

April 24, 2026

Province of Ontario – Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

**Re: Proposed Planning Act, City of Toronto Act, 2006, Building Code Act, 1992 and Municipal Act, 2001 Changes (Schedules 1, 2 and 7 of Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026)  
ERO 026-0300**

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) posting 026-0300 regarding proposed legislative changes to the Planning Act, City of Toronto Act, 2006, Building Code Act, 1992 and Municipal Act, 2001 through Bill 98, the proposed *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026*. The intent of the proposed legislative changes is to further support housing, economic, and infrastructure development, and advance key transportation and transit priorities. The proposed changes under Schedules 1, 2 and 7 of Bill 98 include streamlining and standardizing official plans (OPs) as well as complementary changes to support the implementation of streamlining and standardizing official plans, prohibiting mandatory municipal enhanced development standards and green building standards through site plan, implementing a minimum lot size on parcels of urban residential land outside the Greenbelt area, removing certain legislative requirements related to Minister’s Zoning Orders, removal of upper-tier planning responsibilities in Simcoe County, and making revisions related to encumbered parkland and privately owned public spaces (POPS).

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is supportive and understands the critical need for additional residential housing forms and is supportive of the intent to streamline land use planning processes and create more certainty in the development approvals process. As a legislated commenting agency as well as an active participant in the development process, the SCDSB has a unique perspective on the proposed changes. The intent of this letter is to outline and provide feedback on amendments of interest to the SCDSB. Comments are provided in the following table:

Proposed Legislative Amendments	SCDSB Comment
<p><u>Streamlining and Standardizing Official Plans</u> Details of a standardized structure for local OPs (lower- and single-tier municipality and planning board) through a prescribed table of contents and schedules; and details of a standardized set of land use designations to be used in local OPs.</p>	<p>SCDSB planning staff are pleased to see that the proposed table of contents includes a section titled “Infrastructure, Facilities and Community Services” (Chapter 8) with a section dedicated to “Public Service Facilities” (Section 8.3), as the board has been requesting that local municipalities identify schools and ancillary uses including child care as ‘public service facilities’ within local official plans to align with policies and definitions in the <i>Provincial Planning Statement, 2024</i>. The proposed</p>

	<p>amendments include restricting official plans to using 12 land use designations (proposed Schedule 1), of which zero contain ‘public service facilities’ as a permitted use. Two of the proposed designations permit “institutional uses”; in the board’s experience, using “institutional uses” within the land use designations creates confusion in how schools and ancillary uses including child care are permitted in the official plan. For clarity, SCDSB planning staff recommend that the “Public Service Facility” section be required to include a policy that states, “Schools and ancillary uses, including child care, shall be permitted within all designations where the sensitivity of the land use allows.”</p> <p>Schools in Simcoe County come in many forms, including rural community schools, schools developed through partnerships with municipalities and other entities, and schools co-located with other community facilities and amenities. By permitting schools and ancillary uses such as child care in all land use designations, under the “Public Service Facilities” section, existing and future school sites will be available in the appropriate form to serve students in local communities.</p>
<p><u>Site Plan: Prohibit Mandatory Municipal Enhanced Development Standards and Green Building Standards</u></p>	<p>The SCDSB is generally supportive of the proposed changes to prohibit mandatory municipal enhanced development standards and green building standards. The board has provided numerous letters and examples through previous Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) postings and other legislative consultation of situations where municipalities have required onerous enhanced development standards that do not align with the board’s best building practices for schools or the Ministry of Education requirements for capital funding and development. The SCDSB will provide a fulsome summary and any additional comments regarding the site plan control process through ERO 026-0310 (consultation on reforming site plan control), ERO 026-0309 (consultation on prohibition of mandatory enhanced development standards as part of land division processes), and ERO 026-0426 (streamline planning approvals for K-12 public schools).</p>
<p><u>Minimum Lot Sizes</u> Create regulation-making authority to allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to set a minimum lot size on parcels of urban residential land outside of the Greenbelt area (a minimum lot size of 175 square metres</p>	<p>The SCDSB has no objection with the intent to create regulation-making authority to allow for a minimum lot size on parcels of urban residential land outside of the Greenbelt area. Reducing minimum lot sizes will reduce the amount of available parking both on the residential property and on street in residential neighbourhoods. In areas with school</p>


<p>is being proposed through ERO 026-0311).</p>	<p>sites, this will add complexity to school site design and vehicular access by reducing the opportunity for dispersed pick up and drop off points. Many communities in Simcoe County continue to be car-dominated and reducing the number of personal vehicles in a household is difficult because of a lack of viable alternatives such as transit and active transportation. If parking space is not available on residential lots, the use of school sites as informal residential parking lots may increase. This hinders the use and maintenance of school sites. Where sufficient transit and active transportation cannot be provided in the short term, the province should support municipalities in providing communal municipal parking lots/structures in residential areas where this makes sense, with the ability to redevelop parking into higher-productivity land uses as transit and active transportation options become available. The board will provide fulsome comments on this topic through ERO 026-0311 (proposed regulatory approach to establish a minimum residential lot size in urban areas).</p>
<p><u>Upper-Tier Planning Responsibilities in Simcoe County</u></p>	<p>The SCDSB provides comments in relation to school accommodation for planning approvals at both the local and upper-tier municipality level, such as for plans of subdivision, zoning by-law amendments and official plan amendments. Planning staff want to ensure that as planning responsibility is transitioned away from Simcoe County that the board will still be circulated notification of planning applications and comments will be considered to ensure adequate student accommodation is available in local communities.</p>
<p><u>Encumbered Parkland and Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)</u></p>	<p>The SCDSB has no objection to the proposed changes related to encumbered parkland and POPS. In general, the SCDSB respectfully requests that school boards be exempt from municipal parkland dedication requirements (for new builds and additions), as current requirements are inconsistent across municipalities.</p> <p>Specific to the proposed changes through Bill 98, planning staff note that municipal parkland and its identification and location is important to the board. The SCDSB advocates for policy at the local level that encourages the co-location of schools with municipal parkland, as is consistent with policy 3.1.4 of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, in order to capitalize on land use. The focus on co-location is to ensure that there are age-appropriate play facilities for children. This is particularly important in</p>

	<p>urban areas where land is at a premium. Encumbered parkland and POPS may not be able to provide the same synergies, compatibility, and efficiencies as it relates to adjacent or nearby school sites. The board recommends that the land suitability criteria outlined in ERO 026-0312 be modified to reference that where a Parks and Recreation Master Plan (or similar document) outlines what type of park and park facilities is/are required to serve a certain area, the land must be suitable for that type of park and park facilities. The board will provide fulsome comments on this topic through ERO 026-0312 (standardizing parkland requirements).</p>
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With the Province's stated goal to construct 1.5 million new homes by 2031 comes the need to ensure public service facilities, such as schools, are sufficient to meet the needs of the residents of these new homes. The Simcoe County District School Board is supportive of the government's proposals to expedite the approvals process for facilities like schools, which will support the board in its efforts to accommodate growth and ensure that every student has access to quality education.

Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,



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Cc:

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