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On November 19, 2025, the Council of the Corporation of the County of Huron passed the following motion:

**The Council of the County of Huron provide this report as written comments to ERO postings 025-1097 (Proposed Changes to the Planning Act, Schedule 10 of Bill 60), 025-1099 (Consultation on Simplifying and Standardizing Official Plans) and 025-1100 (Consultation on Minimum Lot Sizes).**

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Denise Van Amersfoort, Manager of Planning

Date: November 19, 2025

Subject: Bill 60, *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025*

### **Background:**

The Province has introduced Bill 60, Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025 with the intent to protect Ontario's economy from red tape, streamline the building of new homes and infrastructure and relieving issues at the Landlord and Tenant Board. The proposed legislation received first reading on October 23, 2025 and is comprised of more than forty (40) initiatives including changes to the Building Code Act, Development Charges Act, Planning Act, Highway Traffic Act and Residential Tenancies Act.

The commenting period for the proposed changes to the Planning Act is open until November 22, 2025 on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO 025-1097).

### **Comments:**

This report focuses on the proposed changes to the Planning Act under Schedule 10 and provides an overview of the changes most relevant in Huron County.

### **Community Improvement Plans (CIPs)**

This bill enhances the flexible use of Community Improvement Plans as a tool in community development. The change allows all upper tier municipalities to adopt CIPs and allow all municipalities to fund their respective plans.

To date, the County of Huron has not been able to adopt a Community Improvement Plan; this change provides the option to implement programs through this Planning Act tool should County Council wish.

### **Streamline Municipal Application Processes**

The Province has proposed to investigate opportunities to streamline how planning and building permit applications are processed and tracked in the Province. This may be in response to requirements to report housing starts to the Province for those municipalities with Provincial targets; Huron does not have any set provincial housing targets.

Further, Huron has already implemented a digital planning application software, known as CloudPermit, for all County and local applications which has been well received by the development community.

### **Streamline Ministerial Decisions**

It is proposed that the requirement for Minister's decisions to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement be removed. This would also involve Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) no longer being regulations under the Planning Act and following a more flexible approvals process for provincial priorities such as long-term care, transit-oriented communities and housing.

No Minister's Zoning Orders have been implemented in Huron to date.

### **Variations to Minor Variances**

In June of 2025, Bill 5 (The Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act), introduced regulation making authority for variances to Zoning By-law setbacks to be permitted 'as of right' if a development proposal is within a certain percentage of the required setback. This would apply to urban residential lands on full municipal services and exclude areas such as hazard lands, lands near shorelines and railways. In Bill 60, the Province is expanding to additional prescribed performance standards, such as height and lot coverage, to be altered in the same manner (eg. reduced minimum or increase maximum by 10%).

This would mean that there would be fewer applications submitted and fewer hearings for minor variances before a municipal committee of adjustment for these proposals. It also means there would be no notification to neighbours or public process when an alteration to zoning standards is made.

This will lead to increased responsibility for local building department staff to review for zoning compliance and advise applicants on related implications for drainage, parking depth, snow storage, etc.

Implementing regulations are required to enact this change; Planning staff will continue to monitor and bring forward additional information when available.

### **Septic Systems for On-Farm Worker Housing**

Bill 60 proposes to allow more septic systems for on-farm housing to be regulated under the Building Code. Currently, the Ontario Water Resources Act, permits septic systems under 10,000 liters per day to be regulated under the Ontario Building Code while larger systems require an Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA) from the Province. To support the construction of on-farm worker housing, systems up to 50,000l/day on an agricultural lot are proposed to be regulated under the Ontario Building Code.

In Huron, the local municipalities are responsible for issuing sewage system permits under Section 8 of the Ontario Building Code. This change would increase the area of responsibility for local municipal staff to include larger systems, noting that no individual system would be larger than 10,000l/day but the combination of systems would be permitted up to 50,000l/day.

### **Standardize and Streamline Official Plans (ERO 025-1099)**

The Province is consulting on a proposal to set clear parameters for municipal official plans (OP) with the aim of increasing consistency across municipalities. Proposed changes range from standardizing contents to limiting the length of OPs. The government is calling for best practices and examples of how Official Plans can be more flexible, streamlined and growth oriented.

