

**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members of Planning, Public Works & Transportation Committee

**REPORT FROM:** Melissa Ricci, Planner – Policy

**DATE:** April 10, 2018

**REPORT NO.:** PLS-2018-0031

**RE:** **Watershed Planning Guidance – HAPP Joint Submission**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Report No. PLS-2018-0031, dated April 10, 2018, and titled “Watershed Planning Guidance – HAPP Joint Submission”, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council formally endorses the comments contained in the HAPP Joint Submission(attached as Schedule A of this Report) dated April 6, 2018, from the Halton Area Planning Partnership to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) regarding the document released on February 6, 2018, and titled “Watershed Planning in Ontario: Guidance for Land-use Planning Authorities” (available as Schedule B to this report);

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of Report No. PLS-2018-0031 be forwarded to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), the Region of Halton, the City of Burlington, and the Towns of Oakville and Milton, as the comments of Council for the Town of Halton Hills on the Watershed Planning Guidance.

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 6, 2018, the Province released the Draft Watershed Planning in Ontario: Guidance for Land-use Planning Authorities to support the implementation of policy amendments made through the Coordinated Plan Review (2017), which includes revisions to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

These new Plans set stronger requirements for municipalities and other planning authorities to undertake watershed planning to inform key land use planning and infrastructure decisions. For instance, the 2017 Growth Plan requires municipalities to complete watershed planning to inform land use decisions related to settlement area expansion, major developments and planning for municipal infrastructure. The Watershed Planning Guidance also supports the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) which requires planning authorities to protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning.

This report summarizes the content of the Halton Area Partnership (HAPP) Submission on the draft Watershed Planning Guidance. The Joint Submission has already been submitted to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), in order to meet the April 6 deadline for comments. Through this submission, HAPP provided general comments related to the Guidance document and comments specific to individual sections of the Guidance documents.

Specifically, Town staff highlighted that the Guidance document should:

- Clearly distinguish the scale, scope and deliverables of watershed planning/subwatershed planning and watershed plans/subwatershed plans;
- Provide specific transition timelines to ensure that new requirements do not negatively impact ongoing projects; and
- Clarify the distinction between adaptation and mitigation for integrating climate change and watershed/subwatershed planning processes

### **Watershed Planning in the Town**

It is important to note that the Town has a long history of undertaking subwatershed planning. Recently, subwatershed plans are underway for secondary plan processes such as Vision Georgetown and Premier Gateway (Phase 1B). The Town through its Official Plan supports the preparation and implementation of watershed and subwatershed plans within the Town and the surrounding areas (Section C7.1). Watershed plans are related to an area of land that drains into a watercourse or body of water while subwatershed plans are specifically related to an area of land that drains into a tributary of a large watercourse or body of water. The intent of these plans is to provide direction on how to improve water quality, reduce flood damage and protect natural resources in a watershed or subwatershed.

Generally, the responsibility of preparing watershed plans rests with the Region in partnership with the appropriate Conservation Authority and in consultation with the Town (e.g. Sixteen Mile Creek Watershed Plan). Subwatershed plans are prepared by the Town in cooperation with the appropriate Conservation Authority and are typically prepared prior to the approval of a Secondary Plan, which guides development of greenfield areas (e.g. Vision Georgetown, Premier Gateway Phase 1B). Subwatershed Studies can also be led by the Conservation Authority as part of an overall program not directly related to development (e.g. Silver Creek, Black Creek)

### **COMMENTS:**

The Watershed Planning Guidance contains information to assist municipalities and planning authorities in carrying out watershed planning including direction on how to prepare elements of a watershed and subwatershed plan and how to use watershed and subwatershed planning to inform land use, infrastructure planning and decision making. In general, HAPP supports the Province's goals and objectives related to the protection of water resources and the need for watershed planning to inform land use planning. The key points of the joint submission, which address the concerns of the Town of Halton Hills and the other local municipalities, can be summarized as follows:

## **1) Scope and Scale**

HAPP recommends that the Guidance document should clearly distinguish between watershed and subwatershed planning. The distinction between the two terms is unclear throughout the document and the overlaps in terminology makes it difficult to determine the differences in deliverables, level of detail expected, roles and responsibilities and applicable timelines for watershed plans versus subwatershed plans.

