



Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Planning Committee
From: Sarah Wilhelm, Manager of Policy Planning
Date: Thursday, September 12, 2024
Subject: **2024 Provincial Planning Statement**



1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the new 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

2.0 Report Highlights

- The final version of the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement comes into effect on October 20, 2024.
- The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will be revoked on the same date.
- In the Greenbelt Areas of the County, references to the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement and 2019 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will continue to apply.
- The new PPS allows the County to continue to use the 2051 population, household and employment forecasts which came into effect July 12, 2024 through OPA 120.
- Planning staff will continue with the phased Official Plan Review.

3.0 Background

The finalization of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) brings to conclusion an almost two-year process to streamline and combine the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement and 2019 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Province consulted in 2022 on combining the two policy documents and then in 2023 and 2024 on draft versions of a new policy document. Planning Staff previously reported on the 2023 Draft and the 2024 Draft through report PD2023-17 and PD2024-20.

The 2024 PPS comes into effect October 20, 2024 and all land use planning decisions are required to be consistent with its policies. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will be revoked by O. Reg. 328/24 on October 20, 2024.

The above approach will differ for Greenbelt Plan areas of the County in Puslinch and Erin, where elements of the 2020 PPS and 2019 Growth Plan will continue to apply in accordance with the following new paragraph added to section 1.4.1 of the Greenbelt Plan:

“A reference in this Plan to the PPS is a reference to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 as it read immediately before it was revoked and a reference in this Plan to the Growth Plan is a reference to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2019 as it read immediately before it was revoked.”

The above paragraph was added through approval of Amendment No. 4 of the Greenbelt Plan approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on August 15, 2024 (effective October 20, 2024).

4.0 2024 Provincial Planning Statement

The policy changes brought about by the new PPS are substantial. A summary of key policy changes is provided in Appendix A, including those which were made between the 2024 Draft and 2024 Final version of the PPS.

With respect to implementation, Section 6.1.6 of the new PPS states the following:

“Where a planning authority must decide on a planning matter before their official plan has been updated to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, or before other applicable planning instruments have been updated accordingly, it must still make a decision that is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement.”

This means that as of October 20, 2024, decisions of County Council, Planning Committee and Land Division Committee must be consistent with the new PPS and the County Official Plan for County applications such as an Official Plan Amendment, Plan of Subdivision/Condominium, Consent, etc. The same applies to decisions of local Councils and Committees of Adjustment for applications such as a Zoning By-law Amendment, Minor Variance, etc.

4.1 Relationship to Official Plan

In addition to the new PPS, the County of Wellington Official Plan also continues to apply to land use and servicing decisions. The new PPS states that:

- Official plans continue to be the most important vehicle for implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement.
- The policies of the PPS represent minimum standards.
- Planning authorities may go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of importance to a specific community, unless doing so would conflict with any policy of the Provincial Planning Statement.

The new PPS will be implemented through amendments to the County Official Plan as part of the ongoing Official Plan Review. Until those amendments have been completed, it will be necessary to interpret consistency/conformity with both policy documents.

4.2 Role of County Planning Staff

Policy and/or Development Planning staff will provide a professional planning opinion regarding:

- a) consistency with the new PPS as part of their comments to Committees and Councils on planning matters; and
- b) conformity with the current County Official Plan policies relative to the new PPS as part of their comments to Committees and Councils on planning matters.

Staff will also continue to consult with Member Municipalities about local needs as part of the Official Plan Review.

4.3 Relationship to the Official Plan Review

There are several growth-related policies carried forward in the 2024 PPS which are outlined below and compared with the current Official Plan/Official Plan Review.

