



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: January 21, 2019

Report Number: SRPRS.19.024

Department: Planning and Regulatory Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPRS.19.024 Town Comments on the Province's draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan**

Purpose:

To advise Council of the Province's draft "Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan" and to provide comments on the draft plan for Council's consideration.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That SRPRS.19.024 on the Province's draft "Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan" and the Town's proposed response to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) (Attachment 1) be received;
- b) That a copy of SRPRS.19.024 and all comments from Council be forwarded by the Town Clerk to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks as part of input to the public consultation on Ontario's draft environment plan by the January 28, 2019 deadline; and
- c) That a copy of SRPRS.19.024 be forwarded by the Town Clerk to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and York Region.

Contact Person:

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Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Regulatory Services

Approved by: Neil Garbe, Chief Administrative Officer

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All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), Town Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and Chief Administrative Officer. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Background:

On November 29, 2018, the Province of Ontario released its draft policy document, “Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan” for public consultation and feedback. The Plan is posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #013-4208) for a 60-day commenting period (November 29, 2018 to January 28, 2019). It outlines the provincial government’s commitment to addressing climate change and four key environmental challenges. The plan is intended to replace the previous Ontario Climate Change Strategy and meet the government’s legislative obligations under the *Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018* to establish a target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and prepare a climate change plan for Ontario.

The purpose of this staff report is to advise Council of the Province’s draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan and the Town’s response to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP).

Summary of Province’s draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan

The draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan represents a new direction for the Province of Ontario to address environmental challenges. It outlines three guiding principles by which to measure proposed actions:

- **Clear rules and strong enforcement** (imposing tougher penalties on polluters while reducing regulatory burden for responsible businesses);
- **Trust and transparency** (providing real time monitoring and information on environmental challenges to Ontarians); and
- **Resilient communities and local solutions** (recognizing environmental impacts and developing unique, local solutions based on scientific practices and methods).

Four key environmental challenges are discussed throughout the draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan along with a series of continued and proposed new actions.

Comments received on continued actions will be considered in future program reviews and comments received on proposed new actions will be considered during finalization of the plan. A summary of proposed actions organized under the plan’s subsection headings is provided below.

1) Protecting our air, lakes and rivers

- a. **Clean air** – refers to working with agencies and stakeholders in parts of the province facing air quality challenges, revising emissions testing and enforcement of heavy-duty vehicles, continuing to monitor pollutants and

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increased roadside monitoring, and strengthening collaboration on curbing emissions from American states that impact Ontario.

- b. **Clean water** – refers to continuing action plans and strategies to restore the Great Lakes, protecting vulnerable waterways and inland waters (through current lake protection plans, source water monitoring, remediation and best practices), enhancing water taking policies to ensure water security, promoting water conservation technology and practices, and improving municipal wastewater and stormwater management and reporting (e.g. sewage overflows).

2) Addressing climate change

- a. **Building resilience to prepare families and communities** – refers to developing a provincial impact assessment and vulnerability assessments for key sectors, increasing awareness about climate change impacts, climate modelling to inform solutions, and updating government policies and programs to improve climate resilience (e.g. building code, disaster recovery, tax policy options, land use planning, infrastructure, and agriculture).
- b. **Achieving the Paris Agreement Target** – refers to setting Ontario's emissions reduction target at 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 to align with Canada's 2030 target under the Paris Agreement, and identifying potential paths for achieving that target through various sectors and initiatives (e.g. low carbon vehicles, industry performance standards, cleaner fuel standards and conservation, Ontario Carbon Trust fund, emission reduction associated with investments, and innovation in energy storage and low carbon fuels).
- c. **Making polluters accountable** – refers to implementing emission performance standards for large industrial emitters.
- d. **Activating the private sector** – refers to creating an emission reduction fund (a publicly funded \$400 million Ontario Carbon Trust) and a reverse auction (where bids reflecting the lowest cost per tonne of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction are awarded projects) to encourage private investment in clean technology, promoting climate-related corporate disclosures on investments and financing, and encouraging private investment in clean technology and green infrastructure (e.g. bonds, tax policy options).
- e. **Using energy and resources wisely** – refers to encouraging energy conservation in homes and buildings (i.e. sharing homeowner energy use data, voluntary energy efficiency disclosure to potential buyers, building code review, energy standards update for appliances and equipment), and increasing access to clean and affordable energy (i.e. community based energy systems, renewable fuels and natural gas, tax policy options to incentivize homeowners, streamlining approvals for businesses using low carbon technology, smart grids, and removing barriers to the uptake of low carbon vehicles).
- f. **Government leadership** – refers to making climate change a cross-government priority (i.e. climate change governance framework for provincial ministries, low

