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## MEMORANDUM

CWCD 421-2019

**Subject: New Niagara Official Plan Updates**

**Date: November 15, 2019**

**To: Regional Council**

**From: Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP, Manager Community Planning**

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The purpose of this memo is to provide Regional Council with an update on several components of the new Niagara Official Plan. The background studies and reports referenced below can all be found under the Rural and Natural Systems tab of the new Niagara Official Plan webpage: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/default.aspx>

### **Aggregates**

The Aggregates Resources Policy Project was initiated in 2014 and a background report to inform the project was finalized in 2016 titled: “*State of Aggregate Resources in Niagara Region: Background Report*”.

Since the finalization of the background report there have been changes by the Province to the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and Niagara Escarpment Plan; *Aggregate Resources Act*; as well as the introduction of Bill 139. A technical addendum, to summarize these legislative changes, was completed to assess policy implications.

The Province has again indicated that aggregate policies at the Provincial-level are under review. There are additional proposed changes to both the *Provincial Policy Statement* and *Aggregate Resources Act*. When the Province finalizes the latest round of changes, draft policies will be prepared for consultation.

The Background Report, Technical Addendum, can be found on the Rural and Natural Systems webpage

### **Agriculture**

Background work for the Agriculture & Rural Area section of the new Niagara Official Plan has been underway since 2015. Most recently, the focus has been on refining the Province of Ontario’s Agricultural System Mapping (released in 2018) which applies to all of Niagara. These mapping refinements have been carried out in consultation with the applicable lower tier municipalities to reflect on the ground realities. Mapping refinements will be completed in draft format for consultation by the end of 2019.

During the 2015-2017 Provincial Coordinated Policy Review, and since the implementation of the new Niagara Official Plan work program, the Region and local

municipalities have received requests for land to be removed from the Greenbelt Plan area. Greenbelt designations are a Provincial responsibility and are beyond the purview of the Regional Official Plan. If the Province indicates changes to Greenbelt mapping, the Region can incorporate those changes in the new Niagara Official Plan.

Policy review and development has been ongoing since 2017, with Regional staff having participated at several opportunities in Provincial Policy development. This work program has been closely aligned with the Natural Environment Work Program, ensuring that the agricultural community has input into Natural Environment policy. Moving forward, draft policies are expected in early 2020 for consultation.

### **Archaeology**

As part of the new Niagara Official Plan, Niagara Region has retained Archaeological Services Inc. to prepare and consult on a Regional Archaeological Management Plan.

The plan will:

- Support the goals and directions of provincial planning documents
- Identify and map areas of archaeological potential
- Ensure the long-term protection of archaeological resources
- Streamline the planning and development review process
- Provide clear direction for when archaeological assessments will be required

The plan will also integrate planning protocols for resource management implementation and Aboriginal engagement.

A background report on the Regional Archaeological Management Plan was recently released and will be available shortly on the Rural and Natural Systems webpage.

### **Climate Change**

A Climate Change Discussion Paper has been prepared by staff as part of the work program for the new Niagara Official Plan. This discussion paper builds upon previous climate change work completed at Niagara Region over the course of the past decade. The purpose of this paper is to provide information and engage readers through the use of discussion questions. Feedback from this paper will inform the development of policies suitable for the new Niagara Official Plan.

Climate Change has been identified at both the Provincial and Regional level as a key area for land use planning policy development. Feedback received will inform options moving forward. It is expected that options and draft policies will be presented to Council in mid 2020.

The Climate Change Discussion paper is currently in the process of being posted on the Rural and Natural Systems webpage. Staff have requested that discussion question feedback be submitted by December 31, 2019.

### **Natural Environment**

The Natural Environment Work Program was the topic of a recent presentation and report to Planning and Economic Development Committee ([PDS 32-2019](#)).

The purpose of the report was to update Council on the status of the Natural Environment Work Program, and to share that the Mapping Discussion Paper, Watershed Planning Discussion Paper, and Natural Environment Background Study are complete and posted to the Rural and Natural Systems webpage.

The next phase of the work program is to develop and evaluate options for the natural systems. This work will be documented the second technical paper: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s).

If you have questions about any of these topic areas, please don't hesitate to contact the undersigned, or staff in the Region's Community Planning Division.

Respectfully submitted by

Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP  
Manager Community Planning