draft Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), which updates the previous draft that was released in April 2023, and summarized in Council Report #2023-071 (Appended to this report as Schedule “A”). The report provided commentary on the significant changes envisioned through the new PPS, arranged around several key themes. For ease of reference, updates on the proposed policy are provided around the same themes.

Settlement Area Expansion

- The previous draft proposed a foundational change to growth planning, proposing to allow the expansion of settlement area boundaries at any time, rather than following a Municipal Comprehensive Review process that applies a needs-based approach that follows certain criteria. The principle of this approach carries over from 2023, however the 2023 language stated that Council “should” consider the following criteria has been strengthened so that Council “shall” consider the following criteria:
 - the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;
 - if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*;
 - whether the applicable lands comprise *specialty crop areas*;
 - the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid *prime agricultural areas* and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in *prime agricultural areas*;
 - whether the new or expanded *settlement area* complies with the *minimum distance separation formulae*;
 - whether impacts on the *agricultural system* are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined

- through an *agricultural impact assessment* or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance; and
- the new or expanded *settlement area* provides for the phased progression of urban development.

While the strengthened language acknowledging the needs-based analysis is welcomed, the broader scope of allowing boundary adjustments, accompanied with relaxed appeal provisions has the potential to undermine local growth management objectives and result in piecemeal settlement extensions.

- The previous draft PPS extended the planning horizon that guides long range growth planning from “up to” 25 years to “at least” 25 years. The revised draft proposes a range of 20-30 years.

Residential Development and Intensification

The 2023 draft PPS contained several policy adjustments that had the effect of encouraging the municipality and development community to explore different models of growth. The updated draft did not appear to substantively change these applicable sections.

The draft PPS encourages municipalities to identify “Strategic Growth Areas” that are targeted for intensification and serve as mixed use focal points. Planning for the “opportunity areas” identified in our Official Plan RFP can be done in alignment with this new approach.

Affordable Housing

The 2023 draft PPS removed the definition of affordable housing from the document, as well as a requirement for municipalities to develop minimum targets for affordable housing. The updated draft re-inserts these requirements similar to that which appeared in the 2020 PPS, and supports the coordination of planning for housing with service managers. This change is supported by staff.

Land Use Compatibility and Employment Lands

The 2024 draft PPS carries forward the changes proposed in 2023 that soften the language allowing the development of sensitive uses (ie. residential) in the vicinity of industrial uses or major facilities. The 2020 PPS would only contemplate such a situation if there was no other viable option, whereby such development is now proposed to be allowed if impacts are mitigated in accordance with provincial standards. The 2024 draft also carries forward a 2023 proposal that designated “employment lands” can be removed at any time, rather than through a comprehensive review and update. Through the upcoming OP process, Council may wish to consider developing appropriate policies protecting employment lands for growth and expansion to support their economic development vision.

Natural Heritage Systems

The draft 2023 PPS Natural Heritage policies came with a “placeholder” that explained that these policies remained under consideration by the Provincial government and would be presented in the future. The 2024 draft restores the existing Natural Heritage policies as outlined in the current PPS, with administrative tweaks to some definitions.

Climate Change

The draft 2024 PPS largely carries forward the draft 2023 policies relating to climate protection, however the additional allowances for rural and agricultural land severances have been largely rolled back to that of the 2020 PPS. In general, the concentration of

development in areas of existing services reduces emissions and supports the financial sustainability of communities.

Summary

In the opinion of staff, the proposed changes brought forward through Bill 185 are less transformational operationally speaking than some recent development related legislation. Broadly, the proposed changes to the Development Charges Act relieve financial pressure on the municipality as it relates to providing growth related infrastructure and appears to address feedback that many municipalities have provided the Province. As with many changes to the Planning Act and PPS, the long-term implications on the community may not be known for many years, as municipalities and our clients adapt to new processes and policies. An initial assessment reveals much that is positive, as well as changes, particularly related to growth management, that would require careful attention as Council embarks on updating its Official Plan.

Budget/Financial Implications: The direct financial impacts relating to the proposed changes to the Planning Act are likely not substantial, however longer-term operational costs may change and are difficult to quantify at this time. The amendments to the Development Charges Act would appear to improve the Town's fiscal capacity to undertake growth related capital improvements as identified in the Development Charges By-law.

Link to Strategic Plan: N/A

Existing Policy: *Ontario Planning Act, Ontario Municipal Act, Development Charges Act*

Consultations: Lanark County Planners

Attachments: Schedule "A" - Council Report #2023-071 – Proposed Changes to the Provincial Policy Statement (2023).

Notes/Action (space for Council Member's notes):

Respectfully Submitted:

Original Copy Signed
Karl Grenke RPP, MCIP
Manager of Development Services

Approved for agenda by Acting CAO:

Original Copy Signed
Paul McMunn
Director of Public Works & Utilities



To: Mayor and Council

From: Karl Grenke, Senior Planner

Date: May 18, 2023

Committee of the Whole Date: May 23, 2023

Title: Proposed Changes to the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

For Direction

For Information

For Adoption

Attachments

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives Report #2022-071, titled “Proposed Changes to Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)” for information; and

THAT staff be directed to provide feedback to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on behalf of the Town of Smiths Falls referencing the discussion points contained in this report.

Purpose: To provide Council with information regarding proposed changes to the Provincial Policy Statement; and, to seek direction on providing feedback to the province through their consultation process.

Background: On April 6, 2023, the Ontario government unveiled the latest of its policy and legislative proposals that further its Housing Supply Action Plan. The proposals include the release for comment of a new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), which will replace the PPS and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Proposed legislative changes are available for public review and comment and the deadline for submitting comments to the province on this document is June 5, 2023.

Bills 109 and 23 introduced in 2022 incorporated changes to planning and development related processes and fees, and Bill 97, which proposes amendments to the PPS as well as further amendments to other legislation, is a functional successor that focusses on policy.

The Provincial Policy Statement is a high-level policy document that identifies and gives direction on matters of provincial interest as it relates to land use planning. The current PPS came into effect in 2020 and is ordinarily reviewed and updated on cycles of 5-10 years. Municipalities implement the PPS in their policy and development decisions. Subsection 3(5) of the *Planning Act* provides that any municipal decision on a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS currently in effect. It is standard municipal practice that staff reports and recommendations on Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications include an opinion from staff regarding consistency to the PPS.

As a province-wide document, the PPS covers a wide range of land use planning topics. Broadly, the PPS addresses the following:

- The efficient use and management of land;
- The provision of sufficient housing, including affordable housing;
- The protection of the environment, prime farmland and natural resources;
- Creating and protecting opportunity for economic development;
- The planning of transportation corridors and other infrastructure to accommodate needs; and
- The protection of people and property from natural and human made hazards.

While an “official” version of the draft PPS with tracked changes has not been made available to date, a version helpfully produced by a law firm can be found at [2023-PPS-comparison-Final.PDF \(osler.com\)](#).

This report is presented for Council’s information, and to assist Council directing the preparation of a municipal feedback response if Council so chooses.

Analysis and Options: Council is invited to provide feedback on any or all of the proposed changes to the PPS. This report summarizes key changes and provides staff remarks on key themes relating to the changes. If so directed by Council, staff are prepared to formalize these comments in a formal submission to the province.

Settlement Area Expansion

Two key changes are proposed:

- Removal of the requirement for a Municipal Comprehensive Review, which offers a needs-based approach that must be followed in order to extend a municipal settlement area boundary and justify the need to extend services and urbanize rural lands. The Land Needs Study that was procured by the Town intended to fulfill part of these requirements. The proposed PPS simply states that municipalities *should* consider sufficient capacity in existing/planned infrastructure, that specialty crop areas and agricultural lands should be avoided and phasing should be provided.
- Planning horizon that guides long range decisions regarding land use extended from “up to” 25 years to “at least” 25 years.