The following sections outline how Official Plans in Huron are structured to deliver effective and efficient planning and to respond to the questions posed by the Province.

Huron County currently has ten (10) Official Plans which govern development: one (1) upper tier OP and nine (9) lower tier or local OPs.

The County OP is a higher order policy document which is limited in length (45 pages) and detail but provides critical, overarching policy direction to ensure consistent interpretation and application of Provincial direction within Huron County. Huron was the first County in Ontario to have an Official Plan (approved in 1973); the County OP has never been subject to a private initiated Official Plan Amendment and Huron's OP has never contained land use designations over its' 50-year implementation. The

Huron County OP is a model of an upper tier Plan which could be replicated for other upper tiers, particularly those outside of the fastest growing regions of the Province.

Each local municipality has its' own Official Plan which include more detailed policy frameworks addressing the local contexts and including land use designations. While many of the local Official Plans contain similar policy directives (for agriculture for example), specific and detailed policies are required to address unique circumstances such as settlement areas within floodways, shoreline hazards, and economic drivers such as the Goderich Harbour. The local Official Plans, while more detailed and highly effective, are still incredibly concise; for example, the Town of Goderich Official Plan is 48 pages in length and the Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh's is 66 pages in length.

The current model in Huron is streamlined in that the County is the approval authority for the nine (9) local Official Plans, undisputed Official Plan Amendments are delegated to staff for approval and the majority of local Official Plan Amendments reach a decision within 3-4 months from complete application.

The County efficiently updates the County Official Plan to maintain consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement; for example, an amendment to implement the 2024 PPS was initiated within 2 months of release and is in full force and effect after a thorough consultation process including Provincial staff, Indigenous Nations, farm organizations and community groups.

All Huron County Official Plans are designed to be clear, concise and comprehensive with a keen attention to maintaining flexibility for interpretation where appropriate. Development standards are reserved for the implementing Zoning By-laws wherever possible and where numbers are provided in an OP, they provide guidance and are not to be interpreted as hard limits. The County questions the rationale of equating the length of an Official Plan with population size. While Huron's population is modest in comparison to other geographies across Ontario, the challenges presented by the landscape requires sufficient policy direction (eg. 100km of shoreline).

The Province proposes to standardize all Official Plan land use designations in Ontario. Official Plans within Huron maintain a standardized list of designations at present so the proposed concept is generally supported but there is a need to apply a rural lens onto the standardized list proposed by the Province. For example, additional residential designations may not be required in a small town setting while a specialized commercial designation may respond more appropriately to traditional main streets.

In terms of the process and time required to bring documents into conformity, it would appear to be sensible to proceed with the upper tier OP first, followed by local OPs at the time of their next 5 or 10 year review. Huron's shared service planning

model allows for the capacity, technical expertise, and local understanding to facilitate all Official Plan reviews and updates to be completed by in-house staff.

In summary, in response to the Province's questions, the Official Plans in Huron County are designed to provide flexible and streamlined land use planning direction which effectively implements the Provincial direction in our rural and small urban areas and responds efficiently to development.

### **Minimum Lot Sizes for Urban Residential Land (ERO 025-1100)**

Within local Zoning Bylaws, municipalities set minimum lot sizes for residential development (ie. the smallest permissible size for a property). There is a wide range across the Province of minimum lot standards which impacts housing options, affordability and the process of subdividing into lots smaller than the set standard. The Province is seeking feedback on a series of questions relating to minimum lot sizes for residential development in fully serviced (municipal water and sewer) settings.

