

---

# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Memorandum PDD-M01-2019 Proposed Growth Amendment Number 1 For Consideration by Council in Committee on April 16, 2019

---



**To:** Mayor Hewitt and Members of Council  
**From:** Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, Director of Planning and Development

### Background

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017 was released on May 18, 2017 and came into effect on July 1, 2017, replacing the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006.

The 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe is a long-term plan that works with the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan to provide a framework for growth management in the region, including Haldimand County.

The key growth management goals for the 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe include:

- Managing growth by encouraging the development of communities in cities and towns that provide affordable housing options and easy access to the businesses and public services residents of all ages use every day.
- Improve and increase transportation options while reducing congestion.
- Focus investments in regional public service facilities in downtown areas.
- Build communities that maximize infrastructure investments, while balancing local needs for the agricultural industry and natural areas.
- Increase and promote economic growth.

The County Official Plan is required to conform with the Growth Plan and development within the County to adhere to the overarching policy intent.

### Growth Plan Amendment Number 1 (Proposed)

In January 2019, the Provincial government released a proposed Amendment Number 1 to the 2017 Growth Plan (GPA 1). The proposed GPA 1 is the government's response to issues that have been raised by various sectors regarding how best to implement the Growth Plan. The proposed changes build on feedback that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing heard from the business, research and development sectors, municipalities, and others during engagement sessions last fall. Planning staff participated in a number of these engagement sessions to provide County perspectives.

The proposed changes improve the ability of local governments to make decisions about how they grow (more details included below in the 'Summary of Changes' section). The Province has made it clear that it will maintain protections for the Greenbelt, agricultural lands, the agri-food sector, and natural heritage systems.

Staff have participated in numerous working groups and municipal round-table discussions over the last number of months to provide feedback for the GPA 1 and inform the end results. In general, staff is supportive of the direction of GPA 1 and are of the view that it addresses local nuance, needed flexibility and a policy initiative that better aligns with County needs.

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Staff have identified a series of key changes that could have beneficial outcomes for the County. The summary below focuses only on the significant changes within GPA 1 and sets them out in a series of specific categories. It is noted that there are categories not listed here due to the lack of application in the Haldimand County context (e.g. Major Transit Station Areas) as well as numerous other changes that relate to language amendments, transitioning (from existing Growth Plan to amended version) and other more administrative matters.

### 1. Employment Planning

Key policy change(s):

- Create a one time window to allow municipalities to undertake some employment area conversions prior to their next municipal comprehensive review (Official Plan update).

Key benefit(s):

- Allows flexibility to make land use changes that better serve community need/benefit as the need arises (i.e. as opposed to having to wait 5 years+ for the municipal comprehensive review process).

### 2. Agricultural System & Natural Heritage System

Key policy change(s):

- Municipalities can request technical changes to mapping, and OMAFRA and MNRF can update and re-issue system mapping in response to such requests.
- Provincial system mapping does not apply until implemented as part of an Official Plan update.

Key benefit(s):

- The system mapping was produced/enacted as part of the 2017 Growth Plan process. Consultation on this component was narrow and quick. As a result, municipalities were limited in their ability to review the mapping in detail and to request modifications. This has resulted in enacted mapping that is flawed and does not (in many cases across the Province) accurately reflect what is happening 'on the ground'. This has imposed development restrictions (in some cases) where restriction should not exist. This change in policy would allow for the required time and resources to be allotted to a detailed review of the mapping and for necessary revisions to be made before the system mapping (and associated policies) become effective.

### 3. Settlement Area Boundary Adjustments

Key policy change(s):

- Allow municipalities to undertake settlement area boundary expansions that are no larger than 40 hectares outside of a municipal comprehensive review (Official Plan update), subject to criteria.
- Allow municipalities to adjust settlement area boundaries outside of a municipal comprehensive review if there is no net increase in land within settlement areas, subject to criteria.
- Remove the requirements to de-designate excess lands when undertaking settlement area boundary expansions.

Key benefit(s):

- Provides flexibility to better respond to community needs and realities in a more timely fashion (i.e. municipal comprehensive review is typically every 5 years or more).

- Supports the County's proposed growth strategy which aims to create incremental improvement in the oversupply of land based on servicing and market economics (i.e. some expansion and some compression of urban areas).
- Allows for planned Official Plan update work to be done in phases.

#### 4. Rural Settlements

Key policy change(s):

- Allow for minor rounding out of rural settlements (e.g. hamlets) in keeping with the rural character of the area and subject to other criteria.

Key benefit(s):

- Provides flexibility to accommodate development plans that may presently be constrained due to strict boundary location, topographic feature, etc.

#### 5. Intensification Targets & Greenfield Area Density Targets

Key policy change(s):

- Changes the minimum Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) target for Haldimand County from 80 persons/jobs per hectare to a new target minimum of 40 persons/jobs per hectare.
- Changes the minimum intensification target for the built up area of urban settlements from 50% (for the years 2022 to 2031) and 60% (for the years 2031 to 2041) to maintenance of the County's existing target or improvement of same. For the County that would mean the existing target of 32% would remain in place for the entire plan period (i.e. to 2041).

Key benefit(s):

- Provides targets that better reflect local realities and moves away from 'one size fits all' policy approach.
- Sets targets that will allow for current urban scale development trends to continue without requiring a shift to more dense GTA trends that would be required to achieve inflated targets.

#### 6. Provincially Significant Employment Zones

Key policy change(s):

- Province has identified 29 provincially significant employment zones that are deemed significant to the regional and provincial economy and that would require provincial input and approval for conversion.

Key benefit(s):

- The Nanticoke Industrial Area is one of the 29 zones identified. Having protective provincial policy layered on top of County Official Plan policy provides for maintenance of the designated land supply for the long term for the intended employment use.
- Identification of the area by the Province in a provincial policy document indicates the Province's recognition of this important resource/land supply (in both regional and broader provincial contexts) and represents opportunity for the County to work closer with the Province to promote and facilitate land development in this location.

**Note:** the Province's draft mapping only encompasses approximately 25% of the Nanticoke Industrial Area. Staff have provided input (including revised mapping files) to key Ministry staff regarding the need to expand the area that is proposed to be mapped in the Growth Plan.

## **Next Steps**

The commenting/engagement period is now complete and the Province is working through the large amount of feedback it received. While no firm date for release of the final GPA 1 has been provided, staff have been advised by the Province that it is moving swiftly to finalize this initiative in an effort to give municipalities the tools they need to work towards successful implementation of the Growth Plan. Staff will provide Council with update(s) as more information on official release is received.