This is a foundational change to growth planning in the province and the practical impact of this would be to allow the municipality to designate more land, faster, for urban serviced development. This provides significant flexibility to the municipality, with very convenient timing as it relates to the schedule of the Official Plan update, however can also lead to urban sprawl or uneven development that may create greater costs on the municipality over the long run. With the requirement for consideration of “cross-jurisdictional issues” through the comprehensive review removed, it is not clear what our role would be in the event that a neighbouring municipality proposes a new or expanded settlement area, or expanded residential development close to our boundaries.

None of these changes prevent a municipality from doing its own planning focussed on a needs based analysis, however in the hypothetical event a development is deemed by Council to not be in the municipal interest due to long term costs or any other reason it may be harder to defend that decision if it is appealed.

Suggested discussion points in municipal response:

- *Staff welcome policy changes that will increase local decision-making abilities in regards to boundary expansions, however recommend that clearer direction be provided for certainty to municipalities and developers:*

- *Re-establish language calling for boundary extensions to be logical and sequential, thereby avoiding leapfrog development;*
- *Considers financial viability over the life cycle of infrastructure and public service facilities;*
- *Considers how to accommodate the development while protecting other provincial interests.*
- *Proposed changes make it difficult to plan for infrastructure without detailed population and employment projections identify growth needs. Direction should be given as to how this can or should be done. A lack of direction can lead to unpredictable outcomes in the event of an appeal.*

Residential Development and Intensification

The proposed PPS policies appear to continue a trend regarding the de-regulation of residential development:

- Removing the requirement for municipalities to establish minimum residential density targets within settlement areas, while allowing municipalities to establish targets based on local conditions.
- Permitting and facilitating all types of intensification, including “the conversion of existing commercial and institutional buildings for residential use”, which is stronger language than at present.
- Removing the requirement to establish development standards for intensification “which minimize the cost of housing and facilitate built form, while maintaining appropriate levels of public health and safety.”

The fundamental shift to allow for local planning control is helpful as it allows the Town to explore different models of growth, however the risk as well is that it can lead to more uneconomical urban sprawl.

Suggested discussion point in municipal response:

- *Staff are generally supportive of the intent of these changes, however we encourage the PPS should allow municipal autonomy to enforce areas of specific local interest, such as preserving certain existing commercial spaces (such as ground floor commercial development downtown) and limiting or phasing intensification in areas where costly infrastructure upgrades would be required.*

Affordable Housing

The PPS proposes to remove the definition of “affordable” as it pertains to both rental and home ownership. The current PPS defines “affordable” based on household income and market rent/home price (as the case may be) and specifically requires municipalities to provide for a range of housing options to support affordable housing needs. The draft still requires municipalities to provide a range of “housing options”, whose definition has been expanded to include laneway housing, additional needs housing and other forms that may be more affordable, however “affordable” housing is no longer part of that definition. This change does not prevent municipalities from creating their own definition of affordability, which has merit in a large province with diverse needs, however the removal of this concept as an apparent expressed priority altogether is not supported, as government, collectively, has a responsibility to enable a housing supply that addresses the needs of all Ontarians.

Suggested discussion point in municipal response:

- *Staff appreciate the flexibility conveyed to municipalities through the amended “housing options” definition; however strongly suggest that a housing section reference a need for municipalities to consider affordability in policy as part of a “complete community”.*

Land Use Compatibility and Employment Areas

Several operative changes are proposed:

- Language regarding the separation of sensitive uses (ie. residential) from industrial or other major facilities has been softened so that instead of allowing encroaching sensitive uses only if there is no other option, they would now be allowed if potential impacts are mitigated in accordance with provincial standards.
- Employment land conversions to other designations can no longer only be done through a comprehensive review – there now only needs to be an “identified need” (not defined), the lands not needed for employment over the long term and the overall viability of the employment area is not negatively affected by the removal.
- Proposed policies scope the range of permitted uses in “Employment Areas” to remove institutional, commercial, retail and office uses, unless associated with the primary employment use – manufacturing, research and development, warehousing and goods movement.

