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MODEL WATERSHED-GROUNDWATER PLANNING POLICIES

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, October 1, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional staff work with area municipalities to assess the effectiveness of the model policies and provide feedback to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority by mid 2006.
2. Staff report back to the Planning and Economic Development Committee by mid 2006 on recommended revisions to this document.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to area municipalities for review.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to introduce a report and model policies prepared on behalf of the York Peel Durham Toronto (YPDT) Groundwater Study to assist municipalities and Conservation Authorities in developing official plan policies to implement watershed plans prepared under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). Entitled *Watershed Planning from Recommendations to Municipal Policies: A Guidance Document, Interim Report April 2005*, these recommendations may form the basis for future municipal policy work after an interim period to analyse their appropriateness.

3. BACKGROUND

Section 24 of the ORMCP requires upper and single-tier municipalities to prepare watershed plans and incorporate the objectives and requirements of these watershed plans into their official plans. These plans are currently under preparation by the Lake Simcoe and Toronto and Region Conservation Authorities as reported at the September 22, 2005 Council meeting.

In order to enable policy development that is consistent across the Oak Ridges Moraine, regardless of municipal boundaries, the Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC) which represents the nine conservation authorities across the Moraine, and the

Regional Municipalities of York, Peel, Durham and the City of Toronto (YPDT) commissioned this Interim Guidance document.

The document proposes model municipal planning policies that should be considered when preparing and implementing watershed plans and is aimed at both conservation authority planners, to help them formulate better watershed plan recommendations, and municipal planners, to help them develop better municipal planning policies.

The document is also meant to compliment and reinforce other watershed-related municipal planning policies, such as hazardous lands policies.

The model policies deal with ground and surface water, terrestrial and aquatic natural heritage, landforms and infrastructure and are GTA specific.

Each section describes why an issue is important, suggests model policies, and discusses how the policies can be adapted in different ways.

An example of an Issue, model policies and discussion are included in Attachment 1 and briefly discussed in Section 4.1 below.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Interim Guidance Document was delivered to municipalities in June of 2005 and YPDT/CAMC recommends that this interim version of the document be assessed over the next year by GTA municipalities and ORM conservation authorities, and the effectiveness of the model policies reviewed and revised based on user feedback.

Regional staff from the Planning and Transportation and Works Departments participated on the working committee that developed this report but have some outstanding concerns regarding the practical application of the policies within various levels of planning documents, and the ease of using the document itself.

In an effort to streamline wording between official plans in YPDT municipalities, Regional staff will review the policies with our municipal counterparts over the next year and bring suggestions for improvements to the document to Council in mid 2006.

4.1 Model Policies

Attachment 1 to this report contains an example of a model policy, in this case, an examination of the issues and options around developing a policy on sustainable water supply.

The document identifies the issue to be addressed in Policy and it's significance, in this case how water budgeting and conservation is necessary to ensure that water, specifically

groundwater, is fairly allocated and efficiently used and available for human, industrial and agricultural uses.

The considerations used in developing this model policy references sections of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan that must be considered, what types of development might be permitted, and alternative ways of implementing the policy, for e.g. through a zoning by-law.

The section proposes a series of recommended “model” policies that could be utilized by the Conservation Authority staff in drafting watershed planning recommendations and/or Regional or local municipal planning staff in incorporating relevant watershed planning policies.

While the “cook-book” approach of these policies may work in certain situations, Regional staff have identified some issues with this approach in that watersheds and planning policy needs tend to vary more widely than model policies can account for. Regional staff has agreed that these model policies will be assessed over the next year as situations arise where they may be considered for use.

4.2 Regional Issues

Since 1994 the Regional Official Plan has contained policies that deal with watershed planning at the macro-level. Policies in section 2.3 support the Conservation Authority watershed planning process and commit the Region to co-operating with the Conservation Authorities to:

- Establish and achieve water quality objectives for the watershed and addressing the long-term cumulative impact of development on the watershed;
- Monitor the quantity and quality of groundwater systems in York Region
- Prepare in conjunction with the area municipalities and the Province, a wellhead protection strategy for the Region to protect regional well sites from incompatible uses and sources of contamination.
- Seek cooperation within adjacent regions and the assistance of the Province in providing coordinated protection and management strategies for critical recharge areas and the groundwater aquifers in the Region.
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As such, much of the policy intent for watershed planning currently exists in the approved ROP.

With new Provincial initiatives including the ORMCP Watershed Planning requirements and Provincial Drinking Water Source Protection legislation and regulations, to be introduced in the future, there may be a need for amendments to the Regional policies. At this time, Regional staff is anticipating that the existing policies are appropriate at the Regional level with very few amendments expected. Once the provincial direction

becomes clear, Regional staff will bring further reports forward to Committee and Council for information purposes.

In so far as the model policies are concerned, while the “cook-book” approach of these policies may work in certain situations, Regional staff have identified some issues with this approach in that watersheds and planning policy needs tend to vary more widely than model policies can account for. Regional staff from York, Peel and Durham Regions and the City of Toronto have agreed that the model policies should be assessed over the next year as situations arise where they may be considered for use.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Work on this document and the review over the next year will be accommodated within the existing budgets and staff complements of the Planning and the Transportation and Works Departments.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional staff will consult and work with local municipal staff on the review of the Interim Guidance Document. The Regional municipalities of Peel and Durham are also reviewing the document over the next year to determine its effectiveness in responding to policy needs.

7. CONCLUSION

Watershed Planning from Recommendations to Municipal Policies: A Guidance Document, Interim Report April 2005 was prepared to assist municipalities and Conservation Authorities in developing official plan policies to implement watershed plans prepared under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP).

Regional staff will consult and work with local municipal staff on the review of the model policies in the Interim Guidance Document over the next year and report back to Council on recommended improvements in mid 2006.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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