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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Community Growth and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2025-CG-10  
Date: October 7, 2025

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**Subject:**

Durham Region's response to the province's proposed updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline, [ERO Posting #025-0844](#)

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**Recommendation:**

That the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the letter dated October 8, 2025 (see Attachment #1) from the Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing be endorsed as Durham Region's comments on the proposed updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline;
- B) That the following recommendations form the Region's comments to the province on the proposed Projection Methodology, namely that:
  - i. Future updates to the Ministry of Finance population projections should consider constraints and opportunities for population growth, and include household and employment forecasts, allocated to the area municipal level of geography;
  - ii. The Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG) should include direction for municipalities to align work on housing needs assessments with housing and homelessness plans like At Home in Durham;

- iii. The PMG should acknowledge and provide direction on the challenges faced by municipalities from privately-led applications for settlement area boundary expansions; and
- C) That a copy of this report be forwarded to Durham local area municipalities, conservation authorities, and neighbouring municipalities for information.
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## Report:

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 On August 12, 2025, the province issued Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Posting [#025-0844](#) which proposed guidance to assist planning authorities with identifying population and employment forecasts and assessing land needs requirements to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024. Comments are requested by October 11, 2025 (a period of 60 days). Due to the commenting deadline being in advance of the October 29, 2025 Regional Council meeting, staff have prepared the attached letter that will be sent to the province. Following endorsement of the comments by Council, staff will follow-up with the province as necessary.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The province has set goals for increased housing supply to provide for a growing population and workforce. In 2024, the province released the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS, 2024), which applies to all planning decisions made on or after October 20, 2024.
- 2.2 The proposed Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG) is a reference document for implementing growth management policies of the PPS, 2024. It includes many of the steps which were required to conduct a land needs assessment (LNA) under the previous policy regime.
- 2.3 In the past, Durham Region was required to implement the forecasts in Schedule 3 of A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (Growth Plan). At the time, the Region was responsible for conducting the LNA and determining area municipal growth allocations. The Growth Plan was repealed in 2024 and has since been replaced with the new streamlined PPS, 2024, which no longer includes growth forecasts.

- 2.4 On January 1, 2025, the Region became an upper-tier municipality without planning responsibility, and the Regional Official Plan became the official plan for area municipalities in Durham. Area municipalities now have approval authority for Planning Act decisions, and the Region is no longer responsible for allocating growth.
- 2.5 For now, municipalities can base their forecasts on Envision Durham but could use an alternative approach. For their current Official Plan Reviews, Pickering and Oshawa have both referenced Envision Durham in their growth management studies. The Region will monitor how municipalities approach forecasting and growth management and provide support if needed.
- 2.6 Population and employment forecasts are important for municipalities to plan their communities. They are needed to support the need for urban boundary expansions, justify employment area conversions, and plan infrastructure and services such as community housing, paramedics, libraries, parks, transit roads, water and sewer. As required under the PPS, 2024, planning authorities shall base population and employment forecasts on the Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and may modify, as appropriate. These projections are published on an annual basis, with a more comprehensive update conducted every five years to coincide with Statistics Canada's Census release.
- 2.7 Municipalities are required to provide sufficient land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years, but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. However, Policy 2.1.3 of the PPS, 2024 specifies that, "planning for infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas, and employment areas may extend beyond this time horizon."
- 2.8 The proposed guidance outlines the appropriate methodologies and data sources to use to prepare these forecasts and land needs assessments. The proposed guidance is organized into four main sections including: establishing population projections; developing housing needs forecasts; developing employment forecasts; and land needs assessment.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 Council endorsed staff comments on the province's proposed new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, in report [#2024-COW-18](#) in May 2024.

3.2 Council endorsed staff comments on the province's initial proposed draft Provincial Planning Statement in report [#2023-P-19](#) in June 2023.

#### **4. Regional Comments on the Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guidance**

##### **Population Projection**

4.1 The MOF population projections are ultimately based on historical trends and cannot fully account for future events, such as, but not limited to, significant changes to near-term economic or housing market conditions, major business expansions or closures within a region of Ontario, infrastructure constraints and/or the timing of major regional or local improvements/expansions.

4.2 When allocating the MOF population projections, municipalities are required to determine their respective share of the Region's projected population. To address this population allocation process, the proposed PMG offers two methods:

- Method A is based on a municipality's current population share of the Region (i.e. based on the most recent Census data); and
- Method B is based on the municipality's share of population growth within the Region over the previous 10-year period.

