



Office of the Chief Planner  
Corporate Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner

Date: September 3, 2020

Re: Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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This memorandum provides Council with an update regarding:

1. Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan), and
2. New Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Land Needs Assessment methodology)

### **On August 28, 2020 the Province amended the Growth Plan with Amendment 1 and released a new market-based Land Needs Assessment methodology**

Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and a new Land Needs Assessment methodology are now in effect. The Growth Plan sets out a long-term framework for managing growth by providing population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities and policy direction on where and how to grow. The Land Needs Assessment methodology provides municipalities direction on determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate growth to the new 2051 planning horizon of the Growth Plan.

On June 16, 2020, the Province released proposed changes to the 2019 Growth Plan and 2018 Land Needs Assessment methodology. York Region provided comments to the Province through a [report](#) endorsed by Council on July 30, 2020. On August 28, 2020, a finalized Amendment 1 to the [Growth Plan](#) and new [Land Needs Assessment Methodology](#) were released by the Province; both came into effect immediately.

## **Amendment 1 updates York Region's population and employment forecasts to 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs in 2051**

As proposed in the June 2020 draft, Amendment 1 extends the Growth Plan planning horizon from 2041 to 2051. It also updates population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe with the forecast referred to as the Reference Forecast in the proposed Amendment. For York Region, this results in a forecast of 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs by 2051.

In response to proposed Amendment 1, York Region supported the Reference Forecast on the basis of having the ability to phase urban expansion to align with infrastructure and financial planning and to ensure delivery of complete communities. Staff will continue to review the need to phase future development as part of the update of the Official Plan.

## **Other policy changes to the Growth Plan through Amendment 1 are largely consistent with the proposed draft**

While there are some differences between proposed Amendment 1 and the final version, the majority of the proposed policy changes were maintained. Of note are the following:

- The Province partially addressed York Region's comments regarding treatment of York Region forecasts as minimums. Through the July 2020 resolution of Council, York Region commented that treating the Schedule 3 forecast as a minimum reduces certainty across municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe when forecasting municipal services and inter-regional needs such as transit. The final version of Amendment 1 still allows municipalities to plan for higher forecasts however the Province indicates that higher forecasts developed by municipalities through their municipal comprehensive review will not apply to Provincial ministries and agencies. This approach is concerning as there should be consistency across each level of government when planning for growth.
- Despite York Region's comments, the final Amendment contains a policy permitting employment conversions within Major Transit Station Areas prior to the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.
- Staff support the Province's decision not to carry forward a proposed policy change which would have removed an existing prohibition on new mineral aggregate operations in habitats of endangered and threatened species.
- Province maintained proposed policies which would bring the Growth Plan into conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. Regional staff support these changes.

## **New Land Needs Assessment Methodology sets out requirements for a market-based approach to determining land needs to 2051**

The Draft Land Needs Assessment methodology released by the Province in June 2020 proposed a less prescriptive approach for determining urban expansion land needs. Unlike the 138-page, comprehensive step-by-step document in effect since 2018, the proposed methodology set out high level key components municipalities would be required to address as part of their land budget process in only a few pages. York Region comments on proposed Amendment 1 requested the Province acknowledge that the level of detail provided through the Land Needs Assessment process should correspond with the magnitude of growth and level of complexity for growth management issues faced by each municipality in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The final methodology continues to outline only key components but provides more detailed technical information and direction on integrating market-demand into land needs assessment. Staff support the additional level of detail as it provides a standardized approach to land needs assessment while still allowing some flexibility. That said, the methodology continues to not fully articulate how Growth Plan targets and objectives are balanced with the new market-based approach.

## **Local municipal Forecasts to 2051 will be developed using the new Land Needs Assessment Methodology as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review**

Through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, York Region is required to update population and employment forecasts and Regional Official Plan policies to be consistent with policies in Amendment 1. The amount of urban expansion needed in York Region to meet the Growth Plan's 2051 growth assignment for the Region will be determined by applying the new provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology. The impacts of these revised documents are still being assessed but are not anticipated to have significant implications on the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review or associated timeline. Staff still anticipate presenting an updated Draft Regional Official Plan to Council in mid-2021 before the mandated provincial deadline of 2022.

In consultation with local municipal staff and other stakeholders, staff will continue developing updated local municipal forecasts and the land needs assessment; it is expected to be presented to Council for consideration in Q1 of 2021.

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Chief Planner

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