



Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury

P.O. Box 160, Bradford, Ontario L3Z 2A8

Administration Centre: 3541 Line 11 at Highway 400 • Tel: 905-775-5366 • Fax: 905-775-0153

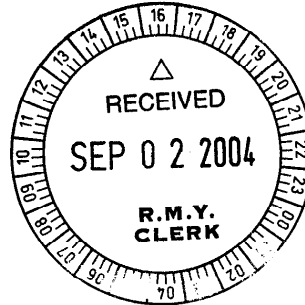
August 27, 2004

The Regional Municipality of York
Box 147
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Attn: Dennis Kelly, Clerk

Dear Mr. Kelly:

Re: Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal
Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Implications on Bradford By-pass and Hwy. 404/427 Extension Projects



REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE

FILE No. - *P07*

→ *Chair*
B. Kelly
R. Schaffer

The Council of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, at its meeting of August 17, 2004, considered a staff report on the "Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future" discussion paper released by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The staff report provided Council with a summary of the major elements of the discussion paper, and commented on what impacts the province's potentially new actions may have on the Town.

Council endorsed staff's comments and adopted the attached resolution. As noted in the report (also attached), the Town is gravely concerned with the Province's apparent retraction of the previous government's commitment to near-term transportation improvements for south Simcoe County and northern York Region. These improvements – the extensions of Hwy. 404 and 427, and the introduction of a freeway linkage between Hwy. 400 and 404 (Bradford By-pass), are key to the economic development and congestion reducing efforts of municipalities in these areas.

The Council of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury is seeking your council's support in convincing the province of the importance of providing the transportation improvements in the near future. Accordingly, we request that a resolution be passed akin to item (ii) of the attached resolution, and forwarded to Ministers Caplan and Takhar. I would also appreciate receiving a copy of any actions taken by your council on this matter.

I thank you in advance for bringing the Town's concerns to the attention of your council. If you have any questions in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact me at (905) 775-5366.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff McKnight', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Geoff McKnight, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning

Encl.

Letter also sent to:

- Lucille King, Director of Corporate Services/ Municipal Clerk,
Town of East Gwillimbury
- Paul G. Landry, Clerk, Town of Innisfil
- Chris Somerville, Clerk, Township of King
- Anita Moore, Clerk, Town of Newmarket
- Patricia M. Middlebrook, Clerk/Manager of Administration,
Town of New Tecumseth
- Glen R. Knox, Clerk, The County of Simcoe

Resolution 34-009
Passed by the Council of the
Corporation of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury
August 17, 2004

- (i) *That the planning report entitled "Detailed Staff Comments - A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe", dated August 17, 2004, be received and forwarded to the Honourable David Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as the Town's formal comments on the "Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future" discussion paper;*
- (ii) *That the Minister be advised that the Council of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury ardently request the reintroduction of the "Bradford by-pass" as a high-priority infrastructure project, and that the province commit to a near-term construction timeframe;*
- (iii) *That the Province be requested to empower lower tier municipalities such that they are recognized as full partners with the province and upper tier municipalities in developing the strategies and implementation tools for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe;*
- (iv) *That Council request a meeting with Mr. Caplan and ministry staff to discuss the Town's interest in the Bradford by-pass, as well as other concerns and comments regarding the discussion paper; and,*
- (v) *That a copy of this staff report and corresponding resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation, John Gerrestsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, and Bradford West Gwillimbury MPP Joseph Tascona.*

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF BRADFORD WEST GWILLIMBURY

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

**Mayor Jonkman and
Members of Council**

August 17, 2004

**RE: Detailed Staff Comments
Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future
A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the planning report entitled "Detailed Staff Comments - A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe", dated August 17, 2004, be received and forwarded to the Honorable David Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as the town's formal comments on the "Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future" discussion paper;

That the minister be advised that the Council of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury ardently request the reintroduction of the "Bradford by-pass" as a high-priority infrastructure project, and that the province commit to a near-term construction timeframe;

That the province be requested to empower lower tier municipalities such that they are recognized as full partners with the province and upper tier municipalities in developing the strategies and implementation tools for managing growth in the greater golden horseshoe;

That Council request a meeting with Mr. Caplan and ministry staff to discuss the town's interest in the Bradford by-pass, as well as other concerns and comments regarding the discussion paper; and,

That a copy of this staff report and corresponding resolution be forwarded to the Honorable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation, John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, and Bradford West Gwillimbury MPP Joseph Tascona.

