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PLACES TO GROW – PROPOSED GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE NOVEMBER 2005

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the recommendations contained in the following report, December 12, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be deleted and the following recommendations be adopted:

- 1. This report and attachments be endorsed as York Region's comments on Places to Grow, the Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (released November 24, 2005).**
- 2. Regional Council advise the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that York Region can only support or implement the policies of the Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, subject to a Provincial commitment to significant infrastructure funding and tools to implement the Plan as indicated in previous reports and in this report, and specifically that:**
 - 2.1 Within the next 6 months, the Province of Ontario produce 30-year Transportation Master Plans and 10-year capital plans to complement the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and that the following services/infrastructure be covered: Provincial highways, local and rapid transit funding, cross-boundary and boundary road funding, hospital and related human services funding, GO Transit and natural heritage implementation funding. (Clause 2, Report 4, Planning and Economic Development Committee, April 21, 2005)**
 - 2.2 The Province of Ontario approve Municipal Transportation Master Plans and commit to Provincial infrastructure and funding identified therein in conjunction with land use plan approvals. (Clause 2, Report 4, Planning and Economic Development Committee, April 21, 2005)**
 - 2.3 As part of the Provincial commitment to infrastructure, the Province immediately commit to funding arrangements for the following critical road and transit infrastructure projects in York Region:**
 - 1. A Rapid Transit System in all four York Region Corridors.**
 - 2. Full funding of GO Transit Expansion Plan.**
 - 3. Highway 404, 427 and Bradford Bypass expansions.**

- 4. New interchanges (12 new or modified interchanges) and widening for 400 series highway.**
- 5. HOV lanes on 400 series highways.**
- 6. Support and funding for Travel Demand Management and commuter parking lots.**
- 7. Cross-boundary and boundary road improvements.**
(Clause 2, Report 4, Planning and Economic Development Committee, April 21, 2005)

- 2.4 That the Province give specific commitment to the construction of the 404 and 427 Highway extensions in keeping with the Growth Plan by December 2006.**
- 2.5 As a number of York Durham Sewage System projects are critical in the immediate term to meet the Provincial growth forecasts for York Region as identified in the Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Province specifically commit to timely environmental and permit approvals for all of the York Durham Sewage System projects outlined in the letter from the Provincial Minister of Environment dated October 1, 2004. *(Clause 3, Report 4, Planning and Economic Development Committee, April 21, 2005)***
- 2.6 That the Ministry of Environment provide Environmental Assessment approval for the 19th Avenue Interceptor Sewer by March 2006 and in future Ministry of Environment approvals adhere to legislated time frames as found in the Environmental Assessment Act.**
- 3. The 40% intensification policies of the Growth Plan should be approved as a target as opposed to a minimum of 40% intensification.**
- 4. Urban expansion required to implement this Plan should be phased, in keeping with local and regional growth management plans;**
- 5. Intensification of centres and corridors should be in keeping with local and regional urban structure plans, in locations and at the discretion of the upper tier and local municipalities;**
- 6. The Province should lead and fund a comprehensive public communication plan with a purpose to advocating different urban structures in Ontario in an effort to change the housing preferences of Ontario residents;**
- 7. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe should prevent “leap-frogging” of development north of the Greenbelt Plan into Simcoe County. The Province is requested to undertake a formal, comprehensive review, similar to the process found in the GTA, which includes all of the elements**

found in the Greenbelt Plan, and this review should specifically address the impacts on York Region. (Clause 1, Report 4, Planning and Economic Development Committee, April 21, 2005)

- 8. The Province should support other corporations to ensure that infrastructure and energy requirements for the Region are met and specifically provide support for sustainable hydro electrical energy.**
- 9. The Regional Chair request a meeting with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to discuss the Region's issues with him and other interested members of Council.**
- 10. Staff be directed to meet with Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal staff to clearly explain Council's issues with the Proposed Growth Plan.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report and attachments be endorsed as York Region's comments on Places to Grow, the Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (released November 24, 2005).
2. Regional Council advise the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal that York Region cannot implement the policies of the Places to Grow unless there is a Provincial commitment to significant infrastructure funding and tools to implement the Plan.

2. PURPOSE

The Purpose of this report is to:

- Advise Committee and Council of the key points from Proposed Places to Grow – The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), released by the Province of Ontario on November 24, 2005.
- Advise Committee and Council of the municipal obligations outlined in the Proposed Places to Grow document.
- Provide comments and recommendations to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal on the Proposed Plan to meet its January 27, 2006 deadline for comments.

3. BACKGROUND

Over the past 2 years, the Provincial Government has released and (in a number of cases) approved a number of initiatives, Statutes and Plans which will have the effect of profoundly changing the way development occurs in the Province in the future.

Regional Council has diligently responded to these initiatives through comments and reports, direct dialogue with Provincial Ministers and through public consultation in a variety of forums. Regional Council's formal written comments to the Province are listed below:

1. The Places to Grow Discussion Paper, was released in the summer of 2004 and comments were provided to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal in September 2004, through Council's endorsement of 32 recommendations contained in Clause 10 of Report 8 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee. (*Attachment 1*)
2. The Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released by the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal in February 2005 and considered by Council at its meeting of April 21, 2005, through its consideration of Clause 1 of Report 4 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee (*Attachment 2*).
3. Regional Council at its meeting of April 21, 2005, also adopted Clauses 2 and 3 of Report 4 of the Planning and Economic Development which detailed the infrastructure projects required for growth and requesting the Province's assistance in funding and approvals for critical infrastructure projects to accommodate the anticipated growth in the Region. The list of critical infrastructure projects is appended to this report as *Attachment 3*.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Proposed Growth Plan and the supporting Technical Guidelines on Intensification and Density Targets and Implementation, contain aggressive growth and intensification targets that York Region cannot implement unless there is a commitment to:

- Significant infrastructure investment.
- Construction approval for critical infrastructure.
- New planning and financial tools directed at urban areas.
- Commitments to long-term Provincial capital planning.

While subtle wording changes have been made to the Proposed Plan as a result of comments received, the majority of Regional Council's previous comments and recommendations have not been incorporated into the Proposed Growth Plan and

therefore remain valid. The following sections highlight key elements of the Proposed Growth Plan in the context of the Region's previous comments.

4.1 Key Messages to the Ministry

As previously indicated, Regional Council sent extensive comments to the Province during the development of the Growth Plan. *Attachment 4* provides in a matrix, a summary of the comments and a summary of the means in which they have been dealt with through this current Proposed Plan. In addition, an indication (by ✓ or ✗ or ---) is provided on whether the Proposed Growth Plan has responded to the comments. Regional staff is of the overall opinion that the majority of previously expressed Regional Council comments remain valid.

There are a number of key messages to the Province that have been consistently delivered and which have not been addressed. For the Growth Plan to be successful and capable of implementation the following must be provided:

- The preparation and funding of a long term Provincial capital program.
- Funding for transit, affordable housing and human services on a long term sustainable basis.
- A streamlined planning approval process and environmental approval process.
- A new series of planning and financial tools to implement the Plan and support intensification including pre-zoning with no appeal, a development permit system, Development Charges Act changes, urban design and architectural control and province wide as-of-right second suites.
- Official plan conformity amendments should not be subject to appeal to the OMB.
- A concerted long term education and marketing strategy provided to shift societal values towards compact urban forms and sustainable development.
- Co-ordination and streamlining of Provincial Ministry functions and approvals.
- A detailed Monitoring and indicator program to measure the success of the Plan.
- The provision of an adequate Waste Management Strategy to support growth.

In addition, there are several minor mapping changes required to reflect current infrastructure approvals for the Yonge Street and Markham Centre Rapid Transit lines on Schedule 5 – Moving People. As well, the extension of the Richmond Hill GO Rail line to Bloomington Road should also be designated On Map 5 as “Proposed Higher Order Transit – to 2031” in accordance with the designation in the approved Regional Official Plan. The required map changes are shown on *Attachment 6* to this report.

