



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: November 27, 2024

Report Number: SRPBS.24.126

Department: Planning and Building Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPBS.24.126 - Update on the Provincial
Planning Statement, 2024**

Purpose:

To provide a summary of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024) and highlight major changes in policy direction that have potential impacts in Richmond Hill.

Recommendation(s):

a) That staff report SRPBS.24.126 be received for information.

Contact Person(s):

- Maria Flores, Director of Policy Planning, Extension 5438
- Gus Galanis, Commissioner of Planning and Building Services, Extension 2465

Report Approval:

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

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Key Messages:

- The new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024) came into effect on October 20, 2024 and applies to all planning decisions made on or after that date.
- The City of Richmond Hill must ensure our Official Plan and other applicable planning instruments are consistent with the PPS, 2024.
- This staff report provides a summary of the PPS 2024 followed by a summary of major changes in policy direction that are relevant to Richmond Hill.

Background:

The new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024) is issued under Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, which states that decisions affecting planning matters “**shall be consistent with**” policy statements issued under the Act. The PPS 2024 provides direction on matters of Provincial interest, outlined in Section 2 of the *Planning Act*, for which an approval authority, such as a municipality, “**shall have regard to**” when carrying out their responsibilities under the Act. The PPS 2024 applies throughout Ontario and its underlying goal is to support the Province’s collective well-being by providing policy direction to ensure that all land is managed well. Municipal Official Plans (OPs) in Ontario must be consistent with the PPS 2024.

The PPS 2024 came into effect on October 20, 2024 and applies to all planning decisions made on or after that date. Effective on the same date, A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (“Growth Plan”) was repealed, revoking its designation as a growth plan area. The PPS 2024 replaced the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, 2020) and incorporates elements of the repealed Growth Plan. The Province is not considering changing the applicability of the Greenbelt Plan or the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in connection with the PPS, 2024. This planning statement introduces new or modified policies with a focus on intensification and freeing up new lands for development. The City of Richmond Hill must ensure our Official Plan and other applicable planning instruments are consistent with the PPS, 2024.

The PPS 2024 introduces some new policies and definitions that were not in the PPS 2020. The PPS 2024 carries forward and, in some cases, modifies policies and definitions from the PPS 2020 and Growth Plan. It is important to note that the City of Richmond Hill is identified as one of 29 large and fast-growing municipalities with the greatest need for housing by the PPS 2024. This staff report provides a summary of the PPS 2024 followed by a summary of major changes in policy direction that are relevant to Richmond Hill.

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Discussion:

Summary of The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

Chapter 1: Introduction

The PPS, 2024 establishes a framework for sustainable land use planning in Ontario, with a focus on economic growth, infrastructure, environmental management and community well-being. It emphasizes increasing affordable housing availability by ensuring diverse housing options that are affordable for all residents. The document is to be read and applied in its entirety.

Chapter 2: Building Homes, Sustaining Strong and Competitive Communities

This chapter provides direction on managing population growth and employment by effectively designating land and providing housing supply. It promotes cooperation between municipalities to develop complete communities by establishing minimum density targets for residents and jobs and by encouraging efficient use of land, especially near transit routes. In this regard, growth should primarily occur in Settlement Areas, supported by density targets and strategic development in key locations. For rural areas, the focus is on promoting health, preserving biodiversity and varied economic activities, while protecting agricultural land.

Chapter 3: Infrastructure Facilities

This chapter highlights the critical need to align infrastructure planning with land use to ensure efficiency and financial viability. It emphasizes the creation of safe and energy-efficient transportation systems that facilitate the use of low- and zero-emission vehicles. The protection of major transportation corridors from incompatible developments and careful planning around airports to mitigate negative impacts on sensitive areas is crucial. Additionally, the chapter addresses the management of sewage and stormwater, promoting green infrastructure and best practices to enhance community health and recreational spaces.

Chapter 4: Wise Use and Management of Resources

This chapter provides direction on the sustainable management of natural resources, agricultural land and cultural heritage. It encourages the diversity of natural systems while limiting development in significant ecological areas. Water quality and availability are prioritized through watershed management, with restrictions placed on development near vulnerable water sources. The PPS 2024 also emphasizes protecting mineral and petroleum resources, promoting rehabilitation after extraction and involving Indigenous communities in the conservation of cultural heritage.