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carbon procurement, better coordination and guidance for municipalities, high performance government buildings, promoting low carbon technology, and green jobs), empowering local leadership (through municipal climate and energy plans, supporting Indigenous community plans, partnerships with community groups and business), increasing awareness about the benefits of public transportation, and promoting green infrastructure (e.g. fleet).

3) Reducing litter and waste in our communities and keeping our land and soil clean

- a. **Reducing litter and waste** – refers to reducing and diverting food/organic waste, updating the blue box program, reducing plastic waste, working with municipalities against neighbourhood/park litter and dumping, promoting local waste reduction programs and Full Producer Responsibility (FPR), considering energy/resource recovery from waste, rules for compostable products, ensuring competitive end markets, and consultation on landfill siting approvals.
- b. **Clean soil** – refers to removing barriers to brownfield redevelopment and clean-up of contaminated lands, easier transfer of excess soil from construction sites, and improved management of hauled sewage.

4) Conserving land and greenspace

- a. **Improving resilience of natural ecosystems** – refers to conservation and stewardship of natural ecosystems such as wetlands and grassland habitat, and protection against wildfires.
- b. **Supporting conservation and environmental planning** – refers to focusing the conservation authority mandate on flood protection and conservation, streamlining environmental assessments, protection policies and stewardship of vulnerable areas, and improving coordination of land use planning and environmental approvals.
- c. **Promoting parks and recreational opportunities** - refers to creating new trails, opportunities to enjoy provincial parks, ensuring revenue from licensing and fines (e.g. fishing, hunting) goes towards conservation, and partnerships.
- d. **Sustainable forest management** - refers to promoting the use of renewable forest biomass in the steel industry and for heating in northern, rural and Indigenous communities, promoting Ontario timber, and forest management plans that consider carbon storage from harvested forests.
- e. **Protecting species at risk and responding to invasive species** – refers to reaffirming commitment to the *Endangered Species Act*, and detecting and responding to invasive species.

As part of next steps, the draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan indicates that the provincial government will continue to consult with the public and Indigenous communities, establish an advisory panel on climate change, begin implementing

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priority initiatives, and measure and report on progress including review of the plan every four years.

Town of Richmond Hill Comments on the draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan

The draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan was circulated to all Town departments for information and reviewed by appropriate staff. This staff report SRPRS.19.024 contains the proposed response from the Town of Richmond Hill to provide input into the Province's draft Environment Plan (see Attachment 1 for detailed comments). Should Council approve the recommendations, a copy of SRPRS.19.024 and all comments from Council will be submitted by the Town Clerk to the MECP before the 11:59 pm deadline on January 28, 2019.

Attachment 1 contains a synthesis of staff comments organized by sections in the plan. The following is a summary of the key themes found in the comments.

Key Themes in the Town of Richmond Hill Comments

- 1) **The Town of Richmond Hill supports the Province's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increasing resiliency and addressing ongoing environmental challenges.** The comments provided in this report are intended to strengthen the direction and effectiveness of the Plan.
- 2) **Ontario's Environment Plan should articulate a cohesive and clear, long-term vision that builds on the strength of existing plans and policies and identifies concrete actions.**
 - The Plan should identify short and long-term goals and targets in order to clarify what will be improved, why we are improving it and thresholds for enforcement.
 - While many of the action statements refer to topics and legislation that will be considered, the proposed solutions are vague. Likewise, the 'best practice' case studies highlighted in the plan should also include information to back up demonstrated results.
 - The Plan should build on and complement other provincial policies, plans and tools that have enabled municipalities to respond to critical issues such as climate change, plan for more sustainable growth patterns, incorporate green development standards, and protect, enhance and restore natural features.
- 3) **Richmond Hill agrees that cross-government collaboration is essential for addressing climate change priorities, environmental challenges and achieving social and economic co-benefits.**
 - Since all communities contribute to GHG emissions and the risks are present in all jurisdictions, a plan that recognizes the complementary effects of government policies and programs at various levels will be more successful in controlling emissions and increasing resiliency overall.