4.2 Proposed Growth Plan - Summary of Key Elements

The Proposed Growth plan is organized into 4 subject areas:

- Where and How to Grow
- Infrastructure to Support Growth
- Protecting What is Valuable
- Implementation and Interpretation

A brief summary of the key elements of each section follows:

4.2.1 Where and How to Grow

Growth Forecasts:

The proposed Growth Plan for the GGH is predicated on the 2031 growth forecasts released by the Province in January 2005. For York Region, this means:

- Population of 1.5 million
- Employment of 780,000
- 500,000 Households

Previous reports to Committee and Council in 2005 discussing the forecasts, the draft Growth Plan and the Region's 30-year infrastructure needs have articulated the significant challenges these numbers represent in terms of the provision of water and sewer services, transportation, transit and human services. Council's overall position was that these forecasts could not be accommodated by the Region due to the disconnect between Provincial policy and the lack of Provincial commitment to long-term infrastructure plans and funding.

The Growth Plan's focus is on intensification in built up areas, urban growth centres, intensification corridors, major transit stations, brownfields and greyfields sites. These areas will provide the focus for transit and infrastructure investment to support growth. In this regard the specifics of the Proposed Growth Plan include:

40% Minimum intensification – By 2015, a minimum of 40% of all residential development occurring annually within each upper tier municipality will occur within the defined built up area.

Urban Growth Centres - The four Regional Centres are confirmed as urban growth centres where the Growth Plan anticipates a minimum gross density of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare by 2031.

Major Transit Station Areas and Intensification Corridors will be designated in Official Plans and planned to achieve densities that are transit supportive.

Employment Lands - Major office and major institutional development will be located in Urban Growth Centres, major transit stations areas or other areas with existing or planned higher order transit service. Further the Growth Plan requires that redesignation of employment lands to non-employment uses will only be permitted through comprehensive review.

In Designated Greenfield areas outside of existing built-up areas, the Growth Plan contemplates that upper tier municipalities will develop and implement official plan policies, including phasing policies to achieve a minimum density target of 50 residents

and jobs per hectare over the entire designated Greenfield area of each upper tier municipality (exclusive of natural heritage features and areas).

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR) in consultation with upper tier municipalities will determine the need for and maximum amount of additional Greenfield area required on a Regional basis. Further urban boundary expansions, will only be permitted through a comprehensive review subject to the criteria in the Growth Plan.

Summary

In order to reach the 40% intensification targets and achieve the objectives of the Growth Plan relating to a more urban compact development focus, there are a number of critical requirements that must be pursued by the appropriate Provincial Ministries, including:

- A Streamlined Planning Approval process.
- A new series of planning and financial tools to implement the Plan and support intensification including pre-zoning with no appeal, a development permit system, Development Charges Act changes, urban design and architectural control and province wide as-of-right second suites.
- A concerted long term education and marketing strategy to shift societal values towards compact urban forms and sustainable development.

As yet these elements have not been provided, and while there is some mention of intent in the Growth Plan, the lack of detail and specificity makes achievement of the Plan very difficult.

4.2.2 Infrastructure to Support Growth

The Growth Plan states that infrastructure investment has lagged behind needs. A basic tenet of the Growth Plan commits PIR to working with other government Ministries and public sector partners to identify strategic infrastructure needs to support implementation of the Plan through multi-year infrastructure Planning and through Sub-Area Assessments (discussed in Section 4.1.4). Other key elements include:

Transit - Public transit is identified as the first priority for infrastructure planning and investment. The policies of the Plan promote co-ordination and consistency among land use and transportation planning and investment by all levels of government.

Map 5 – Moving People however, still fails to show the Region's Yonge Street Corridor rapid transit route to the Newmarket Urban Growth centre as well as to the Markham Centre. The corrections necessary to this conceptual Map are appended as *Attachment 6*. Map 6 - Moving Goods also fails to show previously identified 400 series highway extensions, including the Bradford Bypass and should also indicate the extensions of Highway 404 to Glenwoods Avenue in Keswick as requested by Regional Council in its 2004 resolutions. A copy of Map 6, showing these improvements is appended as *Attachment 7*.