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Chapter 5: Protecting Public Health and Safety

This chapter focuses on protecting public health and safety by limiting development in hazardous locations and ensuring that new projects do not introduce additional risks. Collaboration with conservation authorities is crucial for managing development in flood-prone areas with prohibitions on certain developments unless safe access is ensured. Development near human-hazards is only allowed after thorough remediation and assessment of contaminated sites has been undertaken.

Chapter 6: Implementation and Interpretation

This chapter highlights the need for a well-rounded approach to applying the PPS, ensuring alignment with Indigenous rights. It highlights the importance of keeping municipal zoning and development by-laws up to date with official plans and the PPS. Effective planning requires coordination among municipalities and encourages early engagement with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to promote informed participation and to strengthen community resilience.

Summary of Major Changes in Policy Direction

Growth Forecasts

Under the PPS 2024, municipalities are now responsible for preparing their own population and employment forecasts based on 25-year projections from the Ministry of Finance (MOF). This replaces the previous system, where forecasts were distributed through the Growth Plan and the Regional Official Plan. The City will need to invest in growth management expertise to prepare these projections independently. The PPS 2024 also establishes a 20 to 30-year horizon for municipalities to plan for projected needs. Growth from Minister's Zoning Orders (MZO) is to be considered in addition to the population and employment projections, and planning for infrastructure, public services, and employment areas can go beyond the 30-year time horizon.

Housing

The PPS 2024 continues to include policies that require planning authorities to establish and implement targets that are affordable to low and moderate income households. However, a slight modification has been made to the definition of low and moderate income households by replacing the geographic boundary within which incomes are compared from “regional market area” to “municipality”. This change focuses the area for which affordability is to be calculated within the municipal boundary. In providing a full range and mix of housing types, the PPS 2024 expects municipalities to work with service managers to address local needs. A previous reference to market-based housing was removed, while policies continue to emphasize meeting affordability needs through a range of housing options and densities supportive of- and in proximity to transit.

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Settlement Area

The PPS 2024 offers more flexibility for municipalities to designate new Settlement Areas and expand settlement boundaries outside of a municipal comprehensive review (MCR), provided specific criteria are considered, emphasizing infrastructure and public service facility capacity. The concept of a “comprehensive review and “municipal comprehensive review” are not included in the PPS 2024.

In Richmond Hill, the majority of the lands located outside of the City’s Settlement Area are located on the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM), which falls within the Greenbelt Area, and is subject to the policies of the ORMCP and the Greenbelt Plan. Previously, changes to Settlement Area boundaries were only permitted as part of an MCR in accordance with the Growth Plan. Despite the Growth Plan being repealed, Amendment No. 4 to the Greenbelt Plan came into effect on the same day. This provision states that, where there is reference to the Growth Plan and the PPS 2020 in the Greenbelt Plan, those policies will remain. Therefore, policies prohibiting expansion into the Greenbelt Area still exist.

The PPS 2024 also encourages municipalities to set density targets in designated growth areas. As one of the large and fast-growing municipalities identified in the PPS 2024, Richmond Hill is encouraged to plan for a target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in designated growth areas.

Strategic Growth Areas

Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) are generally nodes and corridors that have been identified by municipalities to be the focus for accommodating intensification and higher-density mixed uses in a more compact built form. This is a new section in the PPS 2024, carried over from the concepts in the Growth Plan. It encourages municipalities to identify and focus growth and development in SGAs and to prioritize planning and investment for infrastructure and public service facilities in these areas. Accordingly, the City will have to do a technical review of infrastructure and public service facilities needed to accommodate proposed growth. The PPS 2024 also encourages municipalities to consider a student housing strategy when planning for SGAs.

Major Transit Station Areas

Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) are generally areas within a ten-minute walk of higher-order transit stations, stops or major bus depots in urban areas. A carryover from the Growth Plan, the PPS 2024 requires planning authorities to delineate MTSA boundaries within a 500 to 800 metre radius of a transit station, through an Official Plan or Official Plan amendment. The PPS 2024 also requires planning authorities to plan for minimum density targets in MTSAs on higher transit corridors, outlining specific targets for residents and jobs per hectare depending on the type of transit available. Additionally, the PPS 2024 introduces the term “frequent transit,” requiring planning

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authorities to plan for intensification on lands adjacent to existing and planned frequent transit corridors, where appropriate.

