

April 10, 2023

Niagara Escarpment Commission
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Public Works

10 Peel Centre Dr.
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Sent via email: Sandy.Dobbyn@ontario.ca

Dear Mr. Dobbyn:

Re: ERO 019-6425 Approval of an Amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above noted Environmental Registry of Ontario posting regarding the proposed Amendments to agricultural policies in the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP).

Please note that the following comments are provided by Region of Peel staff and may be considered by Regional Council for endorsement. If additional or differing comments are provided through a Council resolution, they will be forwarded to the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) for consideration.

General Comments

The NEC's proposed review of the NEP to expand permission for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses in the Escarpment Protection Area designation is supported as it addresses comments previously provided to the Province during the Coordinated Plans Review of the NEP, Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) that land use designation policies for permitted uses should be consistent across provincial plans to provide better flexibility for permitted uses aligned to the policy framework of the Provincial Policy Statement.

Staff would welcome the opportunity to discuss similar Amendments to the ORMCP with the appropriate provincial staff to achieve full harmonization across the Greenbelt Plans.

Detailed Comments

In general, Regional staff support the direction proposed to better harmonize the NEP's agricultural policies with similar policies in the Provincial Policy Statement, Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan.

However, Regional staff recommend that the NEC consider including additional clarification in the following proposed Amendments:

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1. Proposed Amendment Part 1 Land Use Policies, Subsection 1.3.3.15 - Permissions related to new maple sugar harvesting

The proposed Amendment will provide permissions related to maple sugar harvesting in significant woodlands but not permit the development of buildings or facilities related to maple syrup production. Regional staff recommend that the permission for maple sugar harvesting include the permission to locate or construct small scale ancillary structures to house equipment that may be required components of the maple sugar harvesting collection system (e.g., pump house).

2. Proposed Amendment Part 2.7 Development Affecting Natural Heritage, Subsection 2.7.2 f) – Permissions related to the Expansion of Existing Agricultural Uses, Agricultural-Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses

Regional staff are supportive of the NEC's proposal to clarify and provide flexibility to permit the limited expansion of existing agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses into natural heritage features. However, staff recommend that the NEC consider using the Growth Plan (Policy 4.2.3.1 f)) and Greenbelt Plan's (Policy 4.5.5) policy language to permit the limited expansion of these uses into Key Natural Heritage Features in the proposed Amendment.

The proposed wording in the draft Amendment is unclear and open to interpretation with the potential that the policy would allow broader encroachment of uses that would negatively impact features. The policy should be clearer and more limited in scope to enable both agriculture and natural heritage objectives of the NEP to be supported. Regional staff suggest the wording in the above referenced Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan sections should be used to achieve better harmonization and clarity in the policy.

As part of the proposed policy Amendment, corresponding existing policies in NEP, such as Policy 2.7.8 a), will also need to be updated to reflect the additional permissions proposed to be provided in 2.7.2 f).

Conclusion

We trust that the Region's comments will be helpful as the NEC considers the proposed amendments to the agricultural policies in the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

I would be pleased to provide any clarifications or further comments on these matters.

Sincerely,



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