The Province is encouraged to provide flexibility for municipalities to undertake watershed planning for the purpose of delineating a water resource system and scoping future subwatershed plans within their own jurisdictional boundaries. The preparation of larger watershed plans should be optional, if the requirements can be met in other ways.

Lastly, HAPP highlights that delineating water resource systems including ground water features and areas, surface water features and key hydrologic functions at the watershed level may result in unrefined data. Refinements will need to be conducted by municipalities at a subwatershed level as part of area-specific planning processes, where applicable.

## **2) Distinguishing Guidance from Policy**

HAPP recommends that the Guidance document avoid using overly prescriptive language that could be interpreted as creating unintended new policy requirements and clarify the difference between undertaking watershed 'planning' as an informative process versus developing an actual watershed 'plan'.

## **3) Transition**

HAPP suggests that transitions provisions should acknowledge the importance of avoiding delays to ongoing review processes while maintaining flexibility for municipalities to determine the appropriate timing/sequencing of integrating updated requirements into the official plan review process.

The Province should also clarify if there are triggers for the initiation/updating of studies/plans, content, process and baseline standards for all scenarios that require watershed planning including for established settlement areas and greenfield areas.

## **4) Funding**

Implementing new watershed planning processes will likely require additional staff and financial resources to support long-term planning studies in coordination with conservation authorities, upper-tier municipalities and municipalities sharing watershed boundaries. Monitoring processes requirements, identified in the Guidance document, will also need long term funding. The HAPP Joint Submission notes that the Province should commit additional funding to support municipalities in implementing new watershed planning requirements.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This report relates directly to the implementation of the Town Strategic Plan, in particular, **Strategic Direction I: Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal**

**Government;** the **Goal** to provide strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services, and the following Strategic Objectives:

**I.6** To Participate fully in Region-wide initiatives to protect and promote the Town's objectives; and

**I.7** To foster a greater understanding of the Town's roles and responsibilities and relationships with other orders of government.

This report also relates directly to **Strategic Direction B: Preserve, Protect and Enhance our Environment** and the follow Strategic Objective:

**B.1** To protect and conserve the quantity and quality of our ground and surface water resources, and ensure the integrity of our watersheds and aquatic ecosystems through integrated watershed planning and management.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct financial impact associated with this report.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

The Joint Submission to which this report relates was the result of consultation with the Halton Area Planning Partnership, represented by planning staff from the Region of Halton, the City of Burlington, and the Towns of Oakville, Milton, and Halton Hills.

#### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The Province published the Watershed Planning Guidance in the Environmental Registry of Ontario on February 6, 2018. The registry allows the public to comment and share thoughts on proposed acts, regulation and policies. The consultation was open until April 7, 2018.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report **advances** the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the **Environmental Health Pillar** which emphasizes water resource conservation, particularly, the goal to protect and enhance water resources over the long-term and in the face of population growth, climate change and other challenges. In summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is **Good**.

If the Province considers the comments and addresses the concerns presented in the Joint Submission, the Draft Watershed planning Guidance will ultimately support the

Town's sustainability goal to prepare and implement watershed plans that can protect, enhance, and rehabilitate local water resources.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

A copy of this report will be forwarded to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOCC), the Region of Halton, the City of Burlington, the Towns of Milton and Oakville, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Conservation Halton and Credit Valley Conservation.

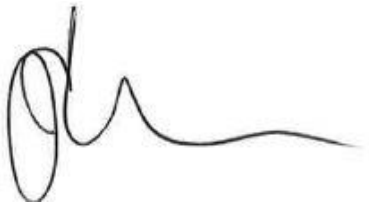
**CONCLUSION:**

This report summarizes the comments of Town Staff with regard to the draft Watershed Planning Guidance. It is recommended that this report be received by Council and that the HAPP Joint Submission (attached as Schedule A of this report) be endorsed.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Steve Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Burke" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Burke, Manager of Planning Policy

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Linhardt". The signature is very stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Brent" and last name "Marshall" clearly distinguishable.

Brent Marshall, CAO