



Proposed Expansion of the Niagara Escarpment Plan: Municipality of Meaford

October 20, 2016 | Niagara Escarpment Commission | 232 Guelph Street, Georgetown

Barb Clumpus, Mayor

Denyse Morrissey, CAO

Rob Armstrong, Director of Development and Environmental Services, RPP

Environmental Stewardship

- The Municipality of Meaford has demonstrated our ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability through our Planning policies and procedures.
- The Municipality of Meaford has also demonstrated this commitment through collaboration with Grey County on their “Green in Grey” Plan.
- We are aware of, and in compliance with, the 7 stated objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Our Concerns

- Has the NEC identified a gap between the stated objectives, and the Municipality of Meaford's current stewardship of environmentally sensitive areas currently within the NEP?
- Are these proposed additions necessary or are they a replacement of the controls already in place at the local level?
- Has consideration been given to the increase in administration costs needed to reduce the delays in the approval of development permits, while increasing the processes and staffing needed to manage these changes and expansion plans?
- Enforcement within the current NEP is often left to local Municipalities. Has consideration been given to the added resources, including financial resources, required by Municipalities to enforce compliance on the added lands?
- There is a great deal of confusion about the proposed changes to designations of existing properties currently within the NEP including discrepancies in mapping, unclear definitions such as "outlier" lands, and lack of detail.

Our Requests

- We propose that a more collaborative consultation process be developed to discuss these concerns, and that the process be extended for 12 months beyond the current deadline of October 31, 2016.
- The Municipality of Meaford, as well as the other communities affected by these expansion plans, must be considered **full partners** in this process as opposed to commenting agencies.

NEP Expansion Impact

- Our total municipal land area (excluding the military base) is 51,474 ha.
- Of this, 13,750 ha are currently within the NEP boundaries.
- The area of lands proposed for addition to the NEP is 20,921 ha.
- This would leave only 16,803 ha of land, or 32.6% of the land area of the Municipality of Meaford, under our planning control.

Current Designations Under Official Plan

- Of the proposed 20,921 ha expansion area, our Official Plan presently designates:
 - 27% as Environmental Protection
 - 25% as Agricultural
 - 47% as Rural
- The **Environmental Protection** designation includes protection and natural function policies which are intended to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of the natural heritage system, and to provide the tools to properly assess development applications located in close proximity to environmentally sensitive features and areas.
- The **Agricultural** designation permits only farm-related lot creation (ie. 40 ha parcels) and the intent of the designation is to maintain and protect the agricultural resource base of the municipality and to protect land suitable for agricultural production from development and land uses unrelated to agriculture.
- The **Rural Designation** permits very limited lot creation, subject to technical considerations (such as access, environmental constraints, adjacent lands, servicing availability etc.).
- Of particular significance to us is that the proposed expansion area includes lands currently within the primary settlement area of Meaford including 17.5 ha of lands designated within the Official Plan for urban employment purposes.

No Significant Development Pressures

Financial Impact

- The proposed changes to the Escarpment Natural Area designations could result in an estimated total loss of property tax revenue of \$698,900 or \$405,200 for the affected municipalities, and \$293,700 for the County of Grey.
- Specifically, the municipality of Meaford could expect an annual loss of **\$87,610** in taxation revenue.

*As Per Grey County Report PDR-PCD-35-15: Proposed Changes to the Niagara Escarpment Plan

Council Resolution

Whereas, the Niagara Escarpment Commission has proposed a major expansion to the present designated area; and

Whereas, the proposed changes will have definite negative economic impacts to the local municipalities involved, in particular the Municipality of Meaford; and

Whereas, the municipalities in which the expansion is proposed already have ample and adequate planning policies in place via the local and county official plans, and the Provincial Policy Statement;

Now therefore be it resolved that Council of the Municipality of Meaford oppose the proposed changes or expansion to the Niagara Escarpment Plan until a more collaborative consultation exercise has taken place, involving affected lower tier municipalities, the County of Grey, and most importantly, our local residents; and

Furthermore, that Council of the Municipality of Meaford support the recent resolution from the County of Grey demanding a longer extension to the commenting process and no decisions made until the best interests of our local area and residents are completely examined and explained.

In Summary

The Municipality of Meaford requests the Niagara Escarpment Commission immediately:

1. Eliminate any further movement to add any more land to the current Niagara Escarpment Plan; and
2. To extend the current deadline for public comment until at least October 31, 2017 to allow for meaningful consultation with your municipal partners.

We have issued an online petition that has received over 200 signatures in 1 week. Many other Meaford residents have submitted comments directly to planreview@escarpment.org.