
DATE: April 14, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES**

FROM: Norma Trim, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Regional Official Plan Amendment Number 21B – Natural Heritage and Agriculture Policies, attached as Appendix I to this report of the Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services dated April 14, 2010, titled “Peel Region Official Plan Review – Adoption of Regional Official Plan Amendment Number 21B – Natural Heritage and Agriculture Policies”, be adopted;

And further, that no further public meetings related to Regional Official Plan Amendment Number 21B are required in accordance with Section 17 of the *Planning Act*;

And further, that the subject report be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), the Cities of Brampton and Mississauga, the Town of Caledon, municipalities adjacent to the Region of Peel, and those parties requesting notification;

And further, that notice of decision of adoption of Amendment Number 21B be given in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

And further, that the necessary by-law be presented to Council for approval;

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to recommend that Regional Official Plan Amendment 21B (ROPA 21B) be adopted by Council. The amendment is attached as Appendix I.
- Planning staff has consulted extensively with the public, area municipal staff, internal departments, conservation authorities, Provincial staff, aboriginal groups, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, as well as stakeholders including the Peel Federation of Agriculture, the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, the Caledon Agricultural Advisory Committee and stakeholders from the local development industry.
- A public meeting required under the *Planning Act* was held on April 23, 2009. Statutory public open houses were held prior to the public meeting and a fourth open house in February 2010 was held following Council direction to undertake further consultation on the amendment.
- All comments received have been thoroughly considered and as a result changes have been made to draft ROPA 21B, as detailed in this report.
- This report supersedes the previous staff report on ROPA 21 for recommendations related to natural heritage and agriculture that was presented to General Committee on November 19, 2009.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

The purpose of this report is to provide a recommendation to Council respecting the approval of Regional Official Plan Amendment 21B (attached as Appendix I) to add and revise policies related to natural heritage and agriculture in the Region of Peel Official Plan (ROP). Regional Official Plan Amendment 21B (ROPA 21B) is a component of the Peel Region Official Plan Review (PROPR) that addresses two of the 15 focus areas that are identified for PROPR.

The natural heritage and agriculture policies were originally circulated for public consultation in March 2009 together with policies on integrated waste management and air quality as Regional Official Plan Amendment 21 (ROPA 21). On November 19, 2009, Regional Council adopted the air quality and integrated waste management policies as Regional Official Plan Amendment 21A (ROPA 21A) and further directed, by Resolution 2009-1259, that the policies related to natural heritage and agriculture be deferred to a future meeting of Regional Council and that Regional staff continue to work with the Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA) on an ecosystem approach to agriculture and natural heritage and engage in dialogue with the Province, neighbouring Regions and municipalities. In accordance with that direction, Regional staff is bringing forward the policies related to natural heritage and agriculture as ROPA 21B through this staff report.

The staff report also provides information on action taken by Regional staff in response to Resolutions 2009-1327, 2009-1328 and 2009-1329 adopted by Regional Council on November 19, 2009. The resolutions were adopted further to the PFA's delegation to General Committee (GC) on ROPA 21. The resolutions are included in Appendix II. Staff has addressed the direction provided in the Resolutions, met with stakeholders on the issues raised and received support from the PFA on the proposed amendment. Staff is satisfied that sufficient consultation has taken place and is comfortable recommending the amendment to Council.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Major research has been completed to support the policy review including discussion papers on natural heritage and agriculture. The Peel-Caledon Significant Woodlands and Significant Wildlife Habitat Study was also completed to provide a technical basis for policies and criteria related to significant woodlands and significant wildlife habitat.

Regional staff is recommending adoption of ROPA 21B as it will:

- ensure the ROP is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS);
- address policy gaps in the ROP related to natural heritage and agriculture; and
- provide policy direction that is coordinated with area municipal policy and that is focused on Regional mandates.