Policy Area	2024 PPS	Official Plan / Official Plan Review
Growth Forecasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for municipalities like Wellington to continue to forecast growth using population and employment forecasts previously issued by the Province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County can continue to use the forecasts in the Official Plan which were based on the Growth Plan and recently approved by the Province through its decision on OPA 120
Planning horizon for land needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 to 30-year time horizon required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2051 horizon of the Official Plan falls within the 20 to 30-year range
Priority areas for growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires settlement areas to be the focus of growth and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County's growth strategy in the Official Plan is consistent with this approach
Intensification targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires County to establish and implement minimum targets for intensification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Official Plan contains a minimum County-wide intensification target of 20% Technical work recommends a reduction to 15% County-wide¹
Density targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages County to establish density targets for lands that have not been fully developed or have been added to settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Official Plan contains a minimum County-wide density target of 40 people and jobs per hectare Technical work recommends maintaining this County-wide target¹
Phasing policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages County to establish and implement phasing policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County will consider phasing policies as part of Official Plan Review
Settlement area boundary expansion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria has been simplified and scoped in some areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New criteria will be addressed as part of Official Plan Review County's established evaluation framework will continue to be applied, for criteria which doesn't conflict with the PPS
County-initiated settlement area boundary expansions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No longer requires (but does not prohibit) settlement area boundary expansions to be initiated by an upper-tier municipality like Wellington 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County will continue with its review and implementation of settlement area boundary expansions

¹ NOTE: The intensification and density targets for Centre Wellington are under review

As noted above, there are areas of alignment between the growth management policies of the new PPS and the Official Plan and/or Official Plan Review. Staff will conduct a detailed review of these and other matters to determine which Official Plan policies can be retained and those which will need to be reconsidered and revised to be consistent with the new PPS.

4.4 Impact on Severances

Given the interest in secondary agricultural rural residential severances, it is important to clarify that the new PPS does not automatically over-ride the March 1, 2005 cutoff date, limits on Hamlet expansions, or other requirements set out in the current Official Plan. The PPS places a clear priority on focusing rural growth in rural settlement areas (Secondary Urban Centres and Hamlets), but also allows growth and development to be directed to rural lands. The PPS leaves it up to municipalities to determine how. The County Official Plan policies currently allow for limited growth in rural settlements and rural areas.

Extension of the County's growth horizon from 2041 to 2051 warrants further consideration of rural growth needs. The County has initiated a Rural Residential Growth Analysis as part of the Official Plan Review (see report PD2024-29). The County will consult with Member Municipalities to determine how to best satisfy identified rural residential growth needs amongst the options for rural growth and implement any necessary changes through an Official Plan Amendment(s).

The new PPS also introduces more restrictive criteria for surplus farm dwelling severances. The PPS limits the number of severances to one new residential lot per farm consolidation (either principal dwelling or an additional residential unit, subject to criteria). As the new PPS policy criteria is more restrictive than the County Official Plan, the new PPS policies would prevail in this instance.

5.0 Transition Matters

On August 20, 2024, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing posted a proposal to seek feedback about any specific planning matters (or types of matters) in process that should be addressed through a potential transition regulation for the new PPS. For example, matters to exempted from specific new policies and/or to be consistent with the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement. Details are provided through Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) posting #019-9065. Staff is reviewing this matter and may submit comments to the Ministry.

The comment period is open until October 4, 2024.

6.0 Next Steps

Staff will factor in the new Provincial Planning Statement and continue with the following parts of the County's Official Plan Review in the fall of 2024:

- Future Development Lands (OPA 123)
- Centre Wellington Urban Expansion Review
- Puslinch by Design – Employment Land Study
- Rural Residential Growth Review

Other important areas of focus for the Official Plan Review will be continued or launched in 2025, depending on the extent of work, staff time needed, and consultant availability.

7.0 Strategic Action Plan

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Making the best decisions for the betterment of the community
- To assist in solving the current housing crisis

8.0 Recommendation

That the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement report be received for information and forwarded by the County Clerk to Member Municipalities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Wilhelm', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sarah Wilhelm, RPP, MCIP
Manager of Policy Planning

Appendix A Summary of Key Policy Changes: Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

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The Province has made additional changes from the Draft 2024 PPS to the Final 2024 PPS, including the following:

- Policy to require (rather than encourage) municipalities to support intensification and establish minimum targets.
- Policy to require municipalities to consider the impact of development within 300 m of employment areas on the long-term economic viability of employment uses.
- Adding back the definition of significant for the purposes of cultural heritage resources and archaeology.
- Revising the definition of on-farm diversified uses to include energy generation, transmission and energy storage systems.
- Clarifying permissions around creating additional residential units in prime agricultural areas, including that additional residential units are considered in addition to farm worker housing.
- Technical housekeeping changes.