BACKGROUND:

As reported at the July 20th, 2004 council meeting, the province has released a discussion paper entitled "Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future". The paper, produced by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, presents a growth plan for the "greater golden horseshoe" an area stretching around Lake Ontario from Niagara in the west to Peterborough in the east.

The purpose of this staff report is to summarize the contents of the discussion paper and comment on aspects of the paper that may have implications for the town.

DISCUSSION:

Since the election in October 2003, the provincial government has released a flurry of draft discussion and position papers on a broad range of development and community-related matters. Topics include rural development, greenbelt protection, rent reform, infrastructure investments, source water protection, Planning Act and OMB reform, brownfield redevelopment, and changes to the provincial policy statement. In addition to those initiatives, the newly formed Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal has released the previously-mentioned discussion paper on growth management for much of southern Ontario, including Simcoe County.

Overview of "Places to Grow – Better Choices, Brighter Future"

Establishing a provincial framework for managing growth is a laudable undertaking. Staff have reviewed the paper and attended a presentation by David Caplan, the minister presiding over Public Infrastructure Renewal. While the discussion paper and subsequent comments from Mr. Caplan offer many positive elements for managing southern Ontario's growth, there are aspects of this initiative that are of concern to staff. These concerns are presented following a brief overview of each of the main components of the discussion paper.

Intensification and Compact Development

Through this section of the paper, the province reiterates provincial policy statements that support the intensification of existing urban areas. Strategies to assist with this goal include:

- reviewing the Development Charges Act such that it provides incentives for compact development
- removing financial impediments for brownfield redevelopment
- encouraging redevelopment of "greyfield" sites (under-utilized retail areas)

All of these actions are intended to promote compact urban form and discourage growth that makes inefficient use of land.

Priority Urban Centres and Future Growth Areas

Consistent with its emphasis on focusing growth within existing urban areas, the discussion paper identifies 11 "priority" and 15 "emerging" urban centres. The priority areas, primarily traditional downtown centres, are cited for their ability to accommodate growth without requiring significant investment in infrastructure. Growth areas are emerging urban centres that share many of the characteristics of priority urban centres, and are seen as ultimately growing to that scale. Downtown Barrie is the only priority urban centre in Simcoe County. Newmarket is the nearest future growth area to Bradford West Gwillimbury.

To assist the designated urban centres in attracting growth, the province will:

- direct infrastructure spending and the provision of public facilities (i.e. hospitals, educational facilities and government offices) to the identified areas

- establish the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt to clearly delineate no-growth areas
- introduce tax incentives to encourage growth in urban centres and discourage it elsewhere, and
- streamline the EA process for projects in urban centres

Municipalities that are not identified by the province as urban centres will be required to address rigorous standards prior to expanding their urban boundary. The standards include accommodating a minimum 40% of projected growth through intensification, and consistency with an upper tier growth plan.

Small Towns and Rural Communities

The growth management plan recognizes that large areas outside of urban centres are home to hundreds of small communities, and they have unique challenges due to their broad geographic areas, dispersed populations, smaller tax bases, and higher dependency on resource industries. The paper states that rural communities are key to the health and vitality of the province, and efforts will be made to:

- encourage population and employment growth within settlement area boundaries
- assist with infrastructure that is critical to the viability and vitality of rural communities
- promote revitalization of downtown areas

Integrated Regional Transportation Network

The province identifies transit as its main priority for moving people in the urban parts of the region. Accordingly, provincial resources will focus on expanding mass transit, establishing new interregional transit services, improving the GO system, and building a network of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.

The other key transportation priority is the movement of goods within and through southern Ontario via road, rail, air and water. With respect to road, the discussion paper lists three "future economic corridors": freeways between Niagara and the GTA, the Kitchener region and the GTA, and the easterly extension of Hwy. 407 from Pickering to Hwy. 35/115.

The province's short and mid-term transportation priorities will be the optimization of Hwy. 400, transit expansion (including GO rail service to Barrie) and the economic corridors outlined above. Long term priorities (20+ years) are identified as extensions to Hwy. 404 and 427, and the Bradford by-pass, which is beyond the timeframe promoted by the previous government.

Agricultural Resources

Agricultural production is recognized as a key component of the Ontario economy and vital for healthy rural communities. The province proposes to protect prime agricultural areas from urban encroachment and land use conflicts by such actions as:

- establishing the previously-mentioned Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt
- promoting initiatives such as nutrient management, stewardship and normal farm practices to protect and enhance agricultural uses
- review the land-use planning system such that farmers have the flexibility to change their operations over time

Other initiatives

The discussion paper lists other strategies for dealing with matters such as sustainable water and waste water services, protecting natural heritage and greenspace systems, and managing mineral aggregate resources.

