



Staff Report

Planning & Building Services – Planning Division

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: March 17, 2026
Report Number: PBS.26.023
Title: Official Plan 5-Year Review Update
Prepared by: Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PBS.26.023, entitled “Official Plan 5-Year Review Update”;

AND THAT Council direct Planning Staff to submit a written request to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to obtain written approval to add new policy sections and complete application requirements as already provided for in the June 2, 2025 Council adopted Official Plan 5-Year Review.

AND THAT Council direct Planning Staff to report back to Council on any decisions from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing including updates to the Official Plan 5-Year Review document for consideration of final adoption.

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to advise Council on legislative changes that impact the final approval by the County of Grey on the Town of The Blue Official Plan 5-Year Review (“OP Review”) Bill 17 (Protect Ontario by Building Faster Act) introduced new sections to the Planning Act that now require written approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing before Council can adopt certain Official Plan Amendments (including the OP Review). These changes are just one Provincial change related to the standardization and increase provincial oversight of the development approvals process by requiring Provincial approval prior to the addition of new policies or complete application requirements under an Official Plan Amendment or 5-Year Review. The Province continues to seek changes that reduce delays, improve consistency/predictability, and shift more control from local municipalities to the Province on what can and cannot be required in a development approvals process.

The changes under Bill 17 came into effect on June 5, 2025 and were retroactive to May 12, 2025.

Council adopted the Official Plan 5-Year Review on June 2, 2025.

The “Official Plan Amendments” that are impacted are those that require additional studies, reports or drawings to be submitted as part of a complete application on a new Planning Submission such as subdivision, site plan, zoning by-law amendment, and others.

C. Background

The OP Review was adopted by Council on June 2, 2025 and sent to the County of Grey for approval. The County has been diligently working on their review, considering County and Provincial Policy, and Ontario legislation. As the Official Plan final approval decision rests with the County, the County also receives written and verbal comments from outside agencies, stakeholders and the public to seek out further changes from the Council adopted version. Generally this work can take approximately 6 months to complete and results in a list of “County Modifications”. The County can approve, approve with modifications, or refuse to approve a Municipal Official Plan. Generally the County will make those modifications and approve the Plan with those changes. Major changes to the Plan that may require further discussion such as direction changes to the intent of the Plan are often times sent back to the local municipality for a further decision.

The County has substantially completed their list of modifications, and have met with most stakeholders/individuals who have requested further County changes to the Plan.

Concurrent with this work, the County and the Town have been reviewing how Bill 17 affects the planning approvals process. Bill 17 received Royal Assent on June 5, 2025, and its changes to the Planning Act are retroactive to May 12, 2025. A key intent of Bill 17 is to limit what municipalities can require in order for a planning application to be considered “complete.” Bill 17 seeks to prevent an Official Plan from requiring new studies, reports, or drawings as a condition of deeming an application complete, unless those items are explicitly identified in the Official Plan list of complete application requirements.

Because municipalities must set out complete application requirements in their Official Plans (a prescribed list of information Section 22(5) of the Planning Act), the practical effect is that if a study, report, or drawing is not listed in the municipal Official Plan as part of the complete application requirements, the municipality cannot require it as part of a complete application submission.

Changes to Sections 17(21.1) and 17(21.2) of the Planning Act now require:

1. Written approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing before council adopts certain OP amendments; and
2. Includes a “deemed not adopted” rule for OP amendments adopted on or after May 12, 2025 without that written approval.

The OP Review contains changes to the prescribed list of Complete Application Requirements. (See [Section E10 of the Official Plan](#)) these changes are to implement the new policy direction, or are identified as industry best practices for required list of studies.

County and Town Staff obtained legal opinions and on the extent of the required Ministry Approvals, and if additional modifications could be made to receive County Approval on the Official Plan without having to go to the Ministry for written approvals.

Town, County and Ministry Staff also met on the Bill 17 changes and the Ministry was clear that County Approval is not an option as the Act deems the Official Plan Amendment for the Official Plan 5-Year Review as “not adopted.” Upon further discussions with the Ministry, it was also learned that it is simply not just the list of Complete Application requirements under Section E10 of the Official Plan that would require changes, but also any OP policy changes that can require additional information to be provided that was not previously required. This interpretation places a significant burden on the Official Plan approvals process as every new policy within the Plan that requires new consideration (new environmental, housing, infrastructure, transportation, heritage, subdivision, parkland, sustainable development, and other policies) will require written approval by the Ministry prior to Council adoption.

The Ministry has indicated that this process will require the identification of new policy and complete application requirements, the intent and purpose of those changes, the background and justification of those changes, and any other relevant information. The Ministry has asked for a concise list of changes and justification and not to approve the entire Official Plan document.

Based on the foregoing, Planning Staff recommends that Town and County Planning Staff continue to work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to obtain written approval for all new policy areas and complete application requirements.

D. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

E. Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts were considered in the development of the Official Plan 5-Year Review. the Town will continue to pursue the enhanced environmental policies contained in the Plan.

F. Financial Impacts

Additional Staff and Consultant time will be required. It is noted that the original budget for the Official Plan 5-Year Review still contains approximately \$7000 which will be used to cover the costs of this extra step. No additional budget funding is being requested.

G. In Consultation With

Liz Buckton, Senior Planner County of Grey
Scott Taylor, Director of Planning County of Grey
Tyler Shantz, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
The Blue Mountains Planning Staff
Tim Murawsky, CBO and Acting Director of Planning and Building Services
Adam Smith, CAO

H. Public Engagement

Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma,
planning@thebluemountains.ca

I. Attached

1. Nil

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Postma
Manager of Community Planning

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tim Murawsky - Feb 27, 2026 - 9:56 AM