



Office of the Commissioner
Environmental Services Department

Office of the Chief Planner
Corporate Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Paul Freeman
Chief Planner

Date: February 19, 2021

Re: Lake Simcoe Protection Plan 10-Year Review Consultation - Regional
Staff Comments

10-year review of Lake Simcoe Protection Plan is a legislative requirement under the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008*

The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (the Plan), implemented in 2009, includes a legislative requirement to review the Plan every ten years. The Province announced the beginning of the review period on December 16, 2020, with comments due March 3, 2021.

As a legislated stakeholder, York Region has been invited by the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) to take part in the review by providing written comments, responding to an online survey, participating in a virtual Town Hall on February 11, and/or meeting with MECP staff to discuss our comments. Region staff submitted comments in Attachment 1 to meet the March 3 deadline. Staff requested the Ministry consider any additional comments that Regional Council wishes to provide following its March Council meeting.

York Region has legislated requirements to implement the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

The Plan is a Provincial land-use plan and the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008* mandates the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and municipalities within the watershed to take action to protect the lake. The Region has legislated requirements to implement actions under the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan related to land-use planning, infrastructure development, servicing, and natural heritage requirements. York Region input will be a key part of the 10-year review. Since inception of the Plan, York Region has demonstrated a commitment to protecting and preserving the health of Lake Simcoe.

To achieve meaningful results, Lake Simcoe Protection Plan needs greater focus on non-point sources

Starting in the 1960s, Lake Simcoe has been one of the most studied lake-based environments in Ontario. There is a long-documented history of phosphorus and other issues affecting the health of the lake. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan has been a necessary tool to improve the health of the watershed but results to date have not met expectations.

While phosphorus levels have decreased over the last ten years, one of the most significant barriers to achieving the goals of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan is the continued focus on point sources like wastewater treatment facilities. The Phosphorus Reduction Strategy was introduced in 2010 to help achieve these goals. This Strategy included a significant focus on wastewater treatment facilities, cutting regulated phosphorus outputs from these plants in half and reducing their loading by more than one tonne since 2009. However, wastewater treatment facilities only account for 2% of the total annual phosphorus loading to the Lake. Non-point sources like agriculture and urban stormwater represent the vast majority of phosphorus inputs to Lake Simcoe. For the Plan to succeed it's vital to shift future actions to tangible, time bound and resourced work to reduce these non-point sources.

Staff made eight key recommendations for the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

York Region staff collaborated on the response to the Province and made the following recommendations on the Plan review:

1. Accelerate measurable phosphorus reductions in Lake Simcoe by focusing on the most impactful and cost-effective actions to address non-point sources
2. Develop, fund and commit to a time-bound implementation plan for reducing phosphorus
3. Make governance changes to the Lake Simcoe Coordinating Committee to facilitate an adaptive management approach to implementation
4. Give Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority the authority and tools required to effectively lead implementation and monitor the effectiveness of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan
5. Convert some policy areas within the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan to 'Designated Policies' that mandate action

6. Align the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan with recent changes to Provincial land-use plans, including the Provincial Policy Statement, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and balance with requirements under 'A Place to Grow'
7. Clarify how municipalities can comply with both legislated growth targets and wastewater servicing restrictions systems under the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan
8. Focus on addressing the impacts of invasive species like mussels on the watershed and infrastructure for the next ten years

Staff will forward any comments from Regional Council to the Province

Region staff will remain engaged with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority staff as the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan is updated. Should Regional Council wish to provide any additional comments on the 10-year review, staff will provide these to the Ministry for their consideration.



Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner



Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Environmental Services



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment (1)
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