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INTERGOVERNMENTAL ACTION PLAN FOR SIMCOE, BARRIE AND ORILLIA – UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, December 1, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council of the Regional Municipality of York request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to keep York Region apprised of the progress of IGAP and involve the Region at key decision points in the process.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee and Council of the recently released Request for Proposal to continue with the IGAP for Simcoe, Barrie, and Orillia, provide a brief analysis of the project for implications to York Region and make recommendations regarding further involvement in the process.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council at its meeting of June 23, 2005 adopted Clause 8 of Report 6 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee which reviewed the Assimilative Capacity Study (ACS) being conducted for Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River Watershed as part of the overall Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia (IGAP).

The ACS is nearing completion and on December 12, 2005, the Province released the Terms of Reference for Phases 2 through 4 of the IGAP

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 IGAP History

In late 2004, faced with growing development pressures in Simcoe County, and the separated Cities of Barrie and Orillia, the Province of Ontario announced the initiation of the Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe, Barrie, and Orillia (IGAP). This four-phase Plan is to be completed by mid 2006 by the Province in partnership with area municipalities, separated cities, the County and the Conservation Authorities in the area.

The Intergovernmental Action Plan as a whole is intended to:

1. Define the assimilative (growth/carrying) capacity of the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga River watersheds (Phase 1).
2. Provide development (servicing) certainty for intensification and approved growth. (Phases 2 through 4).
3. Define Barrie and area's capacity for additional growth (Phases 2 through 4).
4. Ensure effective and sustainable municipal governance (Phases 2 through 4).

Upon completion of the IGAP, it is expected that the participating governments will have a basis for:

- A long-term urban structure plan for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia.
- A sustainable infrastructure strategy for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia.
- Development certainty to all affected stakeholders.
- A suitable governance structure and/or service coordination mechanisms to manage future growth and development.

Over the past year, the Province and its partners including the Region of York have been undertaking both the Assimilative Capacity of the Nottawasaga River and Lake Simcoe Watersheds, and an Existing Capacity Assessment of the Study Area.

The Province has recently released an additional Request for Proposal (RFP) that will involve comprehensive analyses of policy, fiscal, environmental and administrative implications of growth within the study area through:

1. The development of potential growth scenarios and the assessment of their overall impact if implemented.
2. The assessment of implementation options to realise the proposed potential growth options.

4.2 York Region Issues on Growth in Simcoe County

At the present time, amendments to the Town and County Official Plans in South Simcoe County have been made to develop over 3,850 hectares (9,500 acres) of land located between the settlement area boundaries of Bradford and the hamlet of Bond Head, on both sides of Highway 400. The proposed amendments add a minimum of 66,000 people and 39,000 jobs to that previously projected by the Bradford West Gwillimbury Official Plan at build-out by 2035.

York Region Council has put forth a position regarding growth in Simcoe County on several occasions in past two years. Regional Council at its meeting of December 16, 2004, in providing comments to the Province on the Draft Greenbelt Plan, requested that:

7. ***The Greenbelt Plan and Growth Management Plan contain provisions to prevent "leap-frogging" of development north of the Greenbelt Plan. For example to proposed developments in the new Bradford- Bond Head community.***

On April 21 2005, in submitting comments to the Province on the Draft Growth Plan, Regional Council re-iterated its position on growth in Simcoe County as follows:

3.3 The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe should prevent “leap-frogging” of development north of the Greenbelt Plan into Simcoe County. Further, the Province is requested to undertake a formal, comprehensive review, similar to the process found in the GTA, which includes all of the provisions of the Greenbelt Plan, and this review should specifically address the impacts on York Region.

Finally on June 23 2005, in a report advising Committee and Council of the initiation of the IGAP and particularly Phase 1 – the Assimilative Capacity Study for Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River Watershed, Regional Council recommended that:

1. The attached report on the Assimilative Capacity Study be received and Provincial Ministers on the Oversight Committee for the Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia (IGAP) and Provincial staff involved in IGAP be made aware of the April 21, 2005 Regional Council recommendation dealing with the Draft Growth Plan and “leap-frogging” of development into Simcoe County.

Regional Council’s comments and recommendations are all directly related to Growth Management in South Simcoe County and its impact on York Region Infrastructure and residents.

Growth Management

The Proposed Provincial Growth Plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, released in November 2005, designated Barrie as an Urban Growth Centre in Simcoe County. York Region is supportive of this designation, however, the Growth Plan has also identified areas in York Region within the Lake Simcoe watershed for further development including the Newmarket Growth Centre and (by way of their exclusion from the Greenbelt Plan) areas within East Gwillimbury.

Existing designated lands have been included within the calculation of the Assimilative Capacity Study, but additional lands in York, which will be required to satisfy Provincial Growth Forecasts, have not yet been added to the calculations. These lands should be accounted for prior to undesignated. lands in Simcoe County. .

Regional Council has previously indicated its issues with potential growth in Simcoe County, namely:

- That development in Simcoe County be subject to the same rigorous planning, environmental standards and infrastructure requirements as growth in the GTA;

- That prior to proceeding with further additional greenfields development north of the Greenbelt in Simcoe County the Province fully understand the implications of existing approved designations and development commitments in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

With the release of the RFP for the proposal, the next phases of IGAP, which look development of further growth potential scenarios and the assessment of their potential overall impact are to be conducted. In view of previous Council positions, it is recommended that the Region request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to keep the Region apprised of the progress of IGAP and involve the Region at key decision points in the process.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 goals relating to growth management and environmental sustainability are supported by the IGAP process and Study.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Phases 2 through 4 of the Intergovernmental Action Plan for South Simcoe County, will be cost shared between the Province and the area municipalities in Simcoe County with the Province contributing an additional \$750,000 to cover half of the costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities in the Lake Simcoe watershed in York Region have been members of the Assimilative Capacity Study Steering Committee (IGAP Phase 1) but are not anticipated to be members of the subsequent Phases. Regional staff will continue to coordinate input and responses to the studies where necessary.

7. CONCLUSION

The Province has recently released an additional Request for Proposal (RFP) that will involve the development of growth potential scenarios and the assessment of their overall impact for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia.

Regional Council has previously indicated its issues with potential growth in Simcoe County, namely:

- That development in Simcoe County be subject to the same rigorous planning, environmental standards and infrastructure requirements as growth in the GTA;

- That prior to proceeding with further additional greenfields development north of the Greenbelt in Simcoe County the Province fully understand the implications of existing approved designations and development commitments in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Since future development in South Simcoe County has the potential to impact Infrastructure and residents in York Region, it is recommended that the Region request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to keep the Region apprised of the progress of IGAP and involve the Region at key decision points in the process.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)