Water and Waste Water – the Growth Plan identifies that municipal water and waste water must recover the full cost of provision of the services. Further, municipalities are encouraged, but not required, to plan and design these systems to return water to the same watershed from where it was withdrawn.

The Minister of PIR through the Sub-Area Assessment in consultation with the upper tier municipality will conduct an analysis of water and waste water capacity and requirements to service the growth forecasts.

Community Infrastructure - A new section, entitled *Community Infrastructure* has been added to the proposed Growth Plan. *Community Infrastructure* is defined as land, buildings or structures that support the quality of life by providing public services for health, education, recreation and affordable housing among others. The policies also encourage services planning, funding and delivery sectors to develop a community infrastructure strategy to facilitate co-ordination of land use infrastructure and investment and require the Region in consultation with the area municipalities and other stakeholders to develop a Housing Strategy.

The Region of York has been a leader in the field of Human Services Planning for a number of years and the Region of York Human Services Strategy acts as a model that other jurisdictions emulate. The Province should be providing the necessary strategic and financial support to continue this model throughout Ontario.

The Housing Strategy is intended to set out a plan, including Official Plan policies, to meet the needs of all residents including the need for affordable rental and home ownership, and the planning and development of a range of housing types and densities to achieve the intensification and density targets.

Summary

In order to achieve the infrastructure objectives of the Growth Plan and support forecasted growth, Regional Council has consistently identified critical York Region infrastructure projects that are required to support the growth forecasts and identified Provincial responsibility for:

- Preparation and funding of a long term Provincial capital infrastructure program.
- Provision funding for transit, affordable housing and human services on a long term sustainable basis.
- Formulation of a streamlined planning and environmental approval process.

In addition to the above, while Waste Management is referenced in several Growth Plan sections, the references fall within the discussion of “conservation”, not critical infrastructure. A comprehensive Waste Management Strategy, is required to identify the need for such facilities and provide sufficient waste management facilities to support forecasted growth. An assessment of facilities and the need for additional facilities should be part of sub-area assessment. Financial tools should also include re-instatement of the

ability to collect development charges for waste management facilities. These elements should be expressly dealt with in the Growth Plan by the addition of a new section entitled Waste Management Strategy which details the requirements for the Province and upper tier municipalities.

4.2.3 Protecting What is Valuable

Outside of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and the Greenbelt, the Growth Plan calls for the Sub-Area Assessments to identify a natural system for the GGH comprised of natural heritage features and areas, and sensitive surface and groundwater features.

Prime Agricultural and Specialty Crop Areas will be identified and where appropriate protected.

Finally the Proposed Growth Plan advocates a *Culture of Conservation* to include water conservation, recycling, energy conservation, alternative energy generation and distribution, air quality improvements, integrated waste management systems and cultural heritage conservation.

Summary

The identification of natural heritage features in areas subject to the Growth Plan is well advanced based on existing Regional, municipal and Conservation Authority work.

The identification of Prime Agricultural lands and their protection within the area of York Region outside of the ORMCP and Greenbelt is more problematic, given the limited area of York that may remain outside of the existing built-up areas, and designated Greenfield areas once land budgets are calculated for the new Provincial forecasts.

Fostering a culture of conservation as an overall strategy however is consistent with the Region's sustainable development initiative.

Additional comments have been made regarding Waste Management Infrastructure outside of the Culture of Conservation.

4.2.4 Implementation and Interpretation

The Proposed Growth Plan calls for the preparation of more detailed Sub-Area Assessments and envisions implementation by upper and lower tier municipalities through a variety of tools, including Official Plan conformity amendments.

Sub – Area Assessments

The former Sub Area Growth Strategies have now been renamed as “Sub-Area Assessments”, and are intended to focus on the following key elements:

- Regional economic assessment to guide planning for employment and identify Provincially significant employment areas and economic clusters.
- Transit and transportation sub area assessment to focus on transportation infrastructure planning and investment.
- Water and Sewer capacity to service the projected growth forecasts.
- Natural Heritage system identification and protection.
- Prime agricultural and specialty crop area protection.

