



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Planning Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	April 15, 2014
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Requalification of Municipal Building Officials (PED14071) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Neil Everson Acting General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

At its meeting of January 29, 2014, Hamilton City Council considered correspondence dated December 18, 2013, received from the County of Lambton. The correspondence was in the form of a letter, addressed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In the letter, the County of Lambton expressed their opposition with respect to the impending mandatory requalification of Building Officials. Council referred this correspondence to the Acting General Manager of Planning and Economic Development for a report back to the Planning Committee.

## Information:

In 2005, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing implemented a Certification Program for all Building Officials and Designers in the Province of Ontario. The Program is still in place today. To become certified, applicants must prove themselves knowledgeable in a wide range of competencies by successfully passing a series of Ministry exams. This robust series of examinations include all aspects of the Ontario Building Code, including legal processes, construction of houses and small buildings, construction of large and complex buildings, plumbing, on-site sewage treatment and heating/ventilating/air conditioning. Once fully qualified to the competency level required for their position, Building Officials can then review permit applications, issue permits on behalf of the Chief Building Official and inspect work being constructed under the auspices of Building Permits.

The Ministry also incorporated into this new legislation a requalification component. This ongoing requalification regime is intended to ensure that Building Officials remain capable in performing their duties.

Although the details have not been finalized yet, a requalification program could include:

- the full retesting of Building Officials in all competencies; or,
- a less onerous maintenance program.

As described in the correspondence from the County of Lambton, a full-fledged requalification regime (one that mandates the full retesting of Building Officials) will likely prove to be a financial hardship to many municipalities. Staff agrees that this process would add budgetary pressures to municipal Building Departments across the Province in terms of registration costs and examination fees. Additionally, Building Officials will be required to be away from their offices to attend examinations, while still being expected to provide timely services to permit applicants, (i.e. legislated timelines for permit issuance and inspection services). Since Building Officials have already proven themselves competent by completing the current Certification Program, these costs would be an unnecessary reallocation of municipal resources.

A maintenance program that requires mandatory retraining of Building Officials, that highlights changes in the Ontario Building Code, may be a more viable and realistic method of implementing a maintenance program. This less arduous program would take into consideration the already attained certification of Building Officials and would recognize that Building Officials stay current with the Ontario Building Code by enforcing it daily, by ongoing training initiatives implemented by Chief Building Official and strict adherence to Building Official Code of Ethics.

The City of Hamilton acknowledges the essential role played by the Ministry's Building and Development Branch in promoting ongoing maintenance of a Building Official's certification. The City is confident that the Ministry will strike a balance between a requalification program that requires Building Officials to stay competent in their vocation while recognizing the status to which they have already attained. A more modest program that is designed to keep Building Officials current through a maintenance program would be more cost effective for municipalities and would maintain the already high calibre of Building Officials that serve in Ontario's municipalities.

Given this information, it is recommended that this item be removed from the Planning Committee Outstanding Business List.

JWL/sc