
Subject: New Niagara Official Plan - Public Consultation Summary

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, January 15, 2020

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 3-2020 **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That a copy of Report PDS 3-2020 **BE CIRCULATED** to the Local Area Municipalities.

Key Facts Key Facts

- Consultation on the new Niagara Official Plan takes place at four different levels as outlined in this report.
- Significant stakeholder and public input has been received on the structure and contents of new Niagara Official Plan and on the key findings of the background studies that will inform the Official Plan.
- This report provides a summary of the input received to date through public surveys, stakeholder input, direct public input and the Planning Advisory Committee.

Financial Considerations

Council approved the resources to complete the new Niagara Official Plan (NOP) over a 5 year period as part of the 2017 Budget Process, predominantly funded through Development Charges.

Analysis

Public and stakeholder input is an important component of the Niagara Official Plan process and is required in to provide input into the preparation of planning policy and to provide a mechanism for Council to gauge public sentiment.

There are four different consultation formats where input has been received to date, details of which are as follows:

1. Public Surveys

The key themes that the public identified as being important to address were identified through Imagine Niagara (October 2013 – June 2014) and confirmed through Shape Niagara (March – August 2018). Together both of these surveys involved significant community outreach and generated thousands of responses. A summary of the important themes of these initiatives is shown in Appendix 1.

A Special Meeting of Council was also held in July 2018 to hear input on the need for a new Official Plan and what planning matters it could address. A more detailed summary of public comments can be found in Appendix 2.

2. Stakeholder Input

The Official Plan is being informed by various background studies/reports which have involved the input of relevant stakeholder groups. For example, the Natural Environment and Water Systems (NE&WS) background work involved meetings with environmental, agricultural and developer stakeholder groups. These groups will have further opportunity to provide input into the evaluation of options for the NE&WS. Local municipal planning staff also participate via Technical Advisory Groups and are updated on background work.

Local Councils have been updated on the new Niagara Official Plan process and the status of supporting background work twice to date. In general, local Council concerns or questions focused on: bringing local Official Plans in to conformity with the Regional Official Plan; affordable housing; natural heritage and water resource protection; urban boundary expansions; employment land conversions; protecting agricultural land and recognizing the importance of agriculture.

Discussions are ongoing with Indigenous groups.

3. Direct Public Input

Four Public Information Centres (PICs) were held to inform the public and gather input on key findings of the background studies. The PICs were held at Regional Headquarters, Niagara Falls, Grimsby and Fort Erie.

In general, the input provided by the public was confirming as to what planning staff believe to be the relevant planning issues, challenges and opportunities.

Key attendance and input highlights from the PICs are as follows:

- 161 people attended the four PICs;
- Each PIC had a few attendees from outside the host municipality, ranging from four to 9.
- The attendee distribution was about 70% urban and 30 % rural
- Over 200 comments were received; and
- 61 survey results were received;

Interactive PIC Board Input

A variety of interactive boards were placed around the room at the open houses to seek input on each of the topic areas. The first activity board (**Figure 1**) asked participants to place a sticker beside their top three priorities for the new Niagara Official Plan. The top priorities overall were protecting the natural environment, transportation improvements, and more housing options.

Figure 1 – What is most important to you?

Priorities	Sticker Tally
Protecting the natural environment (e.g. woodlands, wetlands)	32
Transportation improvements (e.g. transit cycling)	26
More housing options (e.g. affordable housing)	25
Access to open space, waterfronts and natural areas	21
Supporting jobs and economic prosperity (e.g. tourism)	19
Protecting farmland and supporting the agricultural industry	17
Infrastructure for growth (e.g. sewer, water, stormwater)	14
Sustainable development and planning for climate change	11
Conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources	9
Community planning and urban design	9

Participants were also asked if anything was missing from the list. The majority of the comments related to the priorities identified in some capacity. However, some notable examples of additional priorities included poverty reduction, accessibility and inclusion.

The other activity boards asked participants to identify the biggest challenges and opportunities relative to various themes. Key challenges and opportunities are identified in **Figure 2** below. A more detailed summary of comments is included in Appendix 3.