The Ministry of PIR is currently developing work plans for the Sub Area Assessments with anticipated completion within 18 months from the approval of the Growth Plan.

In addition to the above key elements, the Growth Plan also provides for ongoing consultation and information to the public and stakeholders to facilitate understanding and implementation of the Plan and a marketing campaign to assist municipalities in delivering the message of changing urban forms and development to residents.

Regional staff has previously expressed the opinion that a Waste Management Assessment must be added to this sub- area assessment list and has previously requested that Human Services also become part of the Sub-Area Assessment program.

Conformity Amendments

Significant onus has been placed on the Region, often in consultation with the area municipalities, to formulate and implement the Province's vision.

Section 4.2 of this Report and Attachment 5 describes more fully the Growth Plan expectations regarding Provincial, Regional and area municipal studies to implement the Growth Plan. These studies represent a significant amount of work and expense to be borne entirely at the Regional and local levels. The timing of this work has been provided through the *Places to Grow* Act and requires that conformity amendments be adopted within 3 years of the approval of the Growth Plan.

In addition to the above, while the Province requires that the Region conform to the Growth Plan requirements, conformity amendments must proceed through the normal planning approvals process which may include appeal of such applications to the OMB.

Summary:

Much of the detail that will be required to achieve and implement the Growth Plan is not available. Specifically the areas where improvements to the Growth Plan are required include:

- A concerted long term (10 to 25 year) education and marketing strategy to shift societal values towards more compact urban forms and sustainable development.
- Official plan conformity amendments and implementation mechanisms should not be subject to appeal to the OMB.

- Co-ordination of Provincial Ministry functions and approvals is required in order to streamline and improve service delivery.
- A detailed Monitoring and indicator program is required to measure the success of the Plan.
- The provision of an adequate Waste Management Strategy to support growth.

Other Tools for Implementation

On December 12, 2005, the Province announced Bill 51 which contains proposed changes to the *Planning Act* and several other Acts. A detailed report of the changes will be tabled at the February meeting of Planning and Economic Development Committee in order to meet the Province's commenting deadline of February 26, 2005.

A number of the changes proposed, may assist the Region and area municipalities in achieving parts of the Growth Plan. These changes include:

- Requiring municipal and provincial planning decisions and documents *be consistent with and conform* with the Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans that are in existence *when the decisions are made* or the documents are issued.
- Appeals to the OMB in respect of amendments to Official Plan's and Zoning Bylaws to reduce designated employment areas are restricted.
- Municipalities can regulate the minimum and maximum density and height of development to build more compact communities that make use of lands and services more effective.
- Municipalities could designate the areas where second residential units (e.g., basement suites) are permitted. There would be no right to appeal the designation to the OMB.
- Through site plan controls, the proposed reforms would allow municipalities to shape the environmental quality and appearance of their communities through the review and approval of the exterior design of buildings. This could include green roofs and solar panels; the preservation of on-site vegetation and water-conserving landscaping.

Yet to come is further Provincial articulation of financial tools and incentives that have been promised for some time. These additional tools include, but are not limited to, an examination of Tax Increment Financing (promised in the 2005 budget to occur in 2005-2006) as a means of encouraging urban regeneration, the application of Gas Tax revenues to assist municipalities and Development Charges Act review.

4.3 Regional Responsibilities as Identified by the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan proposes a number of very ambitious studies to provide background and to support the Government's proposals. Undertaking many of these studies is the responsibility of PIR however, even then, the studies are likely to be based on work being undertaken or proposed as part of Regional and area municipal growth management work plans.

Attachment 5 to this report identifies the approximately twenty studies or parts of studies to be undertaken within the next 18 months by PIR to satisfy the Growth Plan requirements.

Over and above these studies will be the work towards conformity amendments, which must be adopted within 3 years of the approval of the Growth Plan.