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- The Town supports the Province's proposed actions to undertake a provincial impact assessment and vulnerability assessments for key sectors and provide further guidance to municipalities.
- To safeguard assets, infrastructure and services that are important to our communities, the Province needs to coordinate data and provide consistent methodology and tools to help municipalities update modelling and develop appropriate adaptation measures. Funding support should also be available for updating regional/local data and standards and implementing actions.
- To increase climate change awareness and capacity building among Ontarians, the Province needs to frame climate change in the local context by highlighting risks to our communities and provide options and incentives for residents and businesses to participate in mitigation and adaptation.
- The Plan should recognize that the co-benefits of supporting climate change action and innovation can help the Province and local municipalities meet their social, economic and environmental responsibilities. For instance, success from homegrown technology and expertise can fill a niche in global markets (Richmond Hill has a highly educated workforce and would welcome green jobs) and enhancements to natural systems that improve environmental health and public health will lead to a better quality of life.

4) Climate change is a long-term problem that requires long-term targets, comprehensive actions and an all-of-government approach to both mitigation and adaptation.

- While climate change resiliency and adaptation measures are essential to addressing risks, it is equally our responsibility (governments and citizens) to mitigate the emissions and impacts our communities generate which contribute to climate change.
- To efficiently and effectively reduce GHG emissions, the Plan should specify appropriate targets and measures for which polluters will be held accountable and consider long-term targets beyond the 2030 time horizon. If Ontario's target is to align with Canada's target under the Paris Agreement, then objectives for GHG emission reductions by 2050 and the appropriate actions should also be considered – especially since the lifespan for key infrastructure and buildings constructed now will go beyond the 2030 timeframe.
- Richmond Hill welcomes a provincial climate change governance framework to clarify various ministry roles, responsibilities and associated legislation with respect to climate change as well as additional guidance for municipalities.

5) Walkable transit-oriented communities that incorporate compact, mixed-use forms of development balanced with green technology and greenspace are inherently more sustainable and resilient to climate change.

- The way we plan, design and build our communities directly affects energy use and GHG emissions. Efficient land use patterns and the introduction of

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sustainable transportation and energy conservation initiatives provides a strong foundation for reducing emissions in our communities.

- Municipalities have a role to play in influencing key sectors with high GHG emissions (e.g. building and transportation) through decisions that affect land use patterns, building and landscape design, transportation networks, and greenspace.
- Accordingly, continued support for tools under the *Municipal Act*, *Planning Act*, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, the Ontario Building Code, regional transit plans and municipal/community energy plans can empower local governments to take action on climate change and help implement required standards and targets.

6) Municipal/Community Energy Plans are a valuable tool for local governments and utility providers to plan for long-term stable supplies of energy, influence conservation and demand management from growing populations, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Richmond Hill supports continuation of the Municipal Energy Plan funding grant program to help municipalities develop community energy plans.
- Many of the actions identified in the Province's draft Environment Plan (e.g. clean energy mix, smart grids, renewable energy systems and technology) can be explored by municipalities in partnership with utilities and stakeholders through the community energy plans and incorporated into Official Plan policies.
- New building standards for resiliency and energy efficiency, as mentioned in the draft Plan, can help inform Richmond Hill's sustainability metrics and other municipal green development standards.
- In addition, the Plan's references to tax policy options may also provide a tool for the Province and municipalities to incentivize building retrofits by homeowners and businesses, e.g. building energy retrofit loan programs.

7) As transportation is a high emissions sector that is also susceptible to the impacts of climate change, investments in public transit, active transportation networks, and low carbon vehicle infrastructure should be prioritized.

- The Plan should expand on how lower carbon transportation alternatives will be promoted through infrastructure development, service network planning and funding incentives (e.g. Yonge St. subway, pedestrian and cycling networks, electric vehicles, car share, etc.).
- In addition, the Plan should also recognize that planning for transit and pedestrian-oriented development patterns with amenities close together increases the feasibility of low carbon alternatives (thereby reducing emissions) and makes communities less vulnerable during transportation disruptions (e.g. road closures or power outages caused by severe weather events).
- With respect to balancing water quality and the increasing need to use road salt to deal with icier conditions, the Town supports further collaboration on best management practices and road salt alternatives.