Figure 2 – What are our biggest challenges and opportunities?

Theme	Biggest Challenge	Biggest Opportunity
Growing Region (growth, development & housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-density development and uneven growth • Lack of diversity in housing types and affordable options, including for seniors and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher-density development, including in proximity to GO Transit stations • More housing options (row housing, semi-detached, apartment buildings, etc.)
Vibrant Region (urban design & cultural resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development occurring without proactive, comprehensive plans, such as secondary plans, and appropriate archaeology assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure plans are in place to guide development in order to achieve design excellence and conserve archaeological resources
Competitive Region (employment, agriculture & resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited public transit to access employment opportunities • Impacts of resource extraction on the natural environment, including our water resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost employment and tourism through public transit, including the GO train • Strong policies to manage resource extraction and final rehabilitation
Connected Region (transportation & infrastructure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring infrastructure (transportation, water, wastewater, sewer) has the capacity to support growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast, efficient and accessible public transit network and complete streets that accommodate all road users
Sustainable Region (natural environment & climate change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of trees and other natural features • Adapting to impacts of extreme weather events, such as flooding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger protections for the natural environment • Meaningful action on climate change across all sectors

Digital Survey

For those that participated in the digital survey the following planning themes were ranked in order of importance: more transportation options; more housing options for all ages and incomes; more jobs; protecting the natural environment; preserving farmland; and planning for climate change. There was no one dominant planning theme. Further planning for the other themes all impact climate change.

The top three planning objectives confirmed for managing growth were: directing growth to strategic locations; using our land and resources wisely; and ensuring growth is supported by infrastructure.

The natural environment, open space and scenery was significantly more valued than other reasons for enjoying the agricultural and rural areas such as wineries, events and tourism; access to a variety of local food; recreation opportunities; jobs and economic opportunities.

Urban Boundary (Settlement Area) Expansions

A variety of requests to expand urban boundaries were submitted as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review/new Niagara Official Plan process, as well as part of the Comprehensive Provincial Plan review in 2017.

Source of Request	Number of Requests	Area (ha)	Number in Greenbelt
Greenbelt Review Municipal Council	34	558	34
Request Private Land Owner	6 35	1,136 592	1 16
Summary	76	2,286*	51

* 2,150 ha - accounting for overlap between municipal and private requests

At the time the above-referenced submissions were received, urban boundaries could be expanded only through the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review/new Niagara Official Plan process. Earlier this year, the Province amended the Growth Plan to allow the consideration of expansions up to 40 Ha, and boundary adjustments, in certain cases and subject to specific criteria, outside of the Official Plan process.

The Region’s review of expansion requests is linked to the analysis of lands needs and will be reported further in 2020. In many cases, requests for urban expansions cannot be accommodated because they are located in the Greenbelt Area which automatically disqualifies consideration. Land owners who have made requests in these areas will be notified accordingly.

4. Planning Advisory Committee

To date, the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), consisting of eight citizens with a professional/academic background, has been providing input on visioning, directives and background information that will inform the development of the new Niagara Official Plan.

Alternatives Reviewed

The public consultation is following a consultation framework approved by Council in March 2019.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report highlights the various consultation steps to date on the new Niagara Official Plan as well as a summary of public input received to date. This process is important to address Council's priority as a Sustainable Engaging Government. The new Niagara Official Plan addresses Council's other priorities, being: Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth; Healthy and Vibrant Community; and Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning.

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 9-2019 New Official Plan Consultation Timeline Framework
PDS 33-2019 Growth Management Program Update for New Official Plan
CWCD 421-2019 New Niagara Official Plan Updates

Prepared by:

Dave Heyworth, MCIP, RPP
Official Plan Policy Consultant
Planning and Development

Recommended by:

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Planning and
Development
Planning and Development

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting, Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Lindsey Savage, Senior Planner; Karen Costantini, Planning Analyst; and reviewed by Doug Giles, Director of Community and Long Range Planning.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Important themes- Imagine Niagara and Shape Niagara
Appendix 2	Summary of Public Comments- Special Council Meeting
Appendix 3	Detailed summary of PIC Comments

Appendix 1 – Priority Themes from Imagine Niagara and Shape Niagara

<p style="text-align: center;">Imagine Niagara (2013-14) Municipal Comprehensive Review – Official Plan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shape Niagara (2018) Council Strategic Plan</p>
<p>8 priority themes, in order of importance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growing the economy 2. Employment 3. Natural environment 4. Rural and agriculture 5. Infrastructure 6. Transportation 7. Managing growth 8. Engagement <p>Gap areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency services • Youth retention • Community and social services • Culture • Health services 	<p>17 priority themes, in order of importance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jobs and economic prosperity 2. Transportation connecting people to jobs and services 3. Supporting populations in need through employment, affordable housing, transit 4. Environmental responsibility and sustainable development 5. Accountable and collaborative government 6. Active transportation 7. Preserving Niagara’s natural assets 8. Infrastructure in support of growth 9. Affordable housing 10. Quality of life and public safety 11. Equitable access to regional services 12. Water and waste management 13. Tourism as an economic driver 14. Communication and engagement with the community 15. Youth and young family retention 16. Responsible spending 17. Mental health services

Appendix 2 – Overview of Comments from July 6, 2018 Special Council Meeting

Overview

- Requests to re-designate certain lands, remove certain lands from the Greenbelt Plan, and bring certain lands into the urban boundary
- Concerns regarding loss of tender fruit production in favour of grape production and cannabis, as well as illegal dumping on prime farmland
- Concerns regarding endangered special, ash die-off, Environment Impact Study review process, loss of forests, and climate change impacts
- Importance of watershed planning and protection of local fisheries
- Concerns regarding impacts of de-designating urban lands and the speed and location of development
- Importance of transparent consultation process and ensuring adequate time and care in the development of the new Niagara Official Plan

Key Themes

Requests to re-designate certain lands

- Request to re-designate certain lands from Agriculture to Rural in Pelham
- Request to re-designate certain lands in Thorold, Niagara Falls and Pelham from Good General Agriculture to Tender Fruit and Grape

Requests to remove certain lands from the Greenbelt Plan

- Request to remove certain lands from the Greenbelt Plan in Grimsby and St. Catharines that is not considered to be viable farmland
- Concern that the Greenbelt Plan is not sufficiently flexible to address on-the-ground realities of farming and agricultural viability

Requests to include certain lands within the urban boundary

- Request for certain lands in Niagara Falls to be included in the urban boundary

Protection of agricultural land and tender fruit production

- Concerns regarding loss of tender fruit production in favour of grape production and cannabis in Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Concern regarding illegal dumping on farmland and in environmental features and areas
- Agricultural and environmental policies are closely linked, particularly when it comes to watershed planning

Protection of the natural environment

- Need to address endangered species within Niagara Region
- There should be an automatic review peer review process for Environmental Impact Studies
- Ash die-off should not be used to remap Environmental Conservation Areas
- Concerns regarding impacts of illegal dumping and garbage dumps on drainage patterns
- Concern regarding loss of forests and impacts on climate change
- Request for watershed planning both inside and outside of the urban boundary and protection of local fisheries

Growth Management

- Concern regarding the speed of development in Grimsby and high-rise condominiums being built in appropriate locations
- If de-designation of urban lands takes place, it should be done on protected wetlands at the urban boundary

Other Comments

- Stakeholder consultations should be based on formal committee that are transparent
- Need to take considerable care to develop the new Niagara Official Plan to ensure it is an improvement over the status quo

Summary of Comments from July 6, 2018 Special Council Meeting

File No.	Type of Representation*	Name(s)	Organization	Municipality	Summary of Comments
CL-C 36-2018	Written submission & presentation	Gloria J Katch Andy Nero	Residents	Pelham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for properties located at 1155 and 1307 Rice Road in the Town of Pelham to be re-designated from agriculture to rural in the new Official Plan This should be part of the Region taking a closer look at the east side of Rice Road
CL-C 37-2018	Written submission	Irene Murray Sue Bates Michelle Wallis	Residents	Niagara-on-the-Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns regarding depletion of tender fruit production in favour of grape production in NOTL, as well as cannabis production in specialty crop areas- the best farmland in Canada
CL-C- 38-2018	Written submission	Marco Marchionda	Marcasa Homes Inc.	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for information regarding his property at 548 Main Street West in Grimsby as well as the 25 acres that surrounds his property Indicates his property is located within the Greenbelt Plan but Grimsby Town staff would like to see the land developed
CL-C- 41-2018	Written submission	Ray and Liz Kowalik	Residents	St. Catharines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for property located at 1406 Third Street in St. Catharines to be removed from the Greenbelt Plan specialty crop designation The property is not viable farmland due to the small parcel size (resulting from MTO expropriation for the Highway 406 overpass) and salt damage Concerns that Greenbelt Plan lacks the flexibility required to address on-the-ground realities of farming and agricultural viability

File No.	Type of Representation*	Name(s)	Organization	Municipality	Summary of Comments
CL-C-43-2018	Written submission & presentation	Dr. John Bacher	Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a new Regional Official Plan is questionable • Agricultural and environmental policies are closely linked • Prospect of de-designation of lands within the urban boundary is disturbing; if de-designation of urban lands takes place, it should be done on protected wetlands at the urban boundary • Stakeholder consultations should be based on formal committees that are transparent • Comments on agricultural policy – lands between the Niagara Escarpment and Highway 20 mapped as Good General Agriculture in Thorold, Niagara Falls and Pelham should be designated as Tender Fruit and Grape • Comments on environmental policies – need to address endangered species; there should be an automatic peer review process for Environmental Impact Studies; ash die-off should not be used to remap Environmental Conservation Areas • Do not rush the Official Plan process; need to take considerable care to develop the plan
CL-C-45-2018	Written submission	S.A. Branscombe	River Realty Development	Niagara Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for 63 acres of River Realty-owned lands in northwest Niagara Falls to be included in the urban boundary
CL-C-46-2018	Written submission	Matt Johnston	Urban Solutions	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for 2.37 ha of land in Grimsby to be removed from the Greenbelt Plan

File No.	Type of Representation*	Name(s)	Organization	Municipality	Summary of Comments
n/a	Written submission	Gauruv Lall	Remax Escarpment Realty	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to remove 18 acres from the Greenbelt Plan to develop the site (e.g. potential for residential development).
n/a	Written submission	George Trifunovic Philip Trifunovic Mike Trifunovic Peter Trifunovic	Resident	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to build the Livingston Avenue extension and remove all properties that have been divided into two parcels by the extension from the Greenbelt Plan This includes 21 acres of land located at 468 Main Street West in Grimsby
n/a	Written submission	Sandra Horvath Nancy McKay Tom Smith	Christ Our Saviour Lutheran Church	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to remove property located at 448 Main Street West in Grimsby from the Greenbelt Plan and complete the Livingston Avenue extension
n/a	Written submission & presentation	Jean Grandoni	Resident	Niagara Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-designate land between Niagara Falls and Thorold and between the Welland River and the Niagara Escarpment from Good General to Tender Fruit and Grape Illegal dumping – stop illegal dumping on prime farmlands and in floodplains, creeks and creek valleys, drainage ditches, etc. Climate change – illegal dumping and garbage dumps alters drainage patterns; climate change is further impacted by cutting down forests; need stronger forestry protection Watershed planning – need watershed planning inside and outside the urban boundary; no diversions should occur; fisheries are forgotten local food supply
n/a	Written submission	Chris Jack	Resident	Grimsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow down development, preserve farmland and do not build high-rise condos in places they do not belong in what used to be the fruit belt

File No.	Type of Representation*	Name(s)	Organization	Municipality	Summary of Comments
					<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns about lack of community consultation, traffic and crime

Appendix 3A – Summary of Interactive Board Comments

Theme	Biggest Challenges	Biggest Opportunities
Growing Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting farmland and the natural environment, including water resources (e.g. our aquifer) • Planning for climate change and extreme weather events (e.g. flooding) • Sprawling, low-density development • Ensuring intensification/density planning is done right • Uneven growth and inconsistent development strategies • Achieving a mix of housing and employment uses that allows people to work where they live • Building complete communities for residents and visitors year-round, not just in the summer months • Lack of diversity in housing types, including rental housing and affordable options for seniors, persons with disabilities and youth • Lack of affordable retirement homes • Concerns regarding the impact of investor activity and home-sharing (e.g. Airbnb) on the rental housing stock and housing affordability • Limited transportation options for seasonal workers and youth • Not enough proactive, comprehensive community planning (e.g. secondary plans, masterplans) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher density, mixed use development in areas supported by infrastructure and services • More apartment buildings, row housing, semi-detached dwellings, tiny homes and multi-ownership housing to expand affordable housing options • Ensure affordable housing and support services are mixed into our communities rather than isolated • Zoning to support residential intensification and home-based businesses • Prioritize brownfield redevelopment over greenfield development • Build the GO Transit Stations and undertake associated transportation improvements • More housing options in proximity to Niagara’s GO Transit Stations • Implement Niagara Region’s Transportation Master Plan to support development and attract a diverse labour pool • Protect the natural environment and build sustainable, healthy, liveable communities • Plan for climate change by preserving greenspace, building bike lanes and supporting transit • Nature-based tourism • Opportunities associated with rehabilitated quarries (e.g. housing, recreation, ecotourism) • Prepare secondary plans and master plans in consultation with the community for orderly growth
Vibrant Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Not in my backyard” (NIMBY) mentality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address NIMBYism • Protect the environment and cultural and archaeological resources

Theme	Biggest Challenges	Biggest Opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political support for design excellence rather than large-scale development • Low-density development • Large-scale development occurring without secondary plans • Following and enforcing by-laws • Assessing important archaeological sites in an appropriate manner • Paying for services should the population base decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate Niagara's natural assets into urban design plans • Plant more trees to shade streets • Support and leverage the growth of culture and the arts in Niagara • Develop vibrant community hubs • Support intensification and improve the mix of housing and employment uses to allow people to work where they live • Build GO Train Stations that are easily accessible for vehicles, bikes and pedestrians • Ensure that regional plans recognize and leverage the strengths and success of individual communities within Niagara • Leverage the expertise of urban design staff at Niagara Region
Competitive Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of industry as the economy transitions • Limited public transit • High volume of commuters • Expansive parking lots that act at heat sinks • Protecting water resources • Concern regarding aggregate extraction deep into the aquifer • Concern that aggregate companies are not following regulations and are not held accountable (threat of aquifer contamination and negative impact on farmland) • Concern regarding fill in wet quarries and impact on the aquifer • Concern regarding wet quarries being converted to garbage dumps • Importation of fill from the Greater Toronto Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect a sufficient supply of employment lands across the region • Build GO Transit Stations and undertake associated transportation improvements to boost tourism • Increase density at GO Transit Stations • Implement Niagara Region's Transportation Master Plan to support development • Explore regional rail service • Develop Fort Erie QEW Corridor • Limit importation of fill from the Greater Toronto Area • Prohibit fill in wet quarries • Recycle aggregate resources • Limit the amount of quarrying that can occur in a given area • Explore opportunities for community development in proximity to rehabilitated quarries

Theme	Biggest Challenges	Biggest Opportunities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore creative opportunities to reuse depleted quarries, such as outdoor theatres or concert venues • Transform depleted quarries into geo-parks • Protect the natural environment and support eco-tourism • Promote international events in Niagara, such as ploughing matches, automotive exhibitions, and natural resource summits • Attract employment, educational and residential opportunities by capitalizing on Niagara’s strengths, such as agriculture, natural environment, resources, new urban development, etc. • Attract green technology and internet technology businesses • Develop a regional employment program that addresses marketing the Region, housing for students and seasonal workers and transportation
Connected Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making necessary infrastructure investments • Ensuring transportation infrastructure has capacity to support new development • Limited transportation options for aging population • Need densities to support transit • Need more cycling lanes within and between communities that are separated from traffic • Raw sewage overflows • Water quality at beaches • Protecting our drinking water • Need to recognize the role of existing wetlands and dangers of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Niagara Region’s Transportation Master Plan • Build the GO Transit Stations and make associated transportation improvements (e.g. Livingston Ave. and Casablanca Blvd. in Grimsby) • Rethink rail service in Niagara to address climate change • Better connections between GO Transit stations and local transit • Connect smaller municipalities with nearby city centres through transit • Improve bus connections • Make bus travel faster and more efficient to improve ridership • Provide bus passes free of charge • Direct intensification to areas that support transit

Theme	Biggest Challenges	Biggest Opportunities
	<p>disrupting the course of water flows, especially in light of climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build complete streets and improve active transportation • Reduce commute times • Challenges and opportunities associated with a possible Mid-Peninsula Highway • Sewage lagoons can double as wetlands and waterfowl habitat • Adopt bolder vision for Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan
<p>Sustainable Region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban sprawl • Urban boundary expansions • Protecting drinking water • Waterfront development • Increase in algae making beaches unsafe to swim • Flooding and storm damage to waterfronts • Shoreline erosion (e.g. Lake Erie) • Loss of forest cover and natural features due to development • Concern that aggregate companies are not following regulations which impacts the natural environment • Inappropriate development • Challenge to achieve open creek conveyance (rather than pipes) • Illegal dumping in natural areas • Impact of infrastructure development on the natural environment (e.g. in Greenbelt) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the natural environment, including natural features and areas within smaller communities and urban areas • Reduce tree-cutting for development, as trees sequester carbon and absorb water • Park naturalization and green roofs • Low impact development standards • Increase buffers for lakeshores, wetlands, and watercourses and naturalize the buffers • Connect natural features and areas within a natural heritage system • Purchase and protect land that can serve as linkages between natural features and areas • Protect vulnerable areas from recreational uses that may damage natural features • Establish targets relative to the protection of natural environment (e.g. tree canopy target) • Eliminate invasive phragmites • Replant areas that have been cleared due to ash borer • Identify flood zones and prohibit development in flood-prone areas • Develop a water usage plan

Theme	Biggest Challenges	Biggest Opportunities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that sustainability and climate change is central to all chapters of the Official Plan • Go beyond provincial minimum requirements for climate change, which are inadequate • Set strong greenhouse gas reduction targets, including targets for net-zero communities • Use natural features and areas to mitigate and adapt to climate change • Prioritize sustainable development to address climate change • Electric vehicle infrastructure • More transit and cycling infrastructure • Relief roads to reduce congestion and pollution on the QEW • Ensure scientific studies guide planning and development • More recycling and community involvement • Electrify more of the Niagara River

Appendix 3B – Written Submissions

Overview of Top Three Themes

Protection of the natural environment

- Concerns regarding loss of environmental features and wildlife habitat
- Need a mapped natural heritage system and stronger environmental policies to protect the natural environment and plan for climate change
- Any references to biological offsetting should be eliminated from the plan
- Establish an Environmental Advisory Committee
- Hold meetings with environmentalists at more accessible locations (e.g. Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines)
- Importance of scenic conservation (e.g. scenic by-ways)

Managing growth and housing

- Need to use our land wisely and limit the number of single-detached dwellings, parking lots and big box smart centre plazas
- Concerns regarding lack of affordable housing
- Concerns that “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) opposition from residents and councillors is limiting the development of affordable housing
- Concerns regarding social impacts of higher-density development

Ensuring infrastructure supports growth

- Concerns regarding sewage overflows in extreme weather events and sewage flowing into Lake Ontario
- Should bury all hydro wires
- Expand GO Train service in Niagara
- Make improvements to Casablanca Blvd. and expand Livingston Ave. in Grimsby
- Request to add a portion of Highway 122 between Garrison Road and Dominion Road in Fort Erie to the Bikeways Master Plan
- Need infrastructure and political coordination and alignment to meet the aggressive population and employment numbers for Niagara Region
- Need to ensure infrastructure can adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Requests to include specific requirements relating to TransCanada Pipelines infrastructure in the new plan