2. Public Consultation

Extensive consultation has been undertaken to review draft policies. Regional staff consulted with agencies, stakeholders, aboriginal groups and the general public. Area municipal staff consultation occurred through staff working groups and through the Planning Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Consultation with the general public and landowners has also been an important part of the process to ensure that draft policies reflect Regional needs. The draft policies were placed on the Region's website and circulated to a broad list of stakeholders and agencies.

In total, six major stakeholder consultation sessions were held, which invited Regional and Area Municipal Councillors to discuss work being undertaken through the natural heritage and agriculture focus areas.

Regional Council hosted a statutory public meeting on April 23, 2009 to receive oral and written submissions. Minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix III. Prior to the public meeting, Regional staff hosted three statutory open houses, one in each area municipality. Further to Resolution 2009-1328, Regional staff hosted a fourth open house on February 22, 2010 in the Town of Caledon to enable the public to review large format mapping of Schedule A (Core Areas of the Greenlands System), obtain information and provide comments on the amendment.

3. Draft ROPA - Comments

Attached as Appendix IV to this report is a table summarizing comments received and the Regional staff responses. Below is a summary of those comments and staff responses.

a) Oral Comments

In total, four delegations were received providing oral comments on the amendment, two at the April 23, 2009 public meeting and two at the November 12, 2009 General Committee meeting.

i) Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA)

The PFA provided presentations entitled 'Back to Conservation' at the public meeting and at the November 12, 2009 GC meeting outlining the PFA's comments with respect to the natural heritage and agricultural policies contained in ROPA 21B. The presentations highlighted areas where the agricultural community shared common interests related to agriculture, natural heritage conservation and stewardship.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

The delegations indicated that agricultural policies should support future economic opportunities in agriculture noting opportunities related to value added uses and renewable energy opportunities. They also requested that the ROP clarify how "existing agricultural operations" may be recognized and allowed to continue and expand without being inhibited by new policy.

Further to Council Resolutions 2009-1259 and 2009-1327, Regional staff completed research and discussions with the Province, neighbouring Regions, including the Region of Niagara, Region of Halton and the City of Hamilton, and area municipal staff on policies related to the continuation of agricultural uses within protected natural heritage features. Regional staff prepared a detailed response to the requests made by the PFA and met with the PFA Environment Sub-Committee and PFA Board to obtain further input on the policies. Detailed staff responses to the PFA requests are provided in a letter from Regional staff dated January 19, 2010 attached as Appendix V.

Regional staff has also prepared a table summarizing the recommended policies in ROPA 21B, the applicable PPS policy, PFA comments on the policies and Regional staff responses. The policy comparison table is attached as Appendix VI. Staff responses to key issues raised by the PFA on ROPA 12B are provided in Section 4 of this report.

On April 7, 2010 the PFA met and passed a resolution supporting ROPA 21B in principle and indicated, at the meeting, that Regional staff should continue to work with the PFA to ensure that policy implementation is coordinated and well communicated. Correspondence from the PFA supporting the amendment in principle is attached as Appendix VIII.

ii) Bruce Reed, Resident, City of Brampton

Mr. Reed identified concerns with the mapping of Core Areas on his property in the City of Brampton advising that the mapping did not accurately reflect the boundaries of natural features. He indicated that the mapped boundaries shown on the draft Schedule A were based on outdated air photo information. Mr. Reed requested that Regional staff visit the property and update the mapping based on current site specific information.

iii) Sierra Club of Canada - Peel Region Chapter

The Sierra Club presented comments to Council indicating that urban areas in Peel have a very small percentage of the natural heritage system remaining and supported the Region taking a systems approach consistent with the PPS and Greenbelt Plan to protect natural heritage. The Sierra Club also indicated concerns with policies in Section 2.3.2.5 of the amendment that would allow exemptions for existing uses and in Section 2.3.2.16 that would permit active recreation in Core valley and stream corridors in the Urban System.

Following the delegation, Regional staff met with members of the Sierra Club, and staff from the area municipalities, Toronto Region Conservation Authority and Credit Valley Conservation in February 2010 to review the policy recommendations and to identify, discuss and evaluate policy options that would address the issues raised.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Regional staff recommendations further to the consultations are provided in Section 4.

b) Written Comments

In total, 51 written submissions were received on the amendment.

i) Area Municipalities

As noted, consultation with Council and staff from the area municipalities occurred throughout all policy development stages for ROPA 21B. The consultation has been extensive and beneficial and, in many areas, the input has provided policy clarification so that policies in ROPA 21B focus on Regional mandates in accordance with the five principles contained in Section 1.3.2 of the ROP.

City of Brampton Comments

With respect to policies for natural heritage, City of Brampton staff is generally supportive of the significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat and Core Valleyland policies contained in ROPA 21B. The City supported the proposed policy initiative in Section 7.6.2.10 to review the natural heritage system planning framework of the Greenlands System through future work. The City requested a number of minor mapping revisions to Schedule A in the ROP to align the Regional mapping with mapping in the City of Brampton Official Plan. Mapping revisions to Schedule A are provided in Appendix VII.

Although supportive in principle of the natural heritage policies, the City of Brampton staff raised concerns with mapping changes proposed for the Bram West and North West Brampton planning areas, noting that these areas are subject to appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and that ROPA 21B may receive similar appeals.

City of Brampton staff is supportive of the draft agricultural policies and found the policies to be generally consistent with the City's Official Plan.

City of Mississauga Comments

The City of Mississauga staff support the policies proposed in ROPA 21B subject to revisions to clarify policy direction in some areas and to address policy issues specific to the City of Mississauga.

City staff and the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) indicated support for the removal of compatible active recreational uses (e.g. golf courses, sports fields, etc.) as a permitted use within Core Areas of the Greenlands System noting that the uses are not compatible with policy objectives to protect and enhance natural features that are Core Areas.

City staff supports the proposed agriculture policies and indicate that consideration should be given to include policies regarding urban agriculture. Staff also requested that the funding sources related to the policies addressing financial incentives for farmers be clarified.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Town of Caledon Comments

The Town of Caledon provided comments on the natural heritage and agriculture policies in ROPA 21B through a staff report dated October 20, 2009.

Town staff generally supports the directions of the Region regarding natural heritage. Staff notes that the Region and Town were partners on the Peel-Caledon Significant Woodlands and Significant Wildlife Habitat Study. Town Staff indicate that the natural heritage policies are responsive to Caledon staff input on key objectives to be achieved. Comments identified a need for flexibility to recognize existing uses and allow appropriate expansions of existing permitted uses within Core Greenlands; clarification of the exemptions for "minor development" and "minor site alteration"; refinement of mapping and appropriate identification of area municipal roles related to invasive species management and stewardship.

Town staff generally supports the Region's broad directions regarding agriculture to enable area municipalities, within the framework of the PPS, to be more flexible at the local level. Town staff suggested adding a policy that the Region review the identification of the Prime Agricultural Area and to research its long term role in the context of the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan. Town staff also recommended policy to: monitor the application of the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) formulae in Peel; address the challenges associated with near urban agriculture; encourage agriculture related uses such as feed mills and fertilizer depots; and address impacts to agricultural operations through planning for the Strategic Infrastructure Study Area.

ii) Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH)

Regional staff met with MMAH staff on September 11, 2009 to discuss revisions and clarify issues identified in the provincial pre-consultation comments on the amendment. Regional staff expects that the discussion and suggested revisions to ROPA 21B have addressed the majority of the Province's comments. Highlights of the Ministry's comments related to natural heritage and agriculture are summarized below.

Natural Heritage

MMAH submitted provincial pre-consultation comments on ROPA 21B, and commented on the need to clarify how the Greenlands System framework for Core Areas, Natural Areas and Corridors (NAC) and Potential Natural Areas and Corridors (PNAC) in the ROP relates to the "no development and site alteration" protection levels in the PPS. The Ministry also requested that the Region clarify policy for the permitted exceptions within Core Areas in Section 2.3.2.5 and policy for environmental impact study requirements. MMAH requested the Region to consider protecting plantations as significant woodlands and re-classifying significant wildlife habitat as a Core Area of the Greenlands System.

Agriculture

The Ministry suggested that the PPS definition should be used to clarify the purpose and function of the minimum distance separation formulae; that not all uses permitted within the Prime Agricultural Areas are subject to the minimum distance separation formulae; and that in order to clarify the policy direction for agriculture within the 2031 Regional Urban boundary, the policy indicate that phasing of development on agricultural lands should be identified in the local official plans. The

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Ministry also identified terms in the Glossary that should be updated to be consistent with the PPS.

iii) Niagara Escarpment Commission

The Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) provided comments on natural heritage policies in ROPA 21B. The NEC comments include revisions to terminology, the proposed descriptions of Escarpment Protection Areas and Escarpment Natural Areas and clarification of criteria to identify Core woodlands. Regional staff considered the NEC's comments and incorporated most of the suggested revisions which were minor in nature.

iv) Conservation Authorities (CAs)

Halton Region Conservation Authority, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, and Credit Valley Conservation submitted written comments in response to the circulation of ROPA 21B requesting a number of policy revisions, primarily to the Greenlands System policies of the ROP. Regional staff consulted with the conservation authorities and proposed revisions to address the concerns raised, including the following:

- clarification of the Region's Core Area, NAC and PNAC Greenlands System categories and how categories relate to significance in the PPS for natural heritage features;
- further clarification on exemptions within Core Areas including for compatible active recreation; and
- clarification of environmental impact study requirements.

The conservation authorities advised that the proposed revisions have adequately addressed the majority of the comments submitted, but continue to recommend revisions to:

- classify significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat (SWH) and regionally significant life science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) as Core Areas of the Greenlands System.

The request to re-classify locally significant woodlands, SWH and regionally significant life science ANSIs is not supported by Regional and area municipal staff since these features fall below the threshold for Regional significance. The proposed classification in ROPA 21B is consistent with the Core, NAC and PNAC policy framework of the ROP. Regional staff will review the classifications in the future as new information becomes available.

The conservation authorities further requested Regional staff to consult with MMAH to confirm if the proposed land use exceptions within Core Areas in Section 2.3.2.5 are consistent with provincial policy direction. Revised policy is included in ROPA 21B to address this concern.

Overall, the consultation with the conservation authorities has been positive and has contributed improvements to the ROPA.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

v) Development Industry

Comments were received from the development industry raising concerns related to how natural heritage policies are changing in the ROP.

Comments suggested that it is premature to adopt ROPA 21B due to outstanding appeals in the case of North West Brampton, and the need to ensure coordination with the other PROPR amendments.

Several comments raised objections to the policy, criteria, size thresholds and definitions related to significant woodlands and significant wildlife habitat. Other comments requested clarification of how the policy for NAC valley and stream corridors is to be interpreted and whether it will allow smaller valley and stream corridors that are not Core valleylands to be evaluated to determine their significance. Comments were also received requesting clarification of the Greenlands System policies for natural corridors. Detailed responses to comments from the development industry are included in Appendix IV.

With respect to the request from Bruce Reed at the April 23, 2009 public meeting, Regional staff arranged a site visit on June 26, 2009 and a further meeting on July 9, 2009 to review the proposed Core Areas mapping at a site level. As a result of that review, Regional staff made adjustments to the Core Areas mapping on and adjacent to the Reed property.

vi) Consultation with Aboriginal Groups/First Nations

Regional staff has presented PROPR to the Peel Aboriginal Network of Directors and the Alderville First Nation and circulated ROPA 21 to aboriginal groups for comment. Regional staff also received one written response from the Chippewas of RAMA First Nation, who are a member of the Williams Treaties First Nations. The written response indicated that they have forwarded ROPA 21 to their solicitor for review.

Regional staff will continue communicating, consulting and engaging aboriginal groups as we move forward in the PROPR process.

vii) Other Comments

Members of the public provided comments related to protection of natural heritage features, plantation woodlands, greenspace in urban areas, agricultural lands, incentives for agriculture and compensation to rural landowners for natural heritage protection.

4. Regional Staff Responses to Key Issues

General

Regional staff has made further revisions to ROPA 21B taking into consideration comments received during the circulation process. Highlights of key issues and Regional staff responses are addressed in the discussion below. Detailed responses to comments are provided in Appendix IV.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

i) Natural Heritage

Continuation of Existing Agricultural Uses (Sections 2.3.2.5 and 2.3.2.7)

New wording in policies 2.3.2.5 and 2.3.2.7 respond to the request from the PFA to clarify that it is the intent of the ROP to recognize and permit existing agricultural uses to continue within the Greenlands System (see Appendix I, Items 15 and 17). The proposed policies allow the continuation of existing agricultural uses; the expansion of existing agricultural buildings and structures; and new accessory agricultural buildings and structures within Core Areas of the Greenlands System.

Concerns were raised by the PFA that existing agricultural uses not be placed into a non-conforming status through the implementation of the Regional policies. The policies in ROPA 21B enable the area municipalities to recognize existing agricultural uses as legal conforming uses in keeping with the PPS direction to allow existing agricultural uses to continue.

The policies provide appropriate Regional policy direction consistent with the five principles of the ROP and allow detailed land use policies to be developed by the area municipalities. The exemptions are allowed provided impacts to Core Areas are avoided, and if they cannot be avoided, that impacts are minimized to the greatest extent possible. Further direction is included in Section 2.3.2.5 to enable the area municipalities to consider existing development tools of other agencies when implementing the policy direction and intent to minimize impacts (e.g. through the issuance of a Niagara Escarpment Commission permit, Conservation Authority permit, etc.). The approach is in keeping with an ecosystem approach, as suggested by PFA, and the principle that existing agricultural operations should be allowed to continue and expand.

Regional staff researched policy approaches in the GTA further to Council's direction to confirm how natural heritage policies are being applied to recognize existing agricultural uses. All of the municipal official plans reviewed permitted existing agricultural uses to continue in accordance with the PPS. Policies in the Region of Niagara and Region of Halton official plans provide detailed policy for agricultural uses within natural heritage features. Both the Halton and Niagara plans conditionally allow expansions and new buildings and structures within natural heritage features subject to environmental impact studies and criteria requiring impacts to be minimized.

The policy flexibility in the Halton and Niagara official plans is similar to policy direction being provided in Section 2.3.2.5 in ROPA 21B. Policies in ROPA 21B provide additional implementation options by enabling the area municipalities to consider existing development tools and approvals of other agencies when developing policies for their official plans.

Single Detached Dwellings on Existing Lots of Record (Section 2.3.2.5)

The proposed natural heritage policies include an exemption to permit, within Core Areas of the Greenlands System, a new single residential dwelling on an existing lot of record. This provision would permit an exception to the general prohibition against development and site alteration within Core Areas, provided that the dwelling would have been permitted by the applicable planning legislation or zoning by-law.

The exemption is currently provided in the area municipal official plans and is included in other official plans reviewed by Regional staff (e.g. the Region of Halton's Natural

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Heritage System policies). It is also included as an exemption in the Greenbelt Plan's "existing use" policies and Provincial staff has advised that the exemption is consistent with the PPS. It is not an exemption, in staff's opinion, that would compromise the ROP's objective to protect Core Greenlands. Legal staff has reviewed the proposed policies and has confirmed that the "existing lot of record concept" for single dwellings is fully embodied in the natural heritage policies proposed for adoption.

Compatible Active Recreation (Section 2.3.2.16)

The Province identified concerns with the list of permitted exemptions within Core Areas of the Greenlands System in Section 2.3.2.5 and is recommending that active recreation not be listed as a permitted use (e.g. golf courses, sports fields, etc.). Similar comments related to active recreation were received from the conservation authorities, City of Mississauga staff and Sierra Club.

Regional staff has revised Section 2.3.2.5 and provided new policy direction in Section 2.3.2.16 to clarify this issue. The proposed revisions in Section 2.3.2.16 indicate what is meant by compatible recreation (i.e. "active" recreation uses); limit where compatible active recreation may be permitted within Core Areas of the Greenlands System; specify the conditions under which permitted development and compatible active recreation may be allowed; and provide policy direction allowing the area municipalities to be more restrictive than the Regional Plan.

Regional staff is also recommending further revisions to the policies presented at the November 12, 2009 GC meeting to limit the exemption to allow expansions to existing active recreation uses only and not permit the establishment of new active recreation uses. The policy exception will allow expansions to existing compatible active recreation uses in Core valley and stream corridors within the Urban System except within other significant natural heritage features (e.g. significant woodlands) unless it is demonstrated there is no negative impacts to the features or their functions; and to prohibit expansions of existing active recreation within significant wetlands and significant habitat of endangered and threatened species. Compatible active recreation will not be permitted in other Core Areas of the Greenlands System outside of Core valley and stream corridors. The policy revisions significantly strengthen the existing ROP policy protection afforded to Core Greenlands.

Urban Agricultural Uses (Section 2.3.2.16)

Section 2.3.2.16 c) is also revised to clarify the exemption for new agricultural uses to remove any conflict with the policies of the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in the Rural System. New agricultural uses are not permitted within significant valleylands in the Natural Heritage System of the Greenbelt Plan and in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area. The policy exemption is being retained to provide opportunities for compatible urban agricultural uses within the Urban System in accordance with proposed policy direction in Section 3.2.2.10 to promote opportunities for urban agriculture. Exemptions for existing agricultural uses, expansions to existing agricultural buildings and structures and new buildings and structures that are accessory to an existing agricultural use are already provided in Section 2.3.2.5.

Environmental Impact Studies (Section 2.3.2.22)

The Province is requesting that the ROP clarify that environmental impact studies (EIS) may be required for permitted development and site alteration within Core Areas. Regional staff supports this recommendation and is proposing revisions to clarify EIS study requirements, but prefers detailed implementation requirements to be developed

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

through the area municipal official plans and flexibility to allow scoping of EIS study requirements. This responds to rural landowner and PFA requests that EIS study requirements, where required for development subject to *Planning Act* approvals, be scoped based on the scale and nature of impacts associated with the development.

Definition of Woodlands (Glossary)

Regional staff does not agree with the Province's requested revision to the definition of woodlands. The existing ROP policy to only include naturalized plantations for the purpose of determining if they meet criteria for Core woodlands is maintained in ROPA 21. The proposed Provincial definition does not clarify this aspect of the policy. Suggested revisions to the definition submitted by the City of Brampton and the PFA have been included.

Re-classification of Significant Wildlife Habitat and Significant Woodlands (Table 1)

Regional staff does not support the Province's recommendation to list significant wildlife habitat as a Core Area of the Greenlands System. A similar comment was received from Credit Valley Conservation and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.

The Peel-Caledon Significant Woodlands and Significant Wildlife Habitat Study concluded that it was not possible to identify thresholds at a Regional scale for all of the significant wildlife habitat (SWH) criteria. It was also not possible to provide Region-wide mapping of SWH due to lack of data. For these reasons, it is recommended that SWH be identified as a NAC to be interpreted, identified and protected in the area municipal official plans in accordance with ROP and PPS policy direction.

With respect to the conservation authorities request to re-classify all significant woodlands as Core Areas of the Greenlands System, the ROP Greenlands System framework requires classification of features into Core (provincially and regionally significant features), NAC (locally significant) and PNAC (significance requires further evaluation) categories. It is not consistent with the ROP to classify all significant woodlands as Core woodlands. The re-classification is not supported by the area municipalities or Regional staff.

Mapping Revisions (Schedule A)

Updated mapping of the Core Areas of the Greenlands System shown on Schedule A is included in ROPA 21 based on more recent and accurate mapping data, and new criteria for Core woodlands and Core valleylands that have been developed through PROPR. The mapping revisions were compared with the natural heritage features mapping in the area municipal official plans and revisions to Schedule A have been included in the recommended amendment based on landowner and area municipal staff input. Mapping revisions to the Core Areas adopted by Council in 2005 through ROPA 13 are also included in ROPA 21.

Prematurity and Timing of Adoption of ROPA 21B

With respect to comments on timing of ROPA 21B from the development industry, Regional staff does not recommend delaying adoption of ROPA 21 until completion of more detailed studies and secondary plans. The Regional policies will guide and inform future planning approvals in Mount Pleasant and other secondary plan areas in all three area municipalities so that policy direction is consistent on a Regional and area municipal-wide basis. Updated policies in ROPA 21 are intended to achieve consistency with provincial policy and the Region is required under the *Planning Act* to bring the ROP into conformity with provincial policy as part of the current five year review of the Plan.

April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

ii) Agriculture

With respect to the request that ROPA 21B be strengthened to address flexibility, biomass energy production, and the international food production shortage, Regional staff recognizes the need to encourage flexibility and diversification in the agricultural sector and has provided appropriate policy direction at the Regional level. ROPA 21B is proposing policies that would encourage a greater diversity of permitted agriculture, agriculture-related and secondary uses, innovation and new practices in the agricultural industry to address emerging opportunities.

The Regional policies in Section 3.2.2.14, for example, encourage greater diversity of permitted uses, such as secondary uses, agriculture-related uses and value added uses within prime agricultural areas. These policies compliment policies in the Town of Caledon Official Plan that have been developed through Official Plan Amendment 179 (OPA 179) to provide flexibility while maintaining consistency with Provincial policy direction. These policies also ensure that the Prime Agriculture Area is protected for long-term use for agriculture.

Regional staff is also committed to support the agricultural community and the PFA through Regional initiatives, including the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG), the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP), and work undertaken through the GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) including topics related to marketing of local food, food security and economic viability of the farming sector.

5. Joint Study of Property Assessment Implications of Natural Heritage Policy

Through Council Resolution 2009-1329, Regional staff is directed to coordinate a joint study to determine impacts to property assessment arising from the identification of natural heritage areas in the ROP. Regional staff from Finance and Planning Policy and Research is moving ahead with the study further to Council's direction and will be bringing information forward to Council in the future when study results are available.

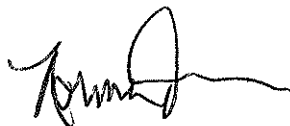
April 14, 2010

PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW (PROPR) - ADOPTION OF REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 21B - NATURAL HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE POLICIES

CONCLUSION

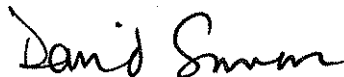
The Region of Peel must bring the ROP into conformity with Provincial policies, plans and legislation. The adoption of this amendment fulfils the statutory requirement with respect to the ROP's natural heritage and agriculture policies.

Regional staff has completed background research and policy development for ROPA 21B through extensive public consultation, six major stakeholder consultations, four open houses and a public meeting. The amendment has incorporated mapping and policy revisions, as appropriate, based on comments received. Given the above, staff recommends that Regional Official Plan Amendment 21B be adopted by Regional Council.




Norma Trim
Chief Financial Officer
and Commissioner of Corporate Services

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact Arvin Prasad, Director of Planning Policy and Research at extension 4251 or via email at arvin.prasad@peelregion.ca

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