The following table provides a high-level overview of key policy changes of the final 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT	
Forecasts and Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction to use Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance as basis for population and employment growth (with potential to modify), with a transition phase for municipalities like Wellington to continue using the 2051 Growth Plan forecasts for land use planning • land to be made available for a range between 20 and 30 years (rather than minimum of 25 years in 2023 Draft PPS) • municipal land and unit supply is required to be based on County allocation of population and units
New and Expanding Settlement Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removes direction requiring settlement area expansions to be identified by municipalities as part of a municipal comprehensive review (Growth Plan) or a comprehensive review (2020 PPS) • provides for more flexible approach to considering such requests • requirement to consider need, infrastructure and public service facility capacity, evaluation of alternative locations in prime agricultural areas, compliance with MDS, impacts on the agricultural system through agricultural impact assessment or analysis, phased progression of urban development • continues to require settlement areas (including rural settlement areas) to be the focus of growth and development

GROWTH MANAGEMENT	
New and Expanding Settlement Areas (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not carry over prohibition on establishing new settlement areas from Growth Plan, but only allows where it has been demonstrated that the infrastructure and public service facilities to support development are planned or available
Intensification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction for municipalities to support general intensification and redevelopment • requirement to establish and implement minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas • “built-up areas” is not a defined term, leaving flexibility for planning authorities to delineate those areas (as opposed to delineated built-up area and delineated built boundary of the Growth Plan)
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • density targets encouraged for lands designated for growth within settlement areas or lands added to settlement areas, but without previous minimum target of 40 residents and jobs per hectare in the Growth Plan for Wellington • removal of 2020 PPS direction for new development in growing areas to be adjacent to existing built-up area
Strategic Growth Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concept of strategic growth areas carried over from the Growth Plan to the PPS • allows for such areas to be identified by municipalities to be the focus for intensification and higher-density mixed uses • there are currently no strategic growth areas identified in Wellington
Complete Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concept of complete communities, one of the guiding principles of the Growth Plan, has been carried over to proposed PPS • removes 2020 PPS policy direction to avoid development and land use patterns that would prevent the efficient expansion of settlement areas in those areas which are adjacent or close to settlement areas • adds policy support for improving social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities and incomes, including equity-deserving groups

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICE FACILITIES	
Planning for Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • added direction to leverage the capacity of development proponents when planning for infrastructure and public service facilities, where appropriate • removal of policies to support prioritizing infrastructure and public service facility planning and investment in strategic growth areas • additional policy clarification supporting public service facilities to be planned and co-located with each other, and with parks and open space where appropriate • new policies supporting municipalities, school boards and childcare service providers to work closely together in planning for schools and child care facilities
Sewage, Water and Stormwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • added the undefined word “timely” to policy direction for accommodating forecasted growth for planning for sewage and water services, but continues to promote efficient use and optimization of existing municipal and private communal sewage and water services • added direction to “align” with municipal planning for sewage and water services, where applicable (rather than consider) • added direction to consider opportunities to allocate, and re-allocate if necessary, the unused system capacity of municipal water and sewage services to meet needs for increased housing supply • concept of servicing “hierarchy” replaced with servicing “options” • removal of policy direction to promote use of existing municipal water and sewage services for intensification and redevelopment to optimize the use of the services • clarification added that municipal sewage services and municipal water services include both centralized and decentralized servicing systems • policy direction added to allow for partial services in rural settlement areas where new development will be serviced by individual on-site water services in combination with municipal sewage services or private communal sewage services
Source Water Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final version of PPS removes previous draft new policy direction to integrate sewage, water and stormwater services with Source Water Protection (Clean Water Act)

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS	
Agricultural System Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction to use an agricultural system approach, but not based on Provincial mapping • clarification will be needed regarding the application of the Provincial mapping in the Greenbelt Area
Residential Severances in Prime Agricultural Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prohibits new residential lot creation (except for a surplus farm dwelling, subject to criteria)
Additional Residential Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permits up to two additional residential units plus the principal dwelling, provided at least one of these additional residential units is located within or attached to the principal dwelling, subject to criteria • clarification added that permitted additional residential units are in addition to farm worker housing, which is permitted as an agricultural use
Surplus Farm Dwelling Severances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limits number of severances to one new residential lot per farm consolidation (either principle dwelling or an additional residential unit, subject to criteria)
Removal of Land from Prime Agricultural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more flexible approach to allow removal of land from prime agricultural areas for new or expanding settlement areas than 2020 PPS and Growth Plan
New Non-agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new requirement for an agricultural impact assessment in these instances to identify potential impacts and recommend avoidance and mitigation approaches • broadens review of impacts from “surrounding agricultural lands and operations” to “the agricultural system”
Residential Lot Creation in Secondary Agricultural Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows for locally appropriate residential development, including lot creation • previous policy reference in draft 2023 PPP to allow “multi-lot residential development” (e.g. subdivision/condominium) has been removed
Rural Area Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinstated policy from 2020 PPS requiring rural settlement areas to be the focus of growth and development in rural areas, but also allows growth and development to be directed to rural lands

NATURAL HERITAGE	
Natural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restored 2020 PPS policies and definitions
Natural Heritage System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direction to identify natural heritage systems based on approach recommended by Province, but not based on Provincial Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System in Greenbelt would appear to continue to apply

HOUSING	
Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> added back requirement for targets for housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households also reinstates definition of “affordable” and “low and moderate income households”, but would measure income for the municipality rather than the regional market area (County)
Attainable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no new policies proposed to address attainable housing
Housing Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> definition of housing options expanded to include additional types of housing (e.g. farm worker housing, multi-generational housing, low- and mid-rise apartments, etc.) and has added affordable housing back to the definition added support for housing on underutilized shopping malls and plazas

EMPLOYMENT	
Employment Area Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employment area definition scoped to exclude institutional and commercial uses, including those retail and office uses not associated with a primary employment use
Employment Area Conversions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows removal of land no longer required for employment area uses (formerly employment conversions), subject to criteria including need such removals are no longer required to be considered as part of a municipal comprehensive review (Growth Plan) or an official plan review or update (2020 PPS)
Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> overall strengthening of policy requirements for land use compatibility between sensitive land uses and employment areas
Rural Employment Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not carry over Growth Plan restrictions which limit employment areas on rural lands to those designated as of 2006 and further limit expansion of such areas

CLIMATE CHANGE	
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> overall, a much more general, less restrictive policy approach to plan for the impacts of climate change

ROLE OF PPS, IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION	
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposed policies continue to represent minimum standards and allow planning authorities and decision-makers to go beyond them, unless doing so would conflict with the PPS policies implementation policy (moved from preamble) requires official plans to “...provide clear, reasonable and attainable policies to protect provincial interests and facilitate development in suitable areas” municipal official plans are the most important vehicle for implementation of the PPS and for achieving comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the new PPS comes into effect October 20, 2024 decisions on a planning matter on or after that date must be consistent with the new PPS the review cycle for the County Official Plan is in progress and the County will continue to update and implement the new PPS policies as part of that process
Greenbelt Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Province has completed an administrative amendment to the Greenbelt Plan to clarify that existing policy connections in the Greenbelt Plan to the 2020 PPS and Growth Plan remain in effect
Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy direction for planning authorities to keep zoning by-laws up-to-date with their official plans and the PPS the PPS also supports forward-looking zoning by-laws that facilitate an appropriate range and mix of housing options for all Ontarians