



## Committee Report

**To:** Chair and Members of the Planning Committee  
**From:** Sarah Wilhelm, Manager of Policy Planning  
**Date:** Thursday, October 09, 2025  
**Subject:** County Official Plan Review – Progress Report #13



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### 1.0 Purpose

This progress report for the County Official Plan Review covers the period from February 2025 to September 2025.

### 2.0 Report Highlights

<b>OPA 123</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Province has approved Official Plan Amendment 123 (Future Development Lands).</li> </ul>
<b>OPA 126</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Province has not made a decision on Official Plan Amendment 126 (Urban Boundary Expansions).</li> </ul>
<b>OPA 131</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The County has circulated Official Plan Amendment 131 (Rural Area Policies and Growth) for comments by November 14, 2025.</li> <li>An Open House and Public Meeting for OPA 131 will likely be scheduled early in the new year.</li> <li>Puslinch by Design – Employment Land Study has been completed and will be implemented through OPA 131.</li> </ul>
<b>Projection Methodology Guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Province has proposed updates to its Projection Methodology Guideline on the Environmental Registry of Ontario webpage (ERO 025-0844).</li> <li>The proposed Guideline does not impact on the County’s Official Plan Review.</li> </ul>
<b>Ministry of Finance Population Projections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current County Official Plan forecasts and allocations to 2051 meet the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and do not need to be based on the projections published by the Ministry of Finance until 2031.</li> </ul>

The following County Planning Committee Reports have been brought forward to Council since the last progress report:

- PD2025-05 County Official Plan Review – Progress Report #12
- PD2025-14 County Official Plan Review – OPA 126 Recommendation Report
- PD2025-20 County Official Plan Review – Phase 3B Rural Residential Growth
- PD2025-24 County Official Plan Review – OPA 131 Rural Area Policies and Growth

### **3.0 Official Plan Amendment Updates**

#### **3.1 Future Development Lands - Official Plan Amendment 123 (OPA 123)**

OPA 123 was originally adopted by County Council on October 31, 2024. The Province approved OPA 123 on September 2, 2025 with two modifications. The Provincial modifications were made to address matters related to Special Policy Area flood hazards in Harriston and a request from the Township of Mapleton to facilitate industrial development in Drayton.

#### **3.2 Urban Boundary Expansions - Official Plan Amendment 126 (OPA 126)**

OPA 126 was adopted by County Council on April 24, 2025. No decision has been made by the Province at the time of writing this report.

#### **3.3 Rural Area Policies and Growth – Official Plan Amendment 131 (OPA 131)**

Draft OPA 131 has been circulated for Provincial, Municipal, Indigenous, agency and public comment. The comment deadline is November 14, 2025. County Council also directed staff to hold an open house and authorized the Planning Committee to hold a public meeting. These meetings will likely be held early in the new year. Notice will be given in accordance with the Planning Act.

The Puslinch by Design – Employment Land Study to identify additional land for rural employment growth in Puslinch is now complete and will be implemented through OPA 131.

### **4.0 Proposed Updates to Provincial Projection Methodology Guideline**

The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) policies set parameters for planning for growth in Ontario municipalities. Provincial guidance is issued from time to time to help planning authorities and decision-makers with implementing those policies. The Projection Methodology Guideline is one such example.

Before the new PPS came into effect, specific growth forecasts and a detailed land needs assessment methodology applied to municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area, like Wellington County. The 1995 Projection Methodology Guideline was used elsewhere in Ontario to determine growth forecasts and land requirements. In support of the implementation of the new PPS, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) has proposed a new guidance document to replace these earlier versions through the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO 025-0844). Consultation closes on October 11, 2025.

The “Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline” (the “Guideline”) is intended to help municipalities develop long-term population and employment forecasts and identify how much land will be needed to support such growth. The County is responsible for forecasting growth and assessing land needs across Wellington.

#### **Forecasts**

Population and employment forecasts are essential to future community planning. This information can be used by municipalities to identify growth areas, manage infrastructure, attract employment and economic development, and coordinate public services. For the current Official Plan Review, the County retained Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. (“Watson”) to prepare forecasts and allocations to the 2051 planning horizon. This work is complete.

The planning time horizon that has been established by the 2024 PPS for using the Guideline is a range of 20 to 30 years. By 2031 and as part of the County’s next official plan update, the PPS policies require the County to base its population and employment growth forecasts on the Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The Guideline provides the following clarification:

“Municipalities should use the most recent MOF projections published and available at the time of an official plan update...It is recommended that municipalities plan to the horizon that aligns with the outer range of the MOF projections available at the time of an official plan update...”

County staff and consultants will continue to monitor annual MOF projection updates (see Section 5.0 below). However, the County doesn’t need to transition to MOF projections until the next official plan review cycle. The County will use the most recent projections available at that time.

### **Land Need**

For the current Official Plan Review, the County also retained Watson to translate the population, household and employment forecasts and allocations into the amount of land needed for a range and mix of land uses to 2051. This work is complete and staff note the proposed Guideline states that:

“The land needs of a community generally do not fluctuate on an annual basis given the longer-term nature of land use planning. As such, municipalities can accurately address changes in growth forecasts and land needs through the standard official plan review cycle.”

Land needs updates in Wellington will be completed as part of the next official plan review cycle as the 2051 forecast approaches closer to the minimum 20 year planning horizon by 2031.

### **Technical Review**

In terms of the review of the technical aspects of the Updated Projection Methodology Guideline, Watson has provided a detailed summary of the proposed updates for their municipal clients and will be making a submission to the ERO. Watson has confirmed that the municipal comprehensive review (MCR) carried out for the County is generally consistent with the proposed Guideline.

It is also worth noting that Wellington County and the City of Guelph are combined in the MOF population projections which are by Census Division. The Guideline offers two methods to help municipalities determine their respective share of the projected population by Census Division. Watson advises that they are able to test the results of these approaches against their population allocations for the County.

Planning staff have reviewed the proposed Guideline and supporting materials and attended an overview presentation by MMAH. Staff will continue to monitor the progress of the ERO posting as it moves through the consultation stages and a decision is posted.

### **Conclusion**

The Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline do not impact on the current Official Plan Review.

## 5.0 Ministry of Finance Projections

As shown in Table 1, the updated 2025 MOF population projections for the Wellington Census Division (including Wellington County and the City of Guelph) are lower than the combined Wellington and Guelph municipal forecasts by 5,367 people by 2031 and by 6,422 people 2041. The MOF projects 3,289 more people in Wellington/Guelph by 2051. The 2025 MOF projections are almost 30,000 less overall than the outdated Fall 2024 projections which were published before Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced the significant lowering of the federal immigration targets.

**Table 1 Comparison of Wellington/Guelph Population Forecasts and Ministry of Finance Population Projections**

Time Horizon	POPULATION		
	Wellington and Guelph	Ministry of Finance (2025)	Difference
2031	297,600	292,233	+5,367
2041	338,000	331,578	+6,422
2051	368,000	371,289	-3,289

The County will work with its consulting land economist and with Member Municipalities as part of the next official plan review cycle to identify and allocate growth across the County.

## 6.0 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.

### Recommendation:

That the County Official Plan Review – Progress Report #13 be received for information and forwarded by the County Clerk to Member Municipalities.

Respectfully submitted,



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Manager of Policy Planning

### In consultation with/approved by:

Aldo Salis, Director of Planning and Development  
Scott Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer