



MAYOR'S OFFICE
ERO # 019-6113

February 1, 2023

Minister Steve Clark
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Office of the Minister
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2J3

**Re: Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO Posting 019-6113)
County of Simcoe OPA 7**

Dear Minister Clark,

Thank you for your letter of December 12, 2022 seeking feedback from the Town of Innisfil on Simcoe County's Official Plan Amendment (OPA) No. 7 currently posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO Posting 019-6113).

This letter and the appended staff report provide a brief summary of the Town of Innisfil's views regarding OPA 7. This report was considered by Town Council and approved on January 11, 2023. The attached staff report identifies specific policies that the Town is requesting remain in OPA 7 (see page 3), and also potential additions or clarifications that the Town is requesting be incorporated into OPA 7 (see page 4). Additionally, Council is requesting the acceleration of the Cookstown / Honda bypass by the Province in order to accommodate growth in both the Town of New Tecumseth and the Town of Innisfil (Cookstown) (see attached Motion).

The Town of Innisfil is a growth-friendly community that is ready and willing to grow and to assist in achieving Ontario's housing goals. In fact, the Town achieved a population growth rate of 18.5% between 2016 and 2021, placing it among the Top 50 fastest growing communities in Canada. The Town is facing significant growth pressure and is at a crossroads in terms of evolving from a modest sized town into a significant transit-oriented sustainable community. We are excited about our transit-oriented, mixed-use community known as The Orbit, centered around the planned new GO station in Innisfil. The Orbit's compact urban form will help the Town avoid the costs and inefficiencies associated with low density development and will have the added benefit of protecting Innisfil's agricultural and natural heritage lands, while making thousands of new homes available in our community.

The Town has demonstrated its ongoing commitment and willingness to grow through our support for the Orbit and its designation as a protected Major Transit Station Area with higher-density development in OPA 7. Innisfil would like to see this designation maintained in the final approved OPA. The Town has also established a local growth-management policy framework and Council-approved criteria to identify locations for expansion to our settlement areas.

Additionally, the Town is equally interested in promoting job creation and economic growth seeking to ensure the continued designation of the Innisfil Heights Economic Employment District, while also requesting that the province recognize the Town Civic Campus and Royal Victoria Health Centre (RVH) South Campus as an Economic Employment District. We have included with this letter a map of the lands that we recommend be recognized as a new hub for job creation and future employment.

Through OPA 7, the Town was provided with the largest population forecast of 39,740 (Table B) and the largest Employment Forecast of 20,290 (Table C) of all 16 lower-tier municipalities in Simcoe County. It would be very helpful to us if the province could provide clarity regarding these population and employment forecasts, and specifically if these are intended to be a “cap” on population and employment, or whether we can plan for growth beyond those numbers. This has been a point of confusion in the past, and if we were provided with more flexibility, that would assist the Town in working with our development-sector partners as we continue to grow as a community and to achieve the Province’s housing goals.

We’d like to take this opportunity to note that the Town of Innisfil is a flood-prone area and wishes to maintain the high quality of the water in Lake Simcoe. We would like to ensure that there is both a policy framework and funding support for infrastructure that would allow us to address both flood management and water-quality. Such support from the province would assist the Town in accommodating growth quickly and efficiently.

The Town operates in a fiscally prudent manner. Having sufficient servicing capacity along with the financial capacity to pay for growth related infrastructure is a key constraint to development. Provincial funding support for the expansion of growth-related infrastructure would certainly help to accelerate future growth. The Town has several settlement areas that are suitable for additional growth and development, but are currently constrained by a lack of servicing capacity. Resolving these constraints quickly, through additional Provincial funding support and streamlined consultation and approvals, could unlock these areas for future development and help to accelerate future growth and maintain affordability for taxpayers. The Town has been an active and positive participant in discussions about regional infrastructure servicing. Unlike most other municipalities, the Town already has an independent water and wastewater utility company (InnServices) that is ready and willing to work with other municipalities to meet regional infrastructure challenges.

The Town continues to engage with the Williams Treaty First Nations (WTFN) and other indigenous communities on all our master plans and development applications. Our goal is to work with indigenous communities in the spirit of respect and mutual collaboration. We appreciate that the Province signed an agreement in 2022 with the Town and WTFN that created a framework for dialogue around planning matters in Innisfil, and we are hopeful that this process will continue to be a useful venue for concerns to be addressed in a constructive manner.

The Town looks forward to continued collaboration with the Province to plan for and achieve our collective current and future housing and employment needs; and would be pleased to meet with the Ministry to further articulate the Town’s interests and how we can partner in achieving the Province’s mandate for more housing. Specifically, if additions to designated settlement

areas are being contemplated as you consider OPA 7, we would like to work with you to prioritize and confirm such additions, as we would like to be in a position to share with you our local, on-the-ground knowledge around how we can best grow in a sustainable way.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Dollin", written in a cursive style.

Lynn Dollin
Mayor
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cc. Oliver Jerschow, CAO
Laurie Miller, Regional Director, Municipal Services Office, Central Region