Employment

Under the PPS 2024, institutional or commercial uses, including office and retail uses, are no longer included in the definition of “employment area” other than those associated with manufacturing uses and warehousing uses. This change requires the City to update its employment area mapping to align with the revised definition. Another change is that municipalities can now remove lands from employment areas at any time, rather than at the time of a municipal comprehensive review, provided they meet certain requirements.

Furthermore, a new policy requires appropriate transitions for developments within 300 metres of employment areas to avoid impacts on their economic viability. The PPS 2024 also changes the requirement to separate employment areas and sensitive land uses, by focusing on land use compatibility between the uses and minimizing and mitigating adverse effects. Lastly, Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs) in the GGH are discontinued and may now be identified simply as employment areas.

Land Use Compatibility

Although the PPS 2024 still includes policies to encourage the planning of major facilities (e.g. industrial and manufacturing) and sensitive land uses (e.g. childcare, seniors long-term care) to avoid one another, it provides more flexibility in locating sensitive land uses adjacent to such facilities provided that adverse effects are minimized and mitigated. Furthermore, there is no longer a requirement to evaluate alternative locations or prove that no reasonable alternatives exist.

Sewage and Water, Water Resources, and Stormwater Infrastructure

The PPS 2024 provides municipalities more flexibility to allocate and reallocate unused system capacity of municipal water and sewage services, optimizing resources and helping the City avoid unused system capacity. It also requires watershed planning in large and fast-growing municipalities, to inform planning matters such as integrated stormwater management.

Agriculture

The PPS 2024 expands permission to permit the establishment of up to two (2) Additional Residential Units (ARUs) for a principal dwelling in a prime agricultural area provided that specified criteria are met. ARUs cannot be severed and must remain with the principal dwelling. These new provisions permit more housing on farms for farmers, farm families and farm workers, without having to create new lots. Another new provision is the requirement for an Agricultural Impact Assessment to address impacts

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where there are incoming new or expanding “non-agricultural uses” in a prime agricultural area.

Furthermore, the PPS 2024 requires municipalities to designate and protect prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, as part of the long-term agricultural land base and in support of the agri-food network. A new definition for urban agriculture further allows the City to encourage local food production in its urban areas. Lastly, the "on-farm diversified uses" definition adds electricity generation, transmission and energy storage systems to the list of secondary uses that may help to support a diversified income stream for farmers.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

The PPS 2024 updates current heritage policies to align with the *Ontario Heritage Act* (OHA) amendments under Bills 108, Bill 23 and 200, with a focus on conserving heritage designated properties. Owners of properties ‘listed’ for potential heritage designation and who are seeking demolition still need to submit a Cultural Heritage Assessment, as required under the OHA, while the City is in the process of designating priority listed properties.

Implementation and Coordination

The PPS 2024 directs all municipal planning decisions including Zoning By-laws and permitting processes are to be consistent with the PPS, even where a municipality’s Official Plan has yet to be updated. It places increased emphasis on undertaking ‘early’ engagement with Indigenous communities and coordinating with them on land use planning matters, supporting consideration of Indigenous interests in land use decision-making and identifying potential impacts of decisions on Aboriginal or treaty rights. Internal discussions might be required to assess the City’s current engagement timeline with Indigenous communities. Lastly, municipalities are encouraged to engage with equity-deserving groups and required to collaborate with school boards for early and integrated planning.

Next Steps

Now that the PPS 2024 is in effect, and in accordance with the *Planning Act*, staff will ensure that Richmond Hill’s Official Plan and Comprehensive Zoning By-laws are updated to be consistent with the policies of the PPS. Recognizing that conformity updates take time to complete, the legislation notes that it is still incumbent on all planning authorities to apply the PPS to all planning matters and that all planning decisions in Ontario must be consistent with the PPS.

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Financial Implications:

No financial implications are associated with this staff report.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

This staff report provides an update on the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024) which came into effect on October 20, 2024. As per the *Planning Act*, the City of Richmond Hill's Official Plan and all decisions relating to planning matters must be consistent with the PPS 2024. By outlining the provincial planning directions by which the City is required to conform, this report relates to Strategic Plan Pillar 1 "Growing a Livable, Sustainable Community" and specifically Priority 1 "Manage growth in a way that enables choice and connection for the city, its residents and businesses now and in the future."

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPBS.24.126 - Update on the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 19, 2024

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

Maria Flores - Nov 19, 2024 - 2:39 PM

Gus Galanis - Nov 19, 2024 - 2:41 PM

Darlene Joslin - Nov 19, 2024 - 2:41 PM