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8) Increasing stormwater flow and flooding are significant climate change conditions that pose risks to infrastructure, life and property and should be addressed more comprehensively in the Plan.

- Municipalities need clear direction, guidance and funding to implement real time monitoring, reporting and adaptation actions to incorporate new technology and practices that could address these risks and prolong the life and capacity of hard infrastructure.
- In past comments to the Province, Richmond Hill has identified a need for updated modelling and methodology, technical and financial support for upgrading aging infrastructure, and clear and consistent standards on new approaches to assist with adaptation and which are compatible to the urban context (e.g. low impact development techniques, green infrastructure).

9) Sustainable forest management recognizes that the functional, social and economic benefits of urban or rural forests can only be achieved if robust, healthy and diverse natural systems are maintained.

- Richmond Hill supports the notion that trees, vegetation and soils act as important carbon sinks that can help reduce GHG emissions, which is an important factor in growing the urban forest canopy.
- Since carbon emissions are associated with human settlements, the Plan should discuss the merits and potential approaches to expanding the urban forest canopy in Ontario's most urbanized regions.
- Trees and vegetation provide valuable environmental (carbon sequestration, stormwater absorption, filtration of pollutants, wildlife habitat), social (recreation and respite) and economic (wood harvesting, tourism) functions.
- With respect to the forest industry, the Plan should clarify that improved carbon sequestration by younger forests (after harvesting) does not preclude the importance of mature and diverse forest habitat in maintaining the natural system against disease, invasive species or severe weather conditions. The adaptation benefits of mature trees and vegetation should be considered alongside the mitigation benefits of younger forests.

10) Richmond Hill supports the overarching waste management objectives outlined in the Plan (e.g. organics diversion, reduction of plastics, and producer responsibility), but suggests exploring a number of logistical considerations.

- Consider implementing consistent standards for compostable and recyclable packaging and the collection of separated waste.
- Identify a clear, legislated role for municipalities in waste collection and processing, with fair and transparent compensation and consideration for municipal assets.

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- Provide funding and other incentives for retrofitting multi-residential buildings and industrial, commercial and institutional buildings to accommodate three-stream waste separation.
- Develop education, awareness and enforcement programs to ensure proper waste diversion.
- Explore opportunities for resource recovery (including waste to energy) and stable end markets for recyclable and compostable materials.
- Recognize progress to date on transitioning to full producer responsibility (FPR) for consistency with the Waste Free Ontario strategy and ensure a meaningful consultation process with municipalities to inform transition to FPR.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

There are no new staffing or financial implications resulting from this staff report. However, Council should be aware that provincial policies and programs under review could affect the Town's ability to secure additional funding dollars for municipal projects.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

Richmond Hill's efforts to address climate change and environmental challenges support the Strategic Plan's goal of *wise management of resources* and *better choices*. Comments submitted through this staff report reflect the Town's long-term goal of planning sustainable, energy-efficient low carbon communities with access to sustainable transportation alternatives, sustainable waste diversion options, greenspace and a healthy urban canopy. The comments also reflect the Town's interest in developing resiliency against the impacts of climate change in order to prepare for necessary infrastructure projects, ensure residents have continued access to services, and act responsibly as a role model for municipal management.

Conclusion:

This staff report SRPRS.19.024 contains the Town of Richmond Hill's proposed response to the Province's draft policy document, "Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan." The Plan outlines the new provincial government's direction for addressing climate change and actions related to four key environmental challenges. The draft document is posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario for a 60-day commenting period ending on January 28, 2019 at 11:59 pm. In order to provide feedback to the Province on the draft Environment Plan, this staff report recommends that a copy of SRPRS.19.024 and all comments from Council be forwarded by the Town Clerk to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks before the deadline.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendices, maps and photographs. If you require an alternative format please call contact person listed in this document.

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Attachment 1 - Town of Richmond Hill Comments on the Province's draft "Made-in-Ontario" Environment Plan

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPRS.19.024 Town Comments on Province's draft Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.docx
Attachments:	- SRPRS.19.024 Attachment1-TownCommentsondraftEnvironmentPlan(FINAL).docx
Final Approval Date:	Jan 14, 2019

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Jan 14, 2019 - 10:46 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Jan 14, 2019 - 10:47 AM

Neil Garbe - Jan 14, 2019 - 11:26 AM