



Hamilton

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March 8, 2023

The Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

**Re: Municipal Reporting on Planning Matters
Proposed Minister's Regulation under the *Planning Act***

Dear Minister:

This letter provides staff-level comments in response to Proposal 23-MMAH001, Municipal Reporting on Planning Matters – Proposed Minister's Regulation under the *Planning Act*.

The City of Hamilton welcomes transparency with respect to development activity and development approvals. For several years now, the City of Hamilton has reported publicly on development activity levels in the City and development review timelines. The underlying data has also been available through our open data portal.

The City of Hamilton has reviewed the proposed datapoints and the information to be reported as part of the proposed regulation and, based on our experience, has identified a number of challenges with the proposal. It is important to note that our assessment of data availability and reporting efforts is based on a number of assumptions. More information, including data definitions and reporting templates, is needed to understand the full impacts of the proposed reporting requirements.

Of particular concern to the City is the time and staff resources that will be required to comply with the regulation, especially given our current focus on expedited development review and development approvals. The City would not currently be able to generate automated reports from a single data source to satisfy all of the quarterly reporting requirements. This means that more labour-intensive, manual processes would need to be used to consolidate data for quarterly reporting, resulting in significant impacts on staff resources. Reporting will also require changes to data entry processes to capture datapoints in alignment with Ministry requirements and to produce reliable automated reports in the future, again resulting in significant impacts on staff resources. The historical data being requested is of particular concern. Due to required changes in our business processes over the past few years to adhere to the various provincial planning regulation amendments, not all historical data is available to satisfy the Ministry's one-time reporting requirement. This work would be required to be completed manually, resulting in significant impacts on staff resources.

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To reduce administrative burden in reporting, the Province should ensure that the required data is not duplicated in other reporting mandates from the various provincial ministries. The Province should also consider whether reduced reporting frequency (e.g. semi-annually or annually) would provide the same value to the Province while reducing administrative burden on municipalities.

The City also notes that some of the required data (GIS-related data) is governed by strict data-sharing and licensing agreements. It is unclear whether this data can be shared with external parties.

As a general comment, the form of the data requested does not reflect the planning process nor the full scope of planning applications. For example, the proposed format does not contemplate an application being deemed "incomplete" after being received, nor does the requested format differentiate between the purpose of a consent application (e.g. lot creation, easement, lot addition, mortgage) and similar for a plan of condominium that may not actually create any residential lots/units (e.g. a common element condominium limited to a private driveway).

In addition to the above administrative and process related concerns, the background information provided with the proposal suggests that annual costs to municipalities to compile and forward the information to the Ministry will be approximately \$3,300. Based on the time required to compile this information as part of the City of Hamilton's internal reporting and Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada reporting (formerly the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative), the City believes that the actual cost will be significantly higher, especially for the historical data which may not be available in an electronic format. Our preliminary estimate is that that this regulation will require, at minimum, 0.5 FTE (staffing resources) to compile the data and submit to the Province in the proposed format.

City of Hamilton staff with expertise in the development approvals process and data collection and reporting are available to meet with Provincial staff to clarify the City of Hamilton's comments and assist in the development of a monitoring framework that would build upon the City's existing best practices and processes. Please do not hesitate to contact Rob Lalli, Director of Strategic Initiatives at (905) 546-2424, Ext. 4674 if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Yours sincerely,



Jason Thorne
General Manager
Planning and Economic Development Department
City of Hamilton

cc Rob Lalli, Director, Strategic Initiatives