Implications of the proposed growth management plan on BWG

As briefly mentioned, the discussion presents many worthwhile strategies for managing growth in southern Ontario. Directing growth to areas that can best accommodate it is a sensible means of containing sprawl, thereby reducing strain on the region's natural, social and fiscal environment. There are elements of the plan however, that are of concern. They range from strategies that are not phrased clearly enough to assess their potential impacts, to other actions that will detrimentally impact the town, such as the apparent loss of the Bradford by-pass.

The following identifies staff's three main concerns with the discussion paper.

Growth management plan may undermine BWG's ability to self govern its urban boundary

The discussion paper sets out a very clear hierarchy for growth. The bulk of it will occur in 11 priority and 15 emerging urban centres, and urban boundary expansion for those areas will be subject to specific criteria. The prospects for expansion of areas other than the anointed 26 are far less clear, as the paper states that such proposals "...will need to be consistent with the upper tier growth plan and the directions provided in the growth plan."

The paper further describes a system in which the province will allocate population and employment projections to upper-tier municipalities, who will divide that allocation among its lower-tier municipalities. The lower-tier municipalities will be required to prepare growth plans that identify how their allocation will be managed, including strategies to accommodate 40% of their projected growth through intensification.

On paper, that looks like a reasonable approach. In practice, it may leave local municipalities with little influence over the scale and timing of their own growth. Further to this concern, efforts are currently underway to develop and allocate the above-mentioned growth projections.

These efforts involve provincial staff and the planning directors of upper-tier municipalities – local municipalities do not appear to be involved in this critical exercise. Staff have been informed that projections for Simcoe County will be finalized prior to completion of the county's growth management plan. The county figures will be based on the growth forecast prepared by Hemson Consulting Ltd. – a document that south Simcoe municipalities have previously criticized.

Staff's concern with this approach should not be misinterpreted as advocating growth beyond that currently planned for urban Bradford. We are, however, advocating the position that local councils should be empowered to make those decisions. With respect to the town, it is likely that urban Bradford will build out well before the OP's planning horizon of 2026. If the town develops a comprehensive urban expansion plan that upholds policies of the provincial policy statement and Simcoe County official plan, is technically and fiscally prudent, and is in the best interests of BWG constituents, it should be in the hands of Council to decide the fate of that

plan.

While it is premature to conclude that Bradford should be considered as an emerging growth centre (as defined in the discussion paper), it is similarly not appropriate to exclude consideration of this option by the town and County of Simcoe. Given its location in relation to Hwy. 400, its existing GO train and bus service, its strategic location midway between the existing developed GTA and Barrie, there may be significant opportunities for Bradford to contribute in a positive manner to the province's growth management objectives.

The identification of the various growth areas does not appear to be supported by any significant background review or studies as to their ability or desirability to sustain additional growth, nor to justify those areas that are not being considered for growth. From the Town's perspective, it would be preferable for the provincial growth strategy to identify the economic corridors and growth areas in a broader scale (e.g. potentially south Simcoe), identify the performance criteria for growth management, provide for the more detailed distribution of growth and future infrastructure through the County Growth Management initiatives (as a partnership with the lower tier and other single tier municipalities, and potentially focusing on the South Simcoe municipalities), and finally provide for a meaningful lower tier role in developing the strategy for growth (and not merely being required to implement items directed from the upper tier and provincial levels).

Intensification targets will be difficult to achieve without assistance

Given the town's current population targets and urban boundary, residential densities will be relatively low upon build-out. Intensification within the area for residential and employment purposes will make better use of municipal infrastructure, and bring greater viability to the introduction of other public services (i.e. transit).

Intensification can be of great benefit to the town, but the province's target of 40% will be difficult to achieve. The most feasible option for intensifying Bradford is to maintain the urban boundary and increase population targets. The success of that option, however, will be challenged by wastewater servicing constraints. This will likely be an issue because intensification is typically more speculative than greenfield development. Therefore, proponents (and lending institutions) are less inclined to up-front funding for the infrastructure required to accommodate intensification projects. A second option would maintain population targets and shrink the urban boundary. However, this option is fraught with legal issues as it would entail the removal of development rights.

