May 12, 2026

To Whom it May Concern,

Re: Bill 98

The Council of the Municipality of Meaford, at its regular meeting on May 11, 2026, passed the following resolution:

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Keaveney
Seconded by: Councillor Uhrig

That Council of the Municipality of Meaford:

1. **Endorse the general positions outlined in the County of Grey staff report respecting Bill 98 and associated Environmental and Regulatory Registry consultations;**
2. **Authorize staff to submit comments to the Province of Ontario expressing Meaford specific considerations related to municipal autonomy, parkland dedication (including Privately Owned Public Spaces), water and wastewater servicing, Development Charges, and long term financial sustainability; and**
3. **Direct staff to continue monitoring provincial regulations arising from Bill 98 and report back to Council as required.**

Carried - Resolution #2026-19-05

The above noted report from the County of Grey has been enclosed for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Allison Penner
Deputy Clerk / Manager, Legislative Services
Municipality of Meaford
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Committee Report

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-18-26
Title:	County Comments on Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act
Prepared by:	Grey County Staff
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer and Niall Lobley
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All member municipalities in Grey
Status:	

Recommendation

1. **That report PDR-CW-18-26 be received, regarding Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026, and the related Environmental Registry and Regulatory Registry postings; and**
2. **That report PDR-CW-18-26 be forwarded on to the province as the County of Grey's comments on the proposed legislative and policy updates as posted on the Environmental Registry through postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009; and**
3. **That this report be shared with; Members of Provincial Parliament Vickers and Saunderson, the County's Planning and Economic Development Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee, and member municipalities in Grey County; and**
4. **That the County of Grey support the correspondence received from the Municipal Engineers Association regarding its comments on the Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003 and that County staff submit such support and comments to the Province; and**
5. **That staff be authorized to proceed prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6(b) of Procedural By-law 5134-22.**

Executive Summary

On March 30, 2026, the province introduced Bill 98, the *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act.* At the same time, the province provided decisions on past Environmental Registry postings and introduced several new Environmental Regulatory Registry postings. Bill 98 proposes updates to the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act,*

the *Municipal Act,* the *Building Code Act,* the *Metrolinx Act,* the *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act,* the *Safe Water Drinking Act*, and the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act,* in addition to other pieces of provincial legislation.

This report provides County Council with a summary of the newly proposed changes, as well as some questions and concerns flagged by staff. Based on the timelines associated with Bill 98 and related postings, it was not feasible to first bring reports to the County's Planning and Economic Development Committee, as well as the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Staff have consolidated comments on the legislative and regulatory changes in this report and recommend that it be shared with the province as the County's comments on Environmental Registry postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009.

Background and Discussion

On March 30, 2026, the province introduced Bill 98, the *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act.* Bill 98 proposes updates to the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act,* the *Municipal Act,* the *Building Code Act,* the *Metrolinx Act,* the *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act,* the *Safe Water Drinking Act*, and the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act,* as well as other pieces of provincial legislation. That same day, the province also provided decisions on past Environmental Registry postings and introduced several new Environmental and Regulatory Registry postings. Staff note that some of the decisions and new postings pick up topics introduced in past legislative cycles, including but not limited to Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022, Bill 17, the *Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act,* 2025, and Bill 60, the *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act*, 2025.

Through this report, County staff offer a summary of the proposed legislative and regulatory changes along with some commentary on how the proposed changes could impact the County in a positive, negative, or unknown manner.

Links to the proposed legislative and policy changes, through Environmental Registry postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009 are also included in the Attachments and Appendices section of this report.

County staff also met with local municipal planners on April 10, 2026, to get municipal feedback on the proposed changes. There was alignment between County and municipal planners on many of the topics covered in this report, but in some instances, there were some divergent or nuanced differences of opinion.

Staff recommend that this report be shared with the province as the County's comments on the above-mentioned Environmental and Regulatory Registry postings.

Summary of Comments on Bill 98 and Associated Consultations

A detailed summary of, and staff commentary on, the proposed legislative and regulatory changes has been provided in the sections that follow.

1. Proposed Planning Act, Municipal Act, and Building Code Changes Act, Posting #026-300

Streamlining and Standardizing Official Plans – The province has introduced a draft table of contents and standard structure for lower-tier and single tier official plans. In addition, the province has shared a standardized set of official plan designations. The province has noted that the proposed changes would come *"into force January 1, 2028, for the 29 large and fast-growing municipalities, and January 1, 2029, for all other municipalities. The government intends to bring these changes into force once additional consultation on secondary plans and upper-tier official plan content is complete, and any final refinements are made to the framework."*

Staff Comment – it's difficult to comment on this approach for the two reasons as follows:

1) There is a related posting on upper-tier official plans and secondary plans. In a Grey County context, to understand what's needed in a lower-tier, one also has to understand what the province wishes to see in an upper-tier plan. See additional comments in section 12 of this report.
2) It remains to be seen what level of autonomy municipalities will have to 'fill in the details' on the various sections of an official plan, and the specific land use designation policies.

Staff support some degree of standardization of official plans, but note that there needs to be:

a) some flexibility on the timing when official plans get updated, particularly for recently updated or newly passed official plans, and
b) some degree of community specific differentiation and autonomy, particularly in settlement areas (i.e., a neighbourhood in Hanover or Meaford may be very different to a neighbourhood in Mississauga or Ottawa). In a province as diverse as Ontario, a 'one size fits all' approach will simply not work, without allowing some level of community specific policies.

As staff have noted in previous reports, staff welcome additional 'standardized' provincial direction on topics which impact the province, where currently there may be policy gaps at the municipal level. A key example of such desirable provincial direction would be energy policies, following the repeal of the former *Green Energy Act.*

Staff would also recommend that the standardized contents, including the designations and list of schedules be considered an 'upset limit' on the contents of a plan but note that municipalities may choose to include less than the upset limit. For example, in smaller municipalities they may not have a need for all the schedules listed in the posting and may instead choose just a subset of those listed schedules. The draft legislative changes appear to support this approach, wherein a municipality could deem a chapter or schedule to be 'not applicable' and indicate that in their plan.

Other topics in the draft table of contents may be divided between upper and lower-tier official plans (where applicable) as per the comments in section 12 of this report.

In the list of detailed designations, it appears a 'hazard lands' designation has been omitted, unless this is meant to be addressed by the 'Natural Environment and Water Resources Area' designation. Hazard lands designations are standard and a necessary tool for municipalities,

which are often separate from natural environment designations or overlays. As a result, a hazard lands designation should be added to this list. In the Employment Areas designation, it may also be worth distinguishing between an urban employment area (on municipal services) and a rural employment area (on private individual services).

As it pertains to the implementation, it's not clear whether the January 1, 2028, and 2029 timelines apply in the following manners:

a) Any new plan or updated plan passed after those timelines needs to follow the province's new structure, but are not required to be updated until their next regular review/update period, or
b) Plans need to be updated in advance of those timelines to meet the new structure.

Staff have assumed that option (a) is intended, but it would be useful for the province to clarify as soon as possible. In Grey County, several of Grey's member municipalities have recently updated their official plans or are in the process of a new official plan or plan update. Grey County is set to begin its official plan review in 2027 but based on when details are known on this new approach, the County may need to delay this start date. Where a plan has recently been updated, it otherwise wouldn't be due for an update for five years. Where there's a newly passed official plan, an update would not be needed for ten years. Having to update an official plan outside of a normal review period would be a significant staffing and financial burden to municipalities.

County staff recommend the province consider providing implementation funding for municipalities to implement this new provincial direction and updating their plans. It is anticipated that bringing the County official plan and each member municipal official plan into conformity with an updated standardized structure will require considerable staff resourcing at both upper and lower-tier levels, particularly if this is required to occur outside of the existing routine review/update cycle.

Staff further recommend that the province consider adding a 'no appeal clause' to these official plan updates where a municipality is simply amending their plan to come into conformity with the new standardized structure.

Complementary Changes to Support Implementation of Streamlining and Standardizing Official Plans – The province plans to:

1) remove the requirement for municipalities to include climate change policies in their official plans, and
2) allow the Minister the ability to exempt lower-tier official plans from the need to conform to upper-tier official plans to facilitate implementation of testing for the proposed official plan framework.

Staff Comment – Staff generally do not support the removal of the need for official plans to have climate change policies. Grey County has recognized the need for municipal climate action through our Going Green in Grey Climate Action Plan and see land use planning as a key tool to realizing a climate-safe future. That said, although the requirement under section 16(14) of the Act is proposed to be removed, the province does not appear to be removing the climate policies of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) or section 2(s) of the Act which provides for *"the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to a changing climate"* as a matter

of provincial interest. As such, even if section 16(14) of the Act is removed, official plans will still be required to implement matters of provincial interest and be consistent with the PPS, and thus still need climate change policies in their local documents.

With respect to removing the need for conformity of a lower-tier plan to an upper-tier to implement the new approach, staff see some merit in this approach provided it's done on a limited basis. This exemption should only apply to those instances where it's necessary based on timing for implementation of the new framework (e.g., municipality 'x' needs to update their plan in 2030, but upper-tier 'y' is not due for an upper-tier official plan update to 2033). The stated exemption should not provide for broader general exemptions to upper-tier plans.

Site Plan: Prohibit Mandatory Municipal Enhanced Development Standards and Green Building Standards – The province is proposing to remove municipal authority on enhanced development standards, remove references to "sustainable design" from site plan control, clarify that zoning cannot be used to require sustainable elements, and prohibit green building or construction standards.

Staff Comment – These changes carry forward the provincial direction that municipalities cannot implement mandatory green development standards. Grey County has already pivoted its green development program to become a completely voluntary recognition program.

With respect to the changes to both zoning and site plan, staff would note that it is not clear on what the province considers these sustainability tools to be. For example, many approvals (e.g., site plans or plans of subdivision) would come with a condition for a tree-retention or planting plan. Within these plans, a common requirement would be planting native species or preventing the removal of some trees. These are useful tools to have available for the long-term sustainability and environmental health of our communities. Staff would not want to lose the ability to use such tools. Furthermore, some of these tools commonly implement a proponent's own Environmental Impact Study (EIS). If these tools are stripped from municipalities, then it's questionable as to how the recommendations of an EIS could be implemented, unless done in a purely voluntary manner.

As staff have learned through the work on Grey's green development program, it is far more affordable to 'build right' the first time, than it is to have to retrofit after the fact. This applies not only to new building construction, but also to site design and infrastructure construction. The ability to require a percentage of parking spaces to have electric vehicle charging facilities, or even conduit to support future charging, is yet another example of an instance where it may be more affordable at the time of initial construction versus a retrofit after the fact. While staff have accepted the fact that municipalities cannot have mandatory 'green development standards', staff have concerns with the provincial direction here if it further erodes municipal abilities to require tree preservation or plantings.

More comments have been provided in sections 6 and 7 below on postings #026-0309 and #026-0310 respectively.

Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) – The changes would remove the legislative requirement for the Minister to provide notice on proposed amendments to or revocations of MZOs.

Staff Comment – these changes follow other updates to the MZO process through Bill 60. Staff recommend that any changes or revocation to an existing MZO only comes after consultation with, and consent from, the host municipality.

Encumbered Parkland and Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) – These regulatory changes follow legislative changes under Bill 23 which allow for both encumbered lands and POPS to count towards municipal parkland dedication requirements. Developers could also appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal if a municipality rejects the developer's proposed parkland dedication.

Staff Comment – although the County does not directly accept parkland dedication, in speaking with municipal planners these changes have generated mixed opinions. Some felt that the changes help provide additional direction and streamlining, while others worried that it may limit municipal abilities to build livable communities with quality outdoor spaces. By further 'forcing' municipalities to take lands of a developer's choosing, under 'threat of appeal', it could lessen a municipality's ability to provide such quality parks for long-term livability or could conflict with existing parks and recreation masterplans. The need for additional agreements for encumbered lands and potential legal costs adds further process and expenses to municipalities. In some cases, a municipality may prefer cash-in-lieu, rather than accept certain pieces of parkland dedication. Additional comments on this topic follow in section 9 of this report in response to posting 026-0312.

2. Proposed Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act and Safe Drinking Water Act Changes, Posting #026-301

In the posting the province has summarized the changes to the two pieces of legislation as follows:

- *"Explicitly prohibiting private ownership in any new water and wastewater public corporation to maintain 100% public sector ownership.*
- *Supporting the continuation of existing contracts so that existing contracts are not affected by a transfer to a new water and wastewater public corporation. This includes contracts such as employment or insurance, or a collective agreement.*
- *Clarifying that certain rights (such as successor, employment, and pay equity rights) are carried forward to a new water and wastewater public corporation. This would include regulation-making authority to help ensure continuity of services related to contracts and employees that are transferred to a new water and wastewater public corporation.*
- *Prohibiting the transfer of water and wastewater debt from Peel Region to the water and wastewater public corporation, while creating new regulation-making authority to enable future regulations to address all matters related to municipal debt.*
- *Legislative amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 (SDWA) to clarify that drinking water systems owned by WWPCs constitute municipal drinking water systems and such that applicable SDWA provisions would apply to them.*

Through a separate posting, the Ministry will be inviting municipalities interested in adopting the water and wastewater public corporation model to submit a comment outlining their detailed interest. This input will help the Ministry determine next steps and support future expansion."

Staff Comment – the County does not own or operate any water or wastewater treatment facilities. All nine of Grey's member municipalities own and operate either a water or wastewater treatment facility or both. The costs to operate such facilities, including expansion costs in support of growth continues to rise. Additional funding mechanisms in support of this infrastructure would be appreciated.

The initial iteration of *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act* received significant pushback on the potential for 'privatization' of water services, because the Ministry could designate corporations incorporated under the *Business Corporations Act* (i.e. for profit, private corporations could be designated) as providers. Municipalities would be required to use them if designated by the Ministry. There would be asset transfers, etc. and then the corporations would then set the fees for water services and municipalities would have to add debts to the tax roll, etc. There were concerns with transparency and oversight of the corporations.

Bill 98 appears to be trying to address the 'privatization' concerns by limiting shareholders of water corporations to municipalities, the province, the federal government, or an agent of any these government entities. There may still be a concern regarding who can be appointed as an agent. If municipalities are the sole shareholder, while there may be some operational benefits, it will not result in less work for municipalities per se. Resources will need to be spent by municipalities to determine how to set up the corporation etc. If regionalization (in that two or more municipalities form one water corporation) were to be contemplated, then there will significant aspects that the municipalities will need to consider, as it will likely be complex and will take significant resources to establish. Bill 98 also adds some clauses regarding transfers of assets, liabilities, and employees, etc.

In speaking with municipal staff, there were also concerns at a municipal level that these changes could result in municipalities being 'required' to provide services to neighbouring communities.

Staff would request more information on these proposed legislative changes, so that municipalities can better consider the practical impacts.

3. Proposed Communal Drinking Water and Wastewater System Municipal Consent Requirements, Posting #026-302

The proposed changes to the *Municipal Act* would require a new non-municipal communal water or wastewater system to first apply for municipal consent. Municipalities would then be able to attach conditions and limitations to that consent. The changes also allow the minister to pass regulations setting out criteria, which if met, would require municipalities to grant consent to such systems. These regulations could provide financial or technical standards, but could also prescribe zoning by-law requirements in respect of the lands, or the lands being serviced.

Staff Comment – staff are aware that the province has been looking at ways to better utilize communal water and wastewater systems, particularly in smaller communities or remote parts of the province. One of the current obstacles to seeing such systems built is the need for a private utility to enter into a responsibility agreement with the municipality. Broadly speaking this provides for municipal assumption of the treatment facility if the private utility is unable to maintain the facility. Based on this requirement, municipalities are reluctant to sign such

agreements, for fear of having to ‘take on’ a new treatment facility that may (a) not be built to a municipal standards, and (b) be costly to operate for a small number of users.

Staff are supportive in principle of the province’s direction of better using communal systems as a treatment option. However, staff cannot support such actions where it poses financial risk to the municipality, or where it results in decentralized development patterns which conflict with the PPS or official plan policies. Rather than setting criteria for municipalities to give to consent to such treatment facilities, perhaps the province could simply ‘shift the burden’ such that any new private communal facility can only be approved where it has a provincial responsibility agreement in place, such that any default on the system by the operator then becomes the responsibility of the province.

4. Draft Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG) to support the Implementation of the PPS 2024, Posting #026-304

The province is looking to update the PMG to assist municipalities with forecasting growth and determining land needs. This follows an Environmental Registry posting from 2025 where the province shared a new draft PMG (updating the 1995 PMG). An updated PMG would also further reinforce direction in the PPS 2024, which requires municipalities to use Ministry of Finance projections as the basis for their population forecasts. The province has noted the further changes from the 2025 draft are as follows:

1) *“Providing increased clarity on when to consider undertaking population and employment forecast updates, which Ontario Population Projection data to use and how to set the planning horizon.*
2) *Providing more details on assessing housing needs by considering housing tenure, housing type and propensities for households to occupy certain types of housing, and making adjustments such as to reflect market demand, housing affordability and suppressed household formation.*
3) *Providing clarity on estimating feasible intensification rates when determining the amount and type of housing units that can be accommodated through intensification in the built-up area.*
4) *Streamlining the land needs assessment methods for greater consistency among most municipalities, while continuing to allow a simplified method that is less data-intensive with clearer recommendations on which municipalities may use it.”*

Staff Comment – Grey County just completed an update to its Growth Management Strategy (GMS). As part of the GMS update, staff worked with Hemson Consulting to ensure the work met the needs of the PPS 2024, as well as the draft 2025 PMG. In principle staff are supportive of the above-described changes, but County staff are not experts on using the current PMG, or the draft version from 2025. As such, staff have reached out to Hemson consulting who prepared the County’s last few GMS updates. After receiving Hemson’s response, County staff will update Council and Municipal staff accordingly, if there are any substantive impacts on the County’s recently completed GMS. Should Hemson’s response be received ahead of the comment deadline, staff can update the County’s comments accordingly, if the response warrants additional considerations on the draft PMG

5. *Proposed Changes to Facilitate the Electronic Submission of Information to Approval Authorities and Allow Notices to be given electronically to the Province, Posting #026-305*

The concept of these changes was introduced as part of the Bill 60 consultations. These proposed changes would facilitate the electronic submission of information and material to approval authorities and would:

- remove the requirement for information and material to include an original or certified copy, and
- allow required notices to be given electronically to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Staff Comment – staff support these changes and would note that many municipalities have enacted similar digital submission and notice processes. Municipal staff noted that if there was a way to provide for electronic commissioning of an application, this would further assist with intaking digital application submissions.

6. *Proposed Regulation to Prohibit Mandatory Enhanced Development Standards as a Condition of land Division Approvals, Posting #026-309*

These changes are similar to those above in item # 1 of this report (posting #026-300). Posting #026-309 is specific to requiring enhanced development standards as a condition of land division (i.e., via plan of subdivision or the consent processes). The proposal would look to remove *"enhanced development standards at the lot level (outside of buildings), that are not specifically required for health, safety, accessibility or protection of adjoining lands (e.g., stormwater management)...To address the above, a regulation would be created under the Planning Act to prohibit "sustainability" conditions as part of land division approvals."*

Finally, the ERO posting also notes the following as it relates to costs: *"There could also be additional costs to municipalities related to the proposal as a result of limits being placed on what municipalities can compel of developers as a condition land division, thus shifting burden from the development sector to municipalities for sustainability measures and/or for addressing unintended environmental impacts."*

Staff Comment – Further to the comments in section 1 above, staff would note the following. In order to properly comment on this item, definitions of 'sustainability' and 'enhanced development standards are needed. The media briefing document released by the province notes examples of *"landscaping and foliage requirements, soil composition and ornamental and design considerations"* as items which would be prohibited. If the prohibitions limit municipal requirements to those *"required for health, safety, accessibility or protection of adjoining lands (e.g., stormwater management)"* then this would appear to limit many environmental protections, including those that implement Environmental Impact Studies (e.g., tree preservation, planting, and native species requirements). If that's the case, then (a) an EIS becomes very difficult to implement, beyond 'the developer voluntarily following through with the mitigation measures', and (b) it could have serious impacts on a municipality's ability to retain tree canopy, protect

species habitat, and prevent the spread of invasive species (which may be used in landscaping new developments). Staff would request additional clarification here, and note the need for 'carve-outs' as it applies to not only health, safety, and accessibility, but also to the natural environment.

Finally, staff note that placing additional financial burden on municipalities for "*addressing unintended environmental impacts"* is unnecessary where there are methods to mitigate against such impacts at the approvals stage. Staff would reiterate the need to 'build it right the first time' versus paying for the costly impacts or retrofits after the fact.

7. Proposal to Reform Site Plan Control, Posting #026-310

Over previous legislative efforts the province has reformed site plan control, including both limiting what can be required via this tool, applying complete application requirements, and requiring that site plan approvals be staff delegated. The province has noted that in many cases site plan processes are still too onerous and take too long to approve. As a result, the province is considering the following potential changes.

1. Remove site plan control as a tool.
2. Require municipalities to have a maximum of three circulations before a mandatory meeting is required to work through the issues.
3. Further scope site plan approval to a checklist of health and safety items, with the use of certified professionals for the acceptance of such studies. Municipalities would not be permitted to request additional items, and if the checklist is met, then site plan approval is granted.
4. Establish or require a municipal arbitration process / site plan review panel for site plan applications that have exceeded the government's 60-day timeline and a specified number of circulations. This would be a process outside of the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT).
5. Establish or require municipalities to establish different site plan approval streams for different kinds of proposed development, with corresponding scope of matters that may be controlled. For example, there may be a complex and simplified stream whereby the simplified streams may be expedited.

Staff Comment – Of the five options above, staff do not support option 1. Site plan is a critical tool for municipalities and needs to be retained. The ability to register an agreement on title is also crucial to municipalities, and not readily available in some other development approvals. This opinion was echoed by the municipal planners consulted in preparing this report.

With respect to options 2 – 5, there were more divergent and nuanced opinions from some municipal and County planners.

Staff could support elements of options 3 and 5. Some level of checklist may be supported to scope requirements, particularly for less complex site plan applications. Municipalities may also choose to amend their site plan by-laws to critically look at some routine applications which may form the basis for exemptions that may not require site plan control. Given the complexity of some site plans, and the detailed review needed, it cannot be entirely reduced to a 'yes/no checklist'. Staff would note that most municipalities in Grey have already implemented option 5.

With the arbitration or site plan review panel (option 4), staff have concerns that this could add another layer of bureaucracy and costs to the process and create additional delays unless strictly defined and managed. If the province were to implement option 4, perhaps it would only be at the request of the proponent, and not 'an automatic' when review exceeds 60 days. Automatic arbitration could delay proceedings, which may've otherwise been nearing an approval. Staff would prefer elements of option 2 to having a separate arbitration panel, but note that if the goal is to process site plans in 60 days, that it's unlikely that a municipality will have completed three circulations within 60 days.

Some staff also flagged the need for the province to better define the objectives of site plan control directly within the Act, to ensure there is less confusion amongst municipalities, developers, and planners.

It was also noted that some provincial ministries are required to comment on site plans where they are adjacent to provincial infrastructure. In some cases, those ministries have a current comment response time of ten weeks (to receive initial comments on an application). The impact not receiving comments for ten weeks is that the 60-day timeline for processing site plans is already exceeded while waiting for the first round of provincial comments. For municipalities to speed up their processes, this provincial service delivery standard needs to be improved.

Finally, municipal staff also flagged the fact that delays in site plan approvals often come from servicing or infrastructure deficits. Having additional dependable infrastructure funding would 'go a long way' towards eliminating delays in the planning approvals process.

8. Establish a Minimum Lot Size in Urban Areas, Posting #026-311

Following up on a Bill 60 consultation, the province is proposing to establish a minimum residential lot size of 175 m^2 (1,884 ft^2) on urban residential lands (i.e., those lands in a settlement area served via municipal water and sewer services). In this proposal the province further notes the following: *"any municipal zoning requirement for minimum frontage and/or minimum depth that would not allow for the minimum lot size standard to be met would be inapplicable. Land owners would retain the ability to apply for the creation of larger or smaller lots through the land division process."*

Staff Comment – The above-noted minimum lot size is not clear if it's meant to apply to any housing type, or a specific housing type. For example, in most municipal zoning by-laws the standard for an interior town or rowhouse unit lot size would be different than a lot for a single detached dwelling. Staff have looked at zoning by-laws across the County and could not find any that had a minimum residential lot size of 175 m^2. The smallest town or rowhouse lots permitted in Grey were ~200 m^2. Many minimum lot sizes, particularly for other types of residential dwelling types, were significantly larger than 200 m^2. Staff would note that the combination of not having higher-order transit (or any transit in some communities) and high amounts of snowfall necessitating a degree of onsite winter snow storage would make a minimum residential lot size of 175 m^2 very difficult to support. The front yard area and need for snow storage becomes further compounded when space for sidewalks are also factored in.

Staff also note that lots of this size may not be suitable to accommodate Additional Residential Units (ARUs) as are broadly permitted per the *Planning Act* on urban residential lands.

Staff would generally support the province's intent here, and suggest the province may wish to consider the following:

a) Clarify if the 175 m^2 is meant to apply to any housing type, or if that minimum lot size could only be used for town or rowhouses, and
b) Consider a range of minimum lot sizes depending on the characteristics of the urban residential land i.e., is there transit, what are the annual snowfall levels, etc.

Should such minimum lot sizes be implemented, municipalities may also need to adjust other lot standards such as setbacks or maximum lot coverage percentages.

Staff would further flag there are implementation costs to municipalities for such changes. The Environmental Registry posting flags the following as it applies to costs. *"The direct compliance cost for all 444 municipalities is estimated at approximately $472,856 and an average annual direct compliance cost of approximately $46,600. These one-time administrative impacts reflect staff familiarization and minor updates to internal planning guidance and workflows to apply the provincial minimum lot size."* As such, staff would request that the province provide funding to municipalities to cover these implementation costs.

9. Standardizing of Parkland Requirements, Posting #026-312

As per the comments in section 1 above, these changes are intended to implement Bill 23 changes around parkland dedication and encumbered lands and POPS (privately owned public spaces). Through this regulatory change, the province is setting out criteria for which lands are ineligible for parkland, which include the following:

- contaminated lands,
- natural and human-made hazards,
- Lands within and adjacent to natural heritage features and areas are eligible on the condition that a park would not interfere with or compromise the natural heritage features and areas.

Parkland must also be accessible, visible, and comfortable to facilitate public use, including being accessible by all users and of a size/shape which can serve park and recreational purposes.

Developers would need to provide municipalities with details to show that the lands meet the above eligibility and accessibility criteria. Municipalities must then make a decision and give notice and rationale to the developer within 20 days of the decision, whereafter the developer would have appeal rights to the OLT.

Staff Comment – These changes, when combined with the Bill 23 changes, will mean that municipalities will be required to take a broader variety of lands as acceptable parkland dedication than previously was the case. The need to take encumbered land will also add additional costs to municipalities and result in the need for additional agreements or could result in additional requests for cash-in-lieu of parkland. Staff recommend that the province consider

providing template agreements to municipalities to offset the costs and workload associated with the encumbered lands agreements.

Staff are supportive of not including hazard lands or contaminated lands in the list of eligible parkland dedication. With respect to the natural heritage area eligibility, staff note that this could result in the following impacts:

a) differences of interpretation as to the impact on a natural feature,
b) conflict between human use and habitat use and/or restrictions on use which the municipality would need to manage (e.g., the conflict between the public's use of a beach and the endangered piping plovers which nest on those same beaches),
c) additional costs and/or liability to a municipality to maintain such an area, and
d) added challenges around accessibility both for access and use of those lands.

As a result, staff would recommend that the province allow for greater municipal discretion with respect to parkland dedication of natural heritage areas and their adjacent lands, without the threat of appeal.

10. Streamlining the Information that Planning Authorities can require as part of a Complete Application, Posting #026-313

The province has released a list of core versus contingent studies which municipalities can require as part of a complete planning application.

Core Studies	**Contingent Studies**
• Environmental Impact Study • Environmental Site Assessment • Functional Servicing Report • Geotechnical Report • Hydrogeological Report • Planning Justification Report • Transportation Impact Assessment	• Aeronautical Report • Aggregate / Minerals / Petroleum Resource Impact Assessment • Agricultural Impact Assessment • Air Quality / Odour Study • Arborist Report • Archaeological Assessment • Contaminant Management Plan • Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment • Economic Viability Assessment • Electromagnetic Field Management Plan • Financial Impact Analysis • Human-made Hazard Impact Study / Assessment • Lakeshore Capacity Assessment / Water Quality Impact Assessment • Minimum Distance Separation Formulae Assessment

	• Natural Hazard Impact Study / Assessment • Noise / Vibration Study • Rail Safety and Risk Mitigation Report • Servicing Options Report • Wildland Fire Assessment • Wind Study

Table 1: List of Core versus Contingent Studies

Staff Comment – the province has asked for answers to the following questions as part of this posting. Staff have included the questions (in italics) and answers below.

1. *Is the list of the types of information and material identified in this proposal comprehensive enough for planning authorities to effectively evaluate all planning applications they may receive?*

    1. *If not, why? What information or material is missing from the proposed list?*

Staff recommend also including the following studies to the above contingent list: affordable/attainable housing assessment report, parkland assessment/suitability report (or perhaps this is a component of the planning justification report), lighting / photometrics plan, and a record of Indigenous engagement. Staff would further flag that a visual impact assessment (VIA) is not included on either list. VIAs are commonly required by the Niagara Escarpment Commission for applications within the Niagara Escarpment Plan. To align with provincial electrical grid management objectives, some development review may also benefit from requiring an energy strategy study, which could be included on the contingent list.

    2. *Should any of the types of studies identified in this proposal be removed from the proposed list?*

Staff recommend that the archeological assessment be moved from the contingent studies list to the core studies list. Staff note that archeological assessments are becoming increasingly ubiquitous, and are particularly important to Indigenous engagement.

2. *Do you have any feedback on the objectives identified for each of the types of studies listed in this proposal? Are they broad enough to support planning authorities in obtaining sufficient information to evaluate applications, comply with applicable legislation, and determine consistency with provincial policies or conformity with provincial and municipal plans? Is there anything missing?*

Staff are generally satisfied with the objectives, but would note the following potential adjustments.

- In the geotechnical, hydrogeological, or hazard assessments, it may worth mentioning karst topography.
- In the arborists report it would be useful to also have tree planting plans included.
- In the land use compatibility study, it should not be limited to only a proposed major facility and should also reference the Ministry's D-series guidelines (D-6 and D-2).

- In the transportation impact study or the geotechnical report, a road assessment should also be considered for inclusion (i.e., can the existing road base support the level of heavy trucks being proposed).
- In the economic viability assessment, it should also cover a broader range of circumstances and not be limited to only the economic viability of employment uses adjacent to employment areas. For example, Grey County currently requires a 'Farm Business Plan' to be submitted where a farmer proposes to sever a prime agricultural lot that is less than the minimum size required by the County official plan. This study would ensure that the resultant farm parcel is economically viable to be used for agricultural purposes. The viability of extending servicing and mainlining appropriate minimum supportive densities could also be a consideration for other types of development applications.

3. *Should the list identify the types of applications that the information and material could be required for (i.e., official plan amendment, zoning by-law amendment, site plan control, plans of subdivision/condominium, consents)? If so, why?*

This assessment should generally be left to municipal discretion.

4. *Are there studies listed that should only be required for certain types of applications? If so, which ones and why?*

This assessment should generally be left to municipal discretion.

5. *Should planning authorities maintain the ability to develop terms of reference to specify the breadth of information required for each of the types of studies included in the provincial list? Please elaborate on your response.*

In absence of a standard provincial terms of reference for each study, municipalities will need to maintain the ability to draft their own terms of reference for these studies. Staff would be supportive of additional provincial guidance or sample terms of reference for these studies.

6. *Do you have any other input or suggestions of relevance to this proposal?*

Nothing further at this time.

11. Changes to the 'Prescribed Professions' as part of a Complete Application, Posting #026-314

As part of Bill 17 the province introduced regulation-making authority to require that municipalities accept studies from 'certified professionals' for the purposes of determining a complete application. To date the province has added professional engineers to this list and is seeking input on any other professions that could be added to this list.

Staff Comment – Staff would support adding professional geoscientists to the list of prescribed professions (or certified professionals).

Municipal staff also requested that it be made clear that prescribed professionals can only submit reports under their prescribed area of expertise. For example, the regulation should be clear that an engineer couldn't also submit a planning report on behalf of a planner, with the aim of 'sheltering' under their prescribed profession status.

12. Consultation on Upper-Tier Official Plans, Secondary Plans, and Site-specific Policies, Posting #026-315

Further to the information shared in section 1 of this report, and the Bill 60 consultations, the province is seeking additional input on upper-tier official plans (for upper-tiers with planning responsibilities), secondary plans, and site-specific policies. As part of this posting the province has released a summary of the feedback they heard on this topic. Some of the changes being considered are as follows:

1. For upper-tier official plans, limiting duplication by creating specific land use designations that only apply at the upper-tier level.
2. For secondary plans or site-specific policies:
    a. identifying the types of areas where secondary plans could be used,
    b. separating secondary plans from the primary official plan, so they would exist as a standalone document while being subject to the same process requirements, and
    c. exempting secondary plans from Minister's approval (lower-tier municipalities in upper-tier municipalities with planning responsibilities would not be exempt from approval by the relevant upper-tier municipality).

Staff Comment – the province has asked for answers to the following questions as part of this posting. Staff have included the questions (in italics) and answers below. Staff have not included the questions for secondary plans or site-specific policies, but generally support municipalities being able to use secondary plans and site-specific policies as important local tools. Secondary plans are not widely used in Grey County, but site-specific policies are more broadly used and continue to be a desirable tool. Municipal staff noted examples of secondary plans being effective where they didn't 'repeat' policies in the official plan; but rather had policies unique to their geography and deferred to the official plan for more generic policies not specific to that geography.

Upper-tier Official Plans

- *In addition to considering a combined "Community Areas" use designation described above, are there other designations that would be useful for upper-tier official plans that would help avoid duplication with lower-tier official plans?*

The policies of the PPS are generally fairly prescriptive for agricultural (and to a lesser extent rural areas/lands), mineral resources, and the natural environment. Growth management and the protection of the environment as well as broad resources such as agricultural or aggregate resources likely makes more sense at a regional scale versus a community specific scale. As such, in a two-tier planning environment maybe the breakdown of responsibility is generally as follows.

1. Upper-tier plans should include policies, mapping, and land use designations for the lands outside of settlement areas including agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resources e.g., aggregates and bedrock resources. The upper-tier plan would also include growth management elements (e.g., growth projections / allocations) and settlement area boundaries, but not have prescriptive designations or policies within settlement areas.

2. Lower-tier plans would then focus on the settlement areas and include the detailed policies and designations within settlement areas. Lower-tier plans do not need to duplicate policies and mapping for agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resource lands, and would instead defer to the upper-tier plan for those areas.
3. Where an upper-tier or lower-tier overlaps with a provincial plan, such as the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the upper-tier plan could defer to the mapping and detailed policies within the provincial plan and lower-tier plan.

- *Are there any parts of the standardized table of contents, schedules, and land use designations outlined in ERO 025-1099 that would need to be modified or would not apply to official plans for upper-tier municipalities?*

Where there are both upper-tier and lower-tier plans, there are a number of areas which could be exclusive to either the upper-tier or lower-tier official plans, as per the comments above regarding policies and mapping for agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resource lands only in the upper-tier plan, and detailed policies and mapping for settlement areas only in lower-tier plans. If the province were to take this approach, it would mean that upper-tier plans could eliminate some of what's in ERO posting 025-1099, but so too could lower-tier municipalities eliminate some of the converse.

- *Are there other considerations we need to take into account regarding the proposed framework for upper-tier official plans?*

Another approach to the above, would be to consider a single official plan at the upper-tier level with policies for the entire jurisdiction, but include separate municipal-specific policies for each lower-tier as chapters within the plan.

13. Development Charges Act Changes to Exempt Non-Profit Retirement Homes, Posting #MMAH009

The proposed change would have the effect of exempting non-profit retirement homes from paying development charges. The province is also proposing to correct two cross references to front-ending agreements relative to previous changes to the Act on the deferral of development charges.

Staff Comment – Staff generally have no concerns with the proposed changes and would note that the County's current development charges by-laws currently exempt not-for-profit housing development.

Although not directly being consulted on as part of this posting, the provincial media briefing document also speaks to a provincial consultation on breaking out the municipal development charges in agreements of purchase and sale, to show what such charges go towards. County staff are supportive of this initiative and would note the County's development charges brochure already does so for the County's charges.

14. Consultation on the 2025 National Construction Codes, Posting #019-8316

The Environmental Registry posting is a 'repost' of a consultation originally conducted in 2024. The posting goes on to note that the *"next and future editions of Ontario's Building Code are an important step in the process to support increased harmonization with National Construction Codes. Approximately 60% of Ontario's Code is currently consistent with the National Construction Codes."*

The provincial media briefing document further notes *"For the first time in 40 years, the government is proceeding with a section-by-section review of the Building Code so it better meets modern challenges, while maintaining Ontario's high health and safety standards."*

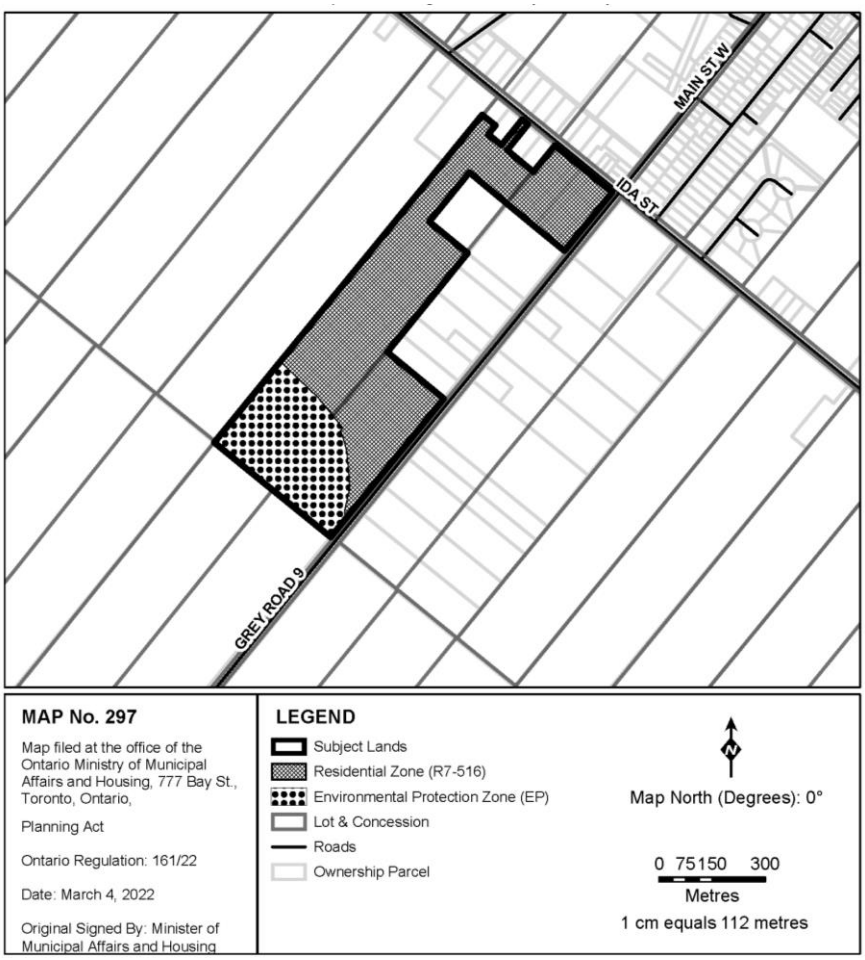
Staff Comment – Staff would note that there were major changes made to the Ontario Building Code in 2024, which took effect in 2025. At that time the changes were billed as the "largest ever provincial building code revision". County staff generally support any initiatives on consistency between the National and Ontario Codes and support the opportunity for Ontario to adopt the National Building Code (NBC 2020) tiered model to allow greater harmonization of energy efficiency elements. Staff are also cognizant however that the impacts of major building code reviews have impacts on developers and municipalities, as they both learn the new code, and adapt their projects or approvals accordingly. In speaking with one local building official, they noted that there could be benefits to condensing some areas of the current Ontario Building Code. Similar to the comments later in the report on the pace of change, the Ontario Building Code is one more example of cumulative change, which may have the unintended consequence of slowing down processes and approvals, at least in the short term.

15. Enhanced Monitoring of some Residential MZOs, Posting #019-8020

The province has listed a series of previously approved MZOs which they note they will be closely monitoring the progress over *"the next 18 months and consider them for potential revocation or amendment in the future if there is a lack of significant progress."* Two of the MZOs on the list are in Dundalk (see Maps 1 and 2 below) and had previously been placed on the enhanced monitoring list by the province.

Staff Comment – County staff will generally defer to the comments from the Township of Southgate on these two MZOs.

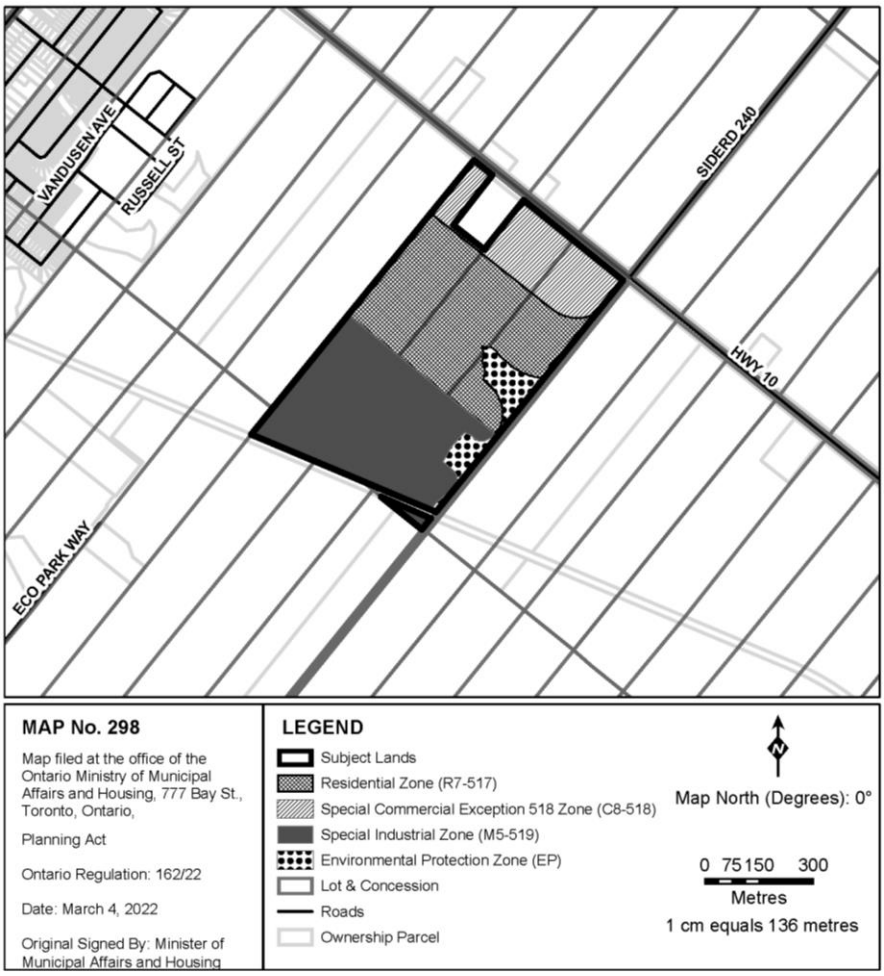
Staff would however note that for the lands covered by Ontario Regulation 161/22, there is a plan of subdivision application currently in process. More information can be found on the County's website here.



Map 1: Township of Southgate MZO Lands under Ontario Regulation 161/22

For the lands covered by Ontario Regulation 162/22, a plan of subdivision application has been submitted, which was deemed incomplete. These MZO lands are also linked to the Township's new Eco Parkway extension project. The Township is eager to move forward with this extension project, and revoking the MZO could have a negative impact of the Township and proponent's abilities to move forward.

Should the province amend or revoke these two MZOs, it may mean that this proponent needs to apply for zoning by-law amendments alongside these two plans of subdivision.



Map 2: Township of Southgate MZO Lands under Ontario Regulation 162/22

Finally, staff would request that where an MZO is revoked or amended, it only be done after consultation with the host municipality. In the case of a revocation, the province should specify what the resulting zoning provisions will revert to e.g., if a MZO for Residential-3 (R3) with exceptions land is revoked, what is it reverting to i.e., Residential-1 (R1).

16. Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards, Posting #26-MTO003

Staff would note that the comment deadline for this posting expired on March 30, 2026. However, staff wanted to bring this to County Council's attention, based on Council's past discussion on this topic as part of Bill 60. Under Bill 60, the *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act* was amended to provide the Minister regulation making authority on the following items:

- *"Govern contracts pertaining to road and bridge construction (including contracts between municipalities and third-party contractors);*
- *Establish reporting requirements; and*

- *Establish a process for requesting an exemption from the application of a standard."*

Under the above-noted registry posting, the province is now proposing a regulation that would cover the following items:

- *"Make Ontario Provincial Standards for Municipal Road Construction (OPSS.MUNI) mandatory with respect to hot mix asphalt, aggregates, and drainage for municipalities throughout the province,*
- *Mandate the use of standard contractual terms and conditions,*
- *Establish a transition provision,*
- *Establish an exemption request process, and*
- *Establish reporting requirements."*

This regulation is proposing a transition provision *"whereby all municipalities would be required to comply with standards listed in the proposed regulation effective July 1, 2027."*

Staff Comment – Staff note that the County previously provided comments on this topic as part of the Bill 60 consultations. The County currently operates using existing engineering standards, the Ontario Provincial Standard Specification (OPSS) and the Ontario Provincial Standard Drawings (OPSD) for its road contracts. These existing standards and specifications help to ensure consistency across projects, yet they allow for professional engineers to be able to ensure that roads are designed for the environment that they are in, respecting the local topography, traffic volumes, underlying soils and bedrock and drainage patterns and needs. As part of the County comments, the County flagged concerns with the following:

- potential for the standard to require 'over-building' roads if a 'one size fits all' standard was implemented,
- liability and the application of minimum maintenance standards, and
- future regulations with respect to contract language, exemptions, and reporting requirements which appear to add more bureaucracy to the process.

The County stands behind these comments. In addition, staff note that the implementation date of July 1, 2027, will have serious impacts on both the County and member municipal capital budget and construction programs. Road projects are planned years in advance, including the designs being completed ahead of the proposed construction year. The County already has designs underway or completed for 2027. As such, if the new standard takes effect in 2027, it will mean (a) reassessing these designs, and (b) rebudgeting for these projects. This is in addition to the work needed to align contract language for road tenders.

It is further noted that the Municipal Engineers Association has circulated correspondence to municipalities to make them aware of the Association's comments and significant concerns regarding this matter. Staff generally concur with the concerns put forward by the Association as they relate to governance, limitations in a one size fits all approach, mandatory reporting and risks to project delivery.

If the province is proposing road standard harmonization, municipalities need a much greater 'lead time' to prepare and adjust their budgets and construction programs accordingly. If the standards are finalized in 2026, compliance with said standards for new road projects should not be compulsory until at least 2028. The province should also consider providing training, as well as implementation funding for municipalities to become familiar with the new standards.

17. Bill 98 Proposed Changes to the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act and the Metrolinx Act

Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026

The *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act* provides the Ontario Minister of Transportation with new authority to:

- Set or regulate transit fares, including prices, discounts, and transfer policies, for transit systems prescribed by regulation,
- Require participation in a provincially approved, unified fare payment system,
- Establish geographic fare zones across participating transit systems,
- Apply fare policies across municipal boundaries, rather than limiting them to individual municipalities, and
- Layout a framework that supports provincially led fare and service integration of priority routes.

Staff comment – While the Act does not appear to apply automatically to all transit systems, it allows the province to prescribe specific systems through regulation. This authority could extend to rural or regional systems, including those currently in Grey County and being considered through the Bruce-Dufferin-Grey-Wellington regional transit study.

The intent of the Act is generally aligned with the direction currently being explored through the Bruce-Dufferin-Grey-Wellington Regional Transit Study, particularly with respect to:

- Creating a more seamless passenger experience,
- Moving toward common or harmonized fare structures, and
- Integrating payment systems across jurisdictions.

While the legislation supports these policy objectives, it also represents a shift toward increased provincial oversight without clarity around governance decisions or financial risks to the municipality.

Staff are eager to understand the scope to which these policies may apply, and if there are means to support service sustainability if applied. Staff would raise concern if municipalities are expected to remain financially responsible for service operations, but the province is prescribing the terms of the services including fares, especially in the rural context where systems are characterized by lower ridership and higher per-trip costs, thus presenting a tangible financial risk.

Metrolinx Act, 2006 (as amended to 2025)

Purpose and scope of the Act

The *Metrolinx Act* establishes Metrolinx as a provincial Crown agency and assigns it responsibility to:

- Provide leadership on regional transit, planning, coordination and integration,
- Support unified fare systems and service coordination, and
- Enter into agreements with municipalities and other partners.

The Act assigns Metrolinx a role in facilitating unified fare systems and coordinating with municipal transit providers in support of regional connectivity, although Metrolinx's primary mandate remains focused on the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This legislative framework underpins:

- PRESTO expansion and other unified fare technologies,
- One Fare and One Fare 2.0 initiatives, and
- The potential and by agreement, to extend integrated fare concepts into rural or regional corridors over time.

The *Metrolinx Act* does not appear to transfer responsibility for local or rural transit operations or funding to Metrolinx. Rural transit systems remain municipally owned, operated and funded.

Staff Comment – With the *Metrolinx Act*, staff would seek clarity to understand if policies, expectations, and standards are to be more broadly applied, will an equitable funding formula, similar to that received by GTHA, be available to rural services. Staff are also curious to understand if a governance shift towards a provincial entity is also anticipated and the speed at which these changes may be proposed.

Previous Environmental Registry Postings

Along with the announcement of Bill 98 and the various new Environmental Registry postings, the province also updated some previous postings with decisions, or transitions to new postings. County staff have included links to these past postings in the Appendices and Attachments section of this report, but for the sake of brevity have not summarized the outcome of each individual posting.

Comments on the Overall Pace of Change

The County supports the province in making changes for the benefit of all Ontarians and the provincial economy. Grey County will continue to be a partner in implementing these changes and providing input on new provincial initiatives.

However, the County remains concerned about the pace and scope of changes, as well as the ability to monitor the efficacy of such changes. Particularly as it applies to the land use planning process, development charges, and conservation authorities, the speed and scale of change have been both rapid and impactful. While the changes may appear to have been incremental, they've also been fairly consistent, occurring a few times each year with little opportunity to reflect on how each individual change has impacted the system as a whole. In some cases, the legislative and regulatory changes have provided great benefits. In other instances, the outcomes are yet to be determined or have had negative impacts on achieving the collective goals of the provincial government. Increasingly both municipal staff and councils find themselves 'playing catch-up' or trying to learn and relearn legislative and regulatory frameworks. County staff have heard similar comments from some developers. At times the constantly shifting legislative framework has resulted in delays to municipal projects and development approvals.

As a result, the County would respectfully request a 'pause' on future changes to the planning and development charges frameworks for the next few years, while municipalities adapt their plans and processes to address the changes made to date. During this pause period, the

province could also work with municipalities and development industry stakeholders to assess the impacts of changes, and to determine if any additional tweaks are needed following the pause period. Again, the County reiterates its desire to be partner alongside the province on enacting change, but requests both time, and in some cases implementation funding, to enable this partnership.

Legislated Requirements

Should new legislation or regulations pass, the County and member municipalities will be required to comply with any legislative changes or associated regulations, subject to any transition provisions included.

Financial and Resource Implications

At this stage, the financial impact of the proposed legislative and regulatory changes is not known. Staff have flagged some potential financial impacts and resource implications in certain sections of this report. Staff will continue to monitor Bill 98 and the related postings will keep County Council up to date on the status and impacts.

Relevant Consultation

☒ Internal: Legal Services, CAO/Deputy CAO, Clerks, Climate Change, Finance, Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Transportation Services, and Planning

- ☒ Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets – See commentary throughout the report

☒ External: Member municipalities in Grey

Appendices and Attachments

Correspondence from the Municipal Engineers Association – OPSS Modernization and Harmonization Concerns

New or Amended Environmental and Regulatory Registry Postings

1. 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)
2. Proposed amendments to the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025 and consequential amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002
3. Communal drinking water and wastewater system municipal consent requirements
4. Draft Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG) to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024)
5. Proposed Changes to Various Regulations Under the Planning Act to Facilitate the Electronic Submission of Information and Materials to Approval Authorities and Allow Notices to be Given Electronically to the Province

6. Proposed Regulation to Prohibit Mandatory Enhanced Development Standards as a Condition of Land Division Approvals
7. Proposal to reform site plan control under the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act, 2006
8. Proposed Regulatory Approach to Establish a Minimum Residential Lot Size in Urban Areas
9. Proposed Changes to Support Standardizing of Parkland Requirements Under the Planning Act
10. Streamlining the information and material that planning authorities can require as part of a complete application
11. Proposed Changes to Various Regulations Under the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to Specify Additional "Prescribed Professions" for the Purposes of a Complete Application
12. Consultation on upper-tier official plans, secondary plans, and site and area-specific policies
13. Changes to the Development Charges Act, 1997 (DCA) to Exempt Non-profit Retirement Homes from Development Charges (DCs)
14. Consultation on the 2025 National Construction Codes
15. Enhanced monitoring of certain housing development Minister's Zoning Orders that have made limited progress
16. Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards* (closed for commenting)

Decisions on Past Registry Postings

a. Consultation on Minimum Lot Sizes
b. Consultation on Enhanced Development Standards – Lot Level (outside of buildings)
c. Consultation on simplifying and standardizing official plans
d. Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024)
e. Developing guidance on section 16 activities under the Species Conservation Act, 2025
f. Proposed legislative and regulatory amendments to enable the Species Conservation Act, 2025

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March 29, 2026

Municipal Standards Harmonization Office (MSHO)

Subject: MEA Comments to Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003

We are writing to respond to Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003 - Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards.

Municipal engineers play a vital role in planning, maintaining, renewing, and constructing municipal infrastructure. Their expertise spans all aspects of municipal infrastructure services - from design and construction to project management and leadership – ensuring the successful delivery of both small and large-scale capital infrastructure projects.

Through its membership, MEA provides specialized knowledge in all areas of municipal engineering in Ontario. In partnership with the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), MEA co-manages the Ontario Provincial Standards & Specifications (Municipal) and delivers training on Ontario Provincial Standards.

While we support the intent of the regulation to promote consistency, quality, and efficiency across municipal road construction projects, we recommend that additional consideration be given to the time and administrative burden associated with preparing, reviewing, and obtaining exemptions, as well as the cumulative impacts on project delivery arising from project-by-project assessments.

Exemption requests that require detailed technical justification across multiple evaluation criteria can take a considerable amount of time to prepare, particularly for complex or large-scale projects. This work frequently requires the involvement of senior engineering, technical, legal, and procurement resources, diverting limited capacity away from active project delivery. The time required to assemble a complete exemption request should therefore be recognized as a potential schedule, cost, and resourcing risk in its own right.

Equally important is the duration and predictability of the Minister's review and response timelines. When exemptions are assessed on a project-by-project basis without defined service standards or response timelines, projects may experience material delays while awaiting decisions. These delays can produce cascading impacts, including missed construction windows, contractor demobilization and remobilization costs, loss of price certainty, and increased exposure to supply-chain volatility. For time-sensitive or critical

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infrastructure projects, even relatively short delays in regulatory decision-making can result in disproportionate impacts to project schedules and budgets.

To better reflect these realities, we recommend that the exemption framework explicitly consider additional criteria, including:

- Administrative and decision-cycle timelines, including the anticipated time required for review and approval and the impact of uncertainty on project planning and procurement;
- Cumulative impacts across multiple projects, particularly where similar exemption requests are repeatedly submitted for comparable project types or conditions;
- Schedule dependency and critical path impacts, including whether delays in exemption approval would directly affect construction sequencing, seasonal work constraints, or contractual obligations; and
- Consistency and precedent considerations, whereby prior approvals for similar circumstances could support streamlined or standardized decision-making, rather than requiring repetitive project-level analysis.

Incorporating these considerations would help ensure that the exemption process supports timely and efficient project delivery while still meeting regulatory objectives. Clear expectations regarding submission requirements and response timelines, as well as opportunities for programmatic or category-based exemptions where appropriate, would significantly reduce risk to project schedules and budgets without compromising safety, performance, or sustainability outcomes.

Looking ahead, and assuming the Ministry is able to successfully deliver the current list of harmonized standards within the proposed timeframe, we agree that the remaining OPSS.MUNI standards should be prioritized for future harmonization based on where the greatest time, cost, and administrative efficiencies can be achieved. In our view, this would include:

- Standards with the highest frequency of use across municipalities, where harmonization would reduce repetitive project-specific reviews, municipal deviations, and contract amendments;
- Standards that routinely generate exemptions, interpretations, or disputes, indicating inconsistency or misalignment that drives additional design effort, approval cycles, or delays;
- Standards that significantly affect project schedules or cost certainty, including those related to materials, construction methods, or inspection requirements that influence procurement and delivery timelines;

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- Standards that overlap or interact closely with those already harmonized, where alignment would enhance system coherence and reduce unintended conflicts or inefficiencies; and
- Standards that affect regional or multi-jurisdictional projects, where inconsistent requirements currently increase coordination challenges and administrative complexity.

A transparent, phased approach, supported by demonstrated progress on the initially harmonized standards, would help ensure that future harmonization efforts are achievable and deliver tangible benefits. Clearly articulating how the Ministry will complete the current scope, and how lessons learned will inform the prioritization of remaining standards, will be essential to achieving intended efficiency gains without overextending implementation capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important initiative. We would welcome continued engagement as the regulation is refined and implemented.

Sincerely,

_____

Penelope Palmer, P. Eng.,
MEA President 2025 – 2026
(Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Strategic Capital Coordination Office
City of Toronto)