Huron County has implemented a housing-friendly lens to local Official Plans and Zoning Bylaws which directly addressed similar subject matter. In Huron's approach, zoning performance standards were altered to create maximum flexibility and yield not only increased number of housing units but a wider variety of housing types. Specific changes included:

- Permitting up to 4 units as of right in low density zones;
- Permitting 2 storey development (no unit maximum) as of right in medium density zones;
- Permitting 3-5 storey development (no unit maximum) as of right in high density zones;
- Reducing all setback requirements to permit maximum flexibility (ie. interior side yards of 1.5 metres to maintain compliance with Ontario Building Code limiting distance and to permit lot grading and drainage plans to function);
- Reduced parking requirements to 1 space per unit, permitting a market-based approach to parking provision while recognizing the challenges of rural transit models; and
- Maintain lot coverage and open space requirements that respond to the level of stormwater infrastructure in established neighbourhoods and sufficient greenspace to mitigate impacts of a changing climate.

Rather than permit small lots as of right, Huron's approach has been to permit more dense forms of housing on low density lots because the size of the lots allows for

flexibility in accommodating different types of housing units, now and into the future. In newly developing areas and appropriate infill locations, Huron has approved reduced lot frontages where a neighbourhood is designed to deliver more compact forms and has the related infrastructure to support (eg. stormwater management facilities). This approach has been in effect for several years and is yielding new housing starts.

Municipalities should be required to permit increased density as of right in fully serviced urban settings but minimum lot size remains an important tool in ensuring the lot fabric of communities can adapt to future changes in desired building forms. Providing guidance on recommended zoning standards would be helpful in achieving consistency but municipalities should maintain the ability to respond to localized conditions (ie. neighbourhoods within an existing floodplain).

An experience in Huron involving small lot sizes comes from the rebuilding process following the 2011 Goderich tornado. In the downtown, historical development had led to very small lot sizes. When the existing buildings were destroyed, the lot fabric was too tight to allow for baseplates of new development which met the requirements of the Ontario Building Code. Multiple landowners had to work together through a condominium agreement with shared infrastructure (eg. stairwells, elevator, etc) to facilitate a viable development. It is conceivable that the same situation could arise if lot sizes down to 6 metres in frontage were permitted.

### **Consultation on Enhanced Development Standards (ERO 025-1101)**

The Province is consulting on future changes regarding municipal development standards at the lot level (outside of buildings). There is no definition of enhanced development standards in the Planning Act but these could include 'green development standards' such as bioswales, permeable pavement, other vegetative elements, native tree planting, soil volume, bicycle parking, etc.

In Huron County, lot level development standards have typically been implemented through Site Plan Control for larger developments, and on an individual lot scale, the Zoning Bylaw and local building bylaws. For example, on an individual lot, the Zoning Bylaw establishes the minimum percentage of open space required and a lot grading and drainage plan is typically required to demonstrate how the lot design accommodates stormwater.

While no municipalities in Huron require green development standards, related practices provide benefits for human health and adaptation to a changing climate (eg. planting trees, stormwater management features, low impact development, etc).

### **Communal Water and Wastewater Systems**

Ontario is consulting on how to further expand the use of communal water and wastewater systems to spur new development in rural communities that are not serviced by municipal water and sewer. Potential changes may support a more streamlined process for municipal consent and provincial approvals for communal systems to enable greater water and wastewater servicing capacity and housing supply in underserviced rural communities through public ownership and, where appropriate, complementary ownership models.

In Huron, there are limited examples of communal water and wastewater systems; for example, in ACW, the Parkbridge development (referred to as the Bluffs) has privately owned water and wastewater systems. Communal systems supporting permanent, year-round development require Municipal Shared Responsibility Agreements.

In Huron, there are 15 fully serviced settlement areas, an additional 9 settlement areas with municipal water, and a large section of the shoreline being serviced by municipal water. Communal systems can be considered by local municipalities at the time of development.

**Others Consulted:**

Planners, Director of Planning & Development

This report has been circulated to the local municipalities for information.

**Information Technology Impacts:**

No information technology impacts.

**Financial Impacts:**

No financial impacts at this time.

**Privacy Impacts:**

No privacy impacts.

**Climate Impacts:**

Promoting efficient use of urban lands and denser forms of housing is positive for climate adaption as it promotes walkability and protects agricultural land and natural areas.

**Council Priorities:**

Economic readiness, housing and agriculture.

**Council Values:**

Rural lens, civic leadership