Intensification is a worthy pursuit, but any efforts undertaken by the town in this regard will require fiscal support from other levels of government and/or the removal of barriers to private funding. Accordingly, the province must identify specific tools that will make available to ensure that intensification can succeed.

Bradford by-pass is critical to the town's quality of life

The province's strategy for an improved transportation system relies on expansion to transit systems and optimization of select elements of the existing highway network. Other than the prospects of widening Hwy. 400 and more frequent GO service, none of the potential

improvements are of particular benefit to Bradford West Gwillimbury.

On the contrary, announcements that extensions of Hwy. 427 and 404, and the inter-highway Bradford by-pass have been shelved indefinitely, are troubling. Of all the comments, directions and strategies emerging from the growth management discussion paper, this announcement offers the greatest detrimental consequences for the town.

Loss of the by-pass will impact upon BWG's future quality of life, and it undermines three areas of declared provincial interest – healthy downtown cores, the efficient movement of people and goods, and strong economic vitality.

The provincial policy statement and several other provincial initiatives cite the value of revitalizing downtown cores, a notion that is supported through various forms of provincial assistance. The town and many volunteers have invested considerable effort into restoring downtown Bradford as a vibrant, multi-use centre. Of greatest benefit to this effort would be the provision of the by-pass, which would greatly reduce the debilitating effect of high traffic volumes and heavy vehicles on Holland and Barrie Streets. Returning Holland Street to pedestrians and local vehicular traffic will stabilize the character of the area, and provide incentive for reinvestment. For this issue alone, the by-pass is warranted. Without it, downtown Bradford will be a place that people go through, rather than to.

Establishing a sizeable and diverse employment base is a priority for the town – a goal echoed in many provincial initiatives. Accomplishing such a goal will deliver many benefits, including an injection of wealth into the community, jobs closer to home, and a stronger assessment base for the municipality. With these benefits in mind, additional employment lands were designated in the new official plan along the MTO-identified route of the Bradford by-pass. This strategic location would benefit from the access, exposure and volumes offered by the freeway – all key attributes for attracting employers. With that designation in place, private interests have acquired land and made investment decisions based on the assumption that the by-pass would be constructed. The value of those lands and investments are now in doubt.

To compensate for the likely loss of employment lands along the by-pass route, the town will be forced to designate lands elsewhere. The most logical location is along Hwy. 400. This option faces obstacles though, as the area is outside of the urban boundary, servicing costs would be higher, and the province is reluctant to construct new highway interchanges. It appears that the town's efforts to uphold provincial policy and solidify its fiscal health will be thwarted by contradictory provincial actions.

We believe that the by-pass will assist in improving the desirability of the Town as a location for employment growth, which would then improve the Town's labour force participation rate and reduce the continued need for commuting outside the community. This By-pass, in connection with the improvements to Highway 400 and Highway 404 should solidify a north-south economic corridor. This would also assist in achieving the province's desired goal of providing an improved balance between population and employment growth.

Town staff have long been involved in good faith discussions with the Ministry of Transportation regarding detailed planning and corridor protection for the by-pass, as well as other transportation improvements such as a potential interchange at Sideroad Ten and the by-pass, and a replacement for the Canal Road interchange that is to be closed at Hwy. 400. It now appears those efforts, as well as environmental assessments that are in various stages of completion, have been wasted.

The by-pass is key to the quality of life for residents of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Simcoe County, York Region, and others. The province must recommit to its construction in the near term.

RECOMMENDATION:

"Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future" does offer fresh and promising direction on managing the tremendous growth the region will experience for the foreseeable future. Staff's enthusiasm for the proposed actions is tempered though, by the concerns listed in this report. Accordingly, staff recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report and forward it to the Honorable David Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as the town's formal comments on the "Places to Grow - Better Choices, Brighter Future" discussion paper;
2. Advise the minister that Council ardently requests the reintroduction of the "Bradford by-pass" as a high-priority infrastructure project, and that the province commit to a near-term construction timeframe;
3. Request that the province empower lower tier municipalities such that they are recognized as full partners with the province and upper tier municipalities in developing the strategies and implementation tools for managing growth in the greater golden horseshoe.
4. Request a meeting with Mr. Caplan and ministry staff to discuss the town's interest in the Bradford by-pass, as well as other concerns and comments regarding the Town's potential role in Growth Management and the discussion paper; and,
5. Direct staff to forward this report and corresponding resolution to the Honorable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation, John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, and Bradford West Gwillimbury MPP Joseph Tascona.

Respectively submitted,



Geoff McKnight, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning