



Office of the Chief Planner  
Corporate Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Chair Emmerson and Members of Regional Council

From: Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner

Date: June 23, 2020

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

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This memorandum provides Council with an update regarding:

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

### **Province released Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow and revised Land Needs Assessment Methodology on June 16, 2020**

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. While the current Growth Plan came into effect in May 2019, the current population and employment forecasts have not been updated since 2013. The Land Needs Assessment methodology provides municipalities direction on determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate growth to the horizon of the Growth Plan.

On June 16, 2020, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released [Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) and [Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#). The Province is requesting comments on both proposals by July 31, 2020.

## **Proposed Amendment 1 updates York Region growth forecasts and extends the planning horizon to 2051**

Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan provides updated population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and extends the planning horizon from 2041 to 2051. The Ministry is considering three growth outlooks for the purposes for consultation: a Reference Growth Forecast, a High Growth Scenario, and a Low Growth Scenario. The release indicates the Reference Forecast represents the most likely future growth outlook and the final amendment will only include one forecast. The proposed population and employment figures for York Region under each scenario are summarized in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Proposed Forecast Options for York Region**

	Population			Employment		
Year	2031	2041	2051	2031	2041	2051
<b>Reference Forecast</b>	<b>1,590,000</b>	<b>1,790,000</b>	<b>2,020,000</b>	<b>790,000</b>	<b>900,000</b>	<b>990,000</b>
Low Scenario	1,590,000	1,790,000	1,930,000	790,000	900,000	950,000
High Scenario	1,590,000	1,790,000	2,110,000	790,000	900,000	1,040,000

The Amendment proposes to maintain the current 2031 and 2041 Growth Plan forecasts; however, municipalities have the ability to adjust these interim forecasts when planning for 2051. The intent of this approach was to ensure continuity of work for municipalities that have completed the process of bringing their official plans into conformity with existing forecasts. Further, proposed Amendment 1 contains a provision which suggests that municipalities can plan for population and employment forecasts higher than Schedule 3 as determined through their Municipal Comprehensive Reviews.

### **Amendment 1 proposes changes to employment policies in Major Transit Station Areas within Provincially Significant Employment Zones**

In addition to updated forecasts, Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan proposes a policy change to allow municipalities to convert lands within a provincially significant employment zone and a Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) outside of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process. The Province will also be conducting a review of Provincially Significant Employment Zones to examine how they can support post COVID-19 economic recovery. This is expected to be completed by early fall 2020.

Amendment 1 also proposes to make it easier to establish new mineral aggregate operations outside of the Greenbelt by removing prohibition on new mineral aggregate operations within habitats of endangered and threatened species. Technical amendments to ensure alignment and consistency with Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 are also proposed.

Conformity with policies and forecasts in Proposed Amendment 1, if approved, would be required through the Region's current MCR. The date by which municipalities must conform to policies in the Growth Plan remains July 1, 2022.

### **Province is proposing a simplified approach to land needs assessment**

The Province is also consulting on a proposed new Land Needs Assessment Methodology. The new methodology proposes a simplified approach to community and employment land needs assessment to reduce complexity. Unlike the existing 138-page, comprehensive step-by-step document released in 2018, the proposed new methodology outlines key components at a high level that municipalities are required to address as part of their land budget process in only a few pages.

### **Several factors need to be considered by the Province when finalizing population and employment forecasts for York Region**

Regional staff will be conducting a thorough review of both proposals in advance of the July 31, 2020 deadline. The following are preliminary comments based on an initial review of Amendment 1:

- Proposed 2051 forecasts for York Region add a range of 23,300 to 29,100 people annually to 2051 from the low to the high scenarios. Past growth rates of approximately 17,200 people per year over the past 10 years and 24,800 people per year on average since 1986 should be considered by the Province when finalizing the forecasts.
- Delays in the approvals for the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre and the construction of the Yonge North Subway Extension could impact the Region's ability to achieve the proposed forecasts. Council has requested that the Province advance these projects and the final forecasts should consider the potential timing of delivery of this essential infrastructure.
- Employment forecasts to 2051 appear achievable, requiring an average annual growth of between 5,000 and 14,000 jobs per year. As of 2019, the Region was generally on track to achieve its employment forecast averaging employment growth of approximately 15,000 jobs annually since 2008. Potential short and medium term impacts of COVID-19 should, however, be considered by the Province when finalizing the forecasts.
- The proposed amendment appears to allow flexibility for municipalities to use forecasts higher than Schedule 3 forecasts, once approved. The final amendment should ensure the continued importance of having one set of forecasts across the Greater Golden Horseshoe for consistency in broader planning initiatives (e.g. inter-regional transit planning, Environmental Assessments, etc.); coordinated forecasts have been in place since the late 1980s.

**Staff comments on the proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology will focus on requesting sufficient direction to ensure Growth Plan objectives are met**

Rather than a comprehensive document which provides explicit direction, the revised methodology is high level with significant room for interpretation. Implementation of the proposed methodology is likely to result in many different approaches to land needs assessment across the Greater Golden Horseshoe rather than the standard process referred to in the Growth Plan.

While the proposed methodology places increased emphasis on addressing the needs of the market and historical trends, clear direction on how the market is to be balanced with other Growth Plan objectives towards higher density, transit supportive and walkable communities focused on producing a variety of affordable housing forms is not provided.

**A meeting of Regional Council is proposed to be scheduled for July 30, 2020 to consider comments on the Provincial Growth Plan consultation**

Detailed comments are being compiled by staff now with emphasis on land needs assessment as a key component of the MCR currently underway. Any implications for the overall schedule to update the Regional Official Plan will also be identified. As well, industry and stakeholder comments will be sought to help inform Council directions. In consultation with the Chairman, a tentative Council meeting on Thursday, July 30 is proposed to meet the province's deadline of July 31, 2020 for comments.

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