Rumoured Changes Under Consideration for the Provincial Growth Plan

**1) New planning horizons with new population and employment forecasts** – potentially reconciling some of the significant differences between the Growth Plan forecasts and the Ministry of Finance forecasts which have been increasingly divergent. The planning horizon could be bumped out to 2051 or perhaps even 2061.

Given the current pandemic and economic collapse forecasting anything even a couple of months into the future is challenging let alone trying to figure out what the population, growth, and land needs will be decades from now.

**2) Updated Land Needs Assessment** with a “Market-based” focus that draws more heavily on historical data rather than the current “Target-based” models that utilize a broad array of data. This Market-based LNA has been shown to be slow to respond to changing markets (particularly rapidly changing markets) and leads towards “more of the same” – particularly detached single family greenfield homes.

**3) The ability to exceed forecasts –** allowing density targets to be met now to allow large numbers of single family detached homes immediately with other types of units (town-homes/apartments) that won’t be constructed for decades providing little needed housing choice or diverse neighbourhoods.

With less efficient singles dominating land use urban sprawl will be far greater and vast amounts of farmland in the GTA will be consumed faster making infrastructure, servicing and efficient/affordable public transit more difficult.

**4) Allowing urban boundary expansions to be done outside of Municipal Comprehensive Reviews (MCR’s)** – disrupting long-standing municipal/regional planning and challenging for smaller municipalities with less available resources.

**5) Changes to the Growth Plan as required to implement the above.** Public consultation and feedback procedures are uncertain during a pandemic (and perhaps not may even to happen due to recent COVID-19 changes to the EBR giving the government powers to bypass consultation).

There seems to be no reason why these Growth Plan changes are being proposed by the provincial government in the middle of a pandemic.

Altogether these potential changes could:

- open up vast amounts of farmland to low-density single family detached urban sprawl,

- make it challenging to still have meaningful intensification targets (already much reduced last year),

- make it difficult to build diverse and mixed-use communities providing housing choice in reasonable time-frames,

- have significant negative impacts on development charges, servicing/infrastructure requirements, and affordable public transit, and

- likely won’t provide the efficient, high quality, Smart Growth communities Canadians are demanding.