

DATE: November 13, 2023

REPORT NO: PD-58-2023

SUBJECT: Information Report – Ongoing Provincial Land Use Planning Changes

CONTACT: Brian Treble, Director of Planning & Building

OVERVIEW:

- Provincial, Regional and local land use planning continues to experience rapid change. Sometimes there is undoing of previous hasty decisions. Staff are not here to judge, just inform on current Provincial changes as they affect West Lincoln.
- First, is letter from the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing advising that modifications made to the Region of Niagara Official Plan, before it was approved on November 4th, 2022 may be undone (see Attachment 1). This appears to affect urban boundary/greenbelt adjustments in Grimsby and Niagara Falls, it is believed that the West Lincoln municipal comprehensive review study as reflected in OPA 62 and 63 documents is safe. Unfortunately, the detail on the letter is not clear and discussions amongst area planners is scheduled for the meeting on November 10, 2023. Further detail will be gathered which then can be verbally shared with Committee at the Planning, Building, Environmental Committee meeting.
- Second, legislation has been introduced that proposed to “fix” the Greenbelt in legislation for perpetuity (see Attachment 2). This exercise might help take the politics out of the Greenbelt and does not appear to change anything in West Lincoln. Our Greenbelt lands are north and east of Thirty Road and Young Street and remain as previously designated.
- Third, recently the Province presented proposed changes to the definition of an Affordable Residential Unit (see Attachment 3). Watson and Associates are currently in the process of completing background study work for our Development Charges by-law review which must be replaced in 2024. They will inform us of the final Provincial changes and how they affect our future ability to collect development charges.
- Fourth, the Provincial and Federal Government have announced that PST and GST (HST) will be removed from all rental housing units so as to encourage construction of rental housing (see Attachment 4).
- This information report is written to keep Committee and Council briefed on current actions of the Province.
- This may require that we generate a letter to the Minister, to be signed by the Mayor. Staff and Mayor will keep Committee and Council informed.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Information Report PD-58-2023, regarding “Ongoing Provincial Land Use Planning Changes”, dated September 11, 2023 be received.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

- **Champion** strategic and responsible growth

BACKGROUND:

Over the past five years we have seen unprecedented changes to various operating acts for municipalities including the Municipal Act, Planning Act, Building Code Act, Heritage Act, Development Charges Act, and Conservation Authorities Act to name the obvious ones. Most changes have been to streamline approval processes and get more houses built quicker. Despite all these changes, housing starts are not anywhere near the numbers needed to achieve 1.5 million new housing units in 10 years. This is at a time when there is talk of a potential for an economic slowdown and rising deficiencies.

Now is a good time to get planning approvals in place such that when a healthy economy returns, we will then see housing starts pick up again.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Provincial planning continues to experience rapid change. Sometimes there are discussions to undo previous hasty decisions. Staff are not here to judge, just inform on current Provincial changes as they affect West Lincoln.

Township staff and the Mayor received a letter from the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Attachment 1) advising that modifications made to the Region of Niagara Official Plan, before it was approved on November 4th, 2022 may be undone. This appears to affect urban boundary/greenbelt adjustments in Grimsby and Niagara Falls, but it appears that the West Lincoln municipal comprehensive review project as reflected in OPA 62 and 63 documents are safe. Unfortunately, the detail on the letter is not clear and discussions amongst area planners is scheduled for the meeting on November 10, 2023. Further detail will be gathered which then can be verbally shared with Committee at the Planning, Building, Environmental Committee meeting.

Also, legislation has been introduced that proposes to “fix” the Greenbelt in legislation for perpetuity (Attachment 2). This exercise might help take the politics out of the Greenbelt and does not appear to change anything in West Lincoln. Our Greenbelt lands are north and east of Thirty Road and Young Street and remain as previously designated.

Recently the Province presented proposed changes to the definition of an Affordable Residential Unit (Attachment 3). Watson and Associates are currently in the process of completing background study work for our Development Charges by-law which must be replaced in 2024. They will inform us of the final Provincial changes and how they affect our future ability to collect development charges.

The Provincial and Federal Government have also announced that PST and GST (HST) will be removed from all rental housing units so as to encourage construction of rental housing (Attachment 4).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Not applicable to at this time. The Definition of Affordable Residential Unit will affect development charges that will be able to be collected in the future and will be discussed in the Development Charges background study work.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

Staff have been discussing changes with Area Planners and the Commissioners of Regional Planning.

CONCLUSION:

This report is written to keep Committee and Council updated on recent announcements of the Province as they may affect the Township of West Lincoln Planning Department and planning approvals.

ATTACHMENTS:


1. Letter from the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
2. Legislation Re: Greenbelt
3. Proposed Changes to the Definition of an Affordable Residential Unit
4. Removal of PST and GST (HST) for Rental Housing

Prepared & Submitted by:



Brian Treble
Director of Planning & Building

Approved by:



Bev Hendry
CAO