The first two proposed changes increase flexibility in terms of planning for, or around, designated employment areas, which in Smiths Falls includes the business park centred on Hershey Drive and some scattered industrial zoned properties elsewhere in Town. Interestingly, the draft PPS makes it easier to locate sensitive uses near to employment areas, while also amending the employment area definition to exclude some of the uses, such as offices, which may be more compatible within that context.

Suggested discussion point in municipal response:

- *Staff support the need for employment areas to be protected for their long-term use and encourages policy to emphasize that such lands are economic resources that need to be protected similar to other protected categories.*
- *Staff are generally supportive of scoping the permitted uses in employment lands to focus on their core function, however support revising the definition to allow the flexibility to include certain stand-alone uses such as offices that support the core uses identified in the PPS. This would allow some latitude for our business park to evolve to meet the needs of employers.*

Natural Heritage Systems

The draft PPS would remove the entire section relating to the protection of Natural Heritage (including significant wetlands, woodlands and wildlife habitat) for now, with a statement that “natural heritage policies remain under consideration by the government. Once proposed policies and definitions are ready for review and input, they will be made available through a separate posting on the Environmental Registry of Ontario”.

Suggested discussion points in municipal response:

- *Good planning practice requires an assessment of all PPS policies in their totality and their relationship to each other in order to inform a complete and thorough decision. Natural heritage features form a part of this and should be considered in conjunction with all other parts of the PPS. The new PPS should include the*

Province's policy direction regarding natural heritage features and in the opinion of staff, is premature without those policies in place for consideration.

Climate Change

Proposed PPS substantively re-writes this section, however the new policies appear to be largely similar in intent to the previous policies in requiring municipalities to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. However, changes in other sections de-emphasize waste management or allow more scattered low-density housing, which appears contrary to climate objectives. Low-impact development is now specifically identified, defined and supported as a tool to manage stormwater, which is an approach strongly supported by staff.

Suggested discussion point in municipal response:

- *Staff recommend that policies and tools supporting climate resilience and adaptation be woven throughout the PPS, to highlight the role the province and municipalities can play. We recommend a greater emphasis on compact development, appropriate location of travel-intensive uses, waste management and green development standards and techniques to assist municipalities in achieving their own reduction goals.*

Other Changes

This report focusses on changes that would affect the Town of Smiths Falls specifically. Other practical changes affect rural municipalities or large urban municipalities, and staff defer to experts in those communities to speak for them:

- Large and fast-growing municipalities (29 identified towns and cities) will be required to identify "strategic growth areas", including around major transit stations where growth should be focussed and where population and employment density targets can be applied.
- Specific Growth Plan targets and policies that do not apply in Eastern Ontario are deleted and folded into the new PPS.
- Additional residential development options is supported in rural areas, including in agricultural areas. Concerns have been raised that the relaxed development policies can degrade the function of prime agricultural lands and specialty crop areas.

Conclusion

The proposed PPS introduces some significant changes to how planning is administered, which will affect key decisions that Council will be making as the Official Plan update is initiated. The broad flavour of the changes will allow for greater flexibility in local decision making, which is helpful for a municipality such as Smiths Falls that is experiencing a sudden period of growth. While many of these changes do not prevent us from exceeding the standards and targets set out in the PPS, the corollary is that it may be harder to say no to, and defend that decision, where a development proposal is not good planning or financially unsustainable for the municipality.

If so directed by Council, staff can provide feedback to the province based on the comments above and will continue to monitor the proposed changes as they unfold.

Budget/Financial Implications: N/A

Link to Strategic Plan: N/A

Existing Policy: *Ontario Planning Act*

Consultations: Lanark County Planners, Planner I

Attachments: N/A

Notes/Action (space for Council Member's notes):

Respectfully Submitted:

Karl Grenke RPP, MCIP
Senior Planner

Approved for agenda by CAO:

Malcolm Morris, CMO
Chief Administrative Officer