Given that the Region is fully committed to its own Growth Management workplan over the next 2 years and area municipal staff is similarly involved in a variety of planning and implementation pieces, providing the Province with the necessary support to undertake and review Growth Plan studies and Sub-Area Assessments presents a challenge that at present is unresourced and unfunded at both the Regional and area municipal level.

Further, while the Growth Plan and PIR studies, including Sub-Area Assessments are not subject to appeal to the OMB, Official Plan conformity amendments required by the Growth Plan will be subject to appeal to the OMB. This places the Region and area municipalities in the position of having to defend the Provincial Growth Plan and its assumptions as expressed through its supporting studies, including the Sub-Area Assessments. Should the Province be serious in its desire to have the Growth Plan implemented, it should be prepared to have conformity amendments approved without the ability of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Proposed Growth Plan supports a number of Vision 2026 goal areas, including Managed and Balanced Growth, Infrastructure for a Growing Region, A Vibrant Economy, Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture, and Responding to the Needs of our Residents. The proposed Growth Plan however, does not support the Vision's objectives relating to financial health largely due to the lack of detail and specificity relating to provincial financial commitments.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The provision of adequate long term funding to support the Province's growth management vision is necessary. In order to support an increase in the population and employment forecasts in the manner proposed by the Province additional funding at an early date will be required. This message has been consistently delivered to the Province through previous Council reports.

To address infrastructure needs, the Ministry of PIR in the proposed Growth Plan has committed to work across Provincial ministries to develop a Provincial infrastructure investment strategy, but no details are yet known. This infrastructure strategy must be implemented immediately in order to support the kind of growth the Province is requiring in the Growth Plan.

In addition to the immediate infrastructure funding requirements of the Region of York, the Province through the Growth Plan will be requiring the preparation of approximately 20 studies where the Region and area municipalities will be required to provide data input, analysis and review. This level of Regional and area municipal involvement is un-resourced and un-funded. Unless the financial support is available, the Growth Plan will not be financially sustainable.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Area municipalities are preparing reports dealing with the Provincial Growth Plan. Regional staff has discussed the Growth Plan with area municipal staff.

7. CONCLUSION

The Proposed Growth Plan is a forward looking and visionary plan that along with other initiatives, including the Greenbelt Plan 2005, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan 2001, Planning Reform, Source Water Protection, among others will fundamentally change how development and planning is undertaken in south central Ontario.

There are a number of key messages to the Province that have been consistently delivered and which have not been addressed. For the Growth Plan to be successful and capable of implementation these must be provided:

- The preparation and funding of a long term Provincial capital program.
- Funding for transit, affordable housing and human services on a long term sustainable basis.
- A streamlined planning approval process and environmental approval process.
- A new series of planning and financial tools to implement the Plan and support intensification including pre-zoning with no appeal, a development permit system, Development Charges Act changes, urban design and architectural control and province wide as-of-right second suites.
- Official plan conformity amendments should not be subject to appeal to the OMB.
- A concerted long term (+ 25 year) education and marketing strategy provided to shift societal values towards compact urban forms and sustainable development.
- Co-ordination and streamlining of Provincial Ministry functions and approvals.
- A detailed Monitoring and indicator program to measure the success of the Plan.
- The provision of an adequate Waste Management Strategy to support growth.

In addition, there are several minor mapping changes required to reflect current infrastructure approvals for the Yonge Street and Markham Centre Rapid Transit lines on Schedule 5 – Moving People and the extension of the Richmond Hill GO line to

Bloomington Road to reflect the approved Regional Official Plan designation. The required map changes are shown on *Attachment 6* to this report.

It is recommended that this report and attachments be forwarded to PIR as York Region's comments on the Proposed Growth Plan, November, 2005 and further that Council advise the Ministry that the Plan cannot be achieved unless there is a commitment to significant infrastructure funding, provision of the planning and financial tools and the staffing and financial resources to assist municipalities in fulfilling their statutory obligations under this Plan.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are included with this report.)