4.3 These two methods will generate a range of results for population growth, particularly in cases where a municipality has experienced much higher population growth over the past 10 years relative to the average population growth rate for the region. Figure 1 illustrates how the two methods produce a population range for each area municipality. If all municipalities used method A, the total population would equal to the total for the region, but if any use Method B, then the total could be greater than the Ministry of Finance population projection total for the region.

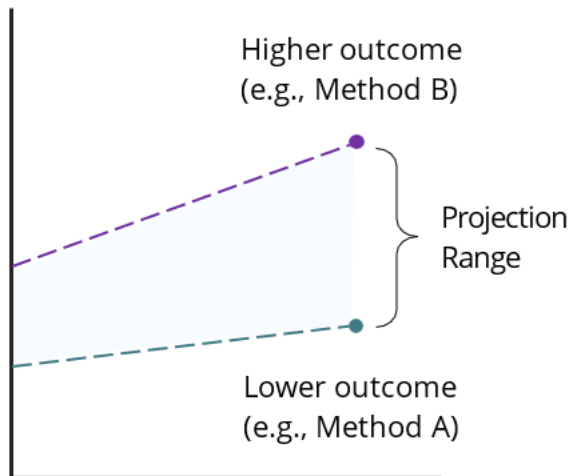


Figure 1: Illustration of the population projection range.

- 4.4 It is anticipated that this process will result in area municipal population forecasts that exceed the total for the region. **The Region may need to use a longer time horizon for planning infrastructure<sup>1</sup>** to temper the risk of higher growth allocations with realistic assumptions on constraints for growth and longer-term demand factors. Area municipalities may consult with the Region to ensure that development timing is concurrent with necessary infrastructure and services. The Region must also consider how growth is planned for in secondary plans, particularly where population will significantly exceed official plan forecasts.
- 4.5 **It is recommended that in the future, when the province updates the MOF population projections it should consider constraints and opportunities for population growth**, not simply historical trends. The MOF projections rely on historical trends to predict future growth; however, a municipality may not be able to maintain growth rates because of a lack of sewer capacity or environmental constraints. Conversely, new infrastructure projects may have opportunity to unlock development potential beyond the projections, or a municipality may have a significant amount of growth areas already designated that could be developed. Furthermore, MOF projections should also include household and employment forecasts, and it should allocate growth the area municipal level of geography. These changes would rationalize the municipal forecasting process for planning land use and infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> To account for higher growth allocations, infrastructure planning could also identify how much land is needed for a given time horizon. The Region could also consider post-period benefits in its DC By-laws.

## Housing Needs Forecasts

- 4.6 Following arrival at the population forecast, the proposed guidelines outline a three-step approach to determine the amount of housing needed for municipalities over the planning horizon based on the amount of population growth projected over the period. This includes identifying housing type and location to assess residential land needs. Municipalities are also encouraged to consider housing affordability and market demand.
- 4.7 The first step identifies the forecast population by age structure and the application of age-specific headship rates (i.e. proportion of people in a particular age group who become head of household). Based on the housing unit forecasts generated from the first step, the guidelines encourage municipalities to adjust housing needs to reflect local factors that influence housing needs, such as economic conditions, housing supply and demand, and infrastructure capacity.
- 4.8 **It is recommended that the PMG include direction for municipalities to align work on housing needs assessments with housing and homelessness plans like At Home in Durham.** This will help ensure that the work is consistent with efforts to support development of a range of housing options, including affordable and accessible housing. Since many funding applications and municipal planning processes require a housing needs assessment, it would be beneficial for them all to reference a common foundation.
- 4.9 Finally, municipalities are encouraged to establish and implement minimum intensification targets reflective of municipal objectives and local conditions. Envision Durham was completed under the Growth Plan which required intensification targets. While municipalities are still encouraged to have intensification targets, it is no longer a requirement. Furthermore, the province no longer prescribes the minimum intensification target, so municipalities may use a lower target. This may lead some municipalities to support more greenfield development which could result in more urban boundary expansions, lack of a diverse range of housing options, and the need for higher infrastructure investments to service these areas.

## Employment Forecasts

- 4.10 There are four steps proposed for establishing employment forecasts. Employment forecasts are to begin with using the activity rate (i.e. people to jobs ratio) to calculate the number of jobs based on population.

- 4.11 The proposed guidelines provide additional direction on how municipalities may adjust the forecast to reflect local considerations, categorize jobs into broad land use types, and then allocate employment growth between the policy areas. Once the employment forecast is confirmed, municipalities should establish employment allocations for designated growth areas.
- 4.12 The final step is planning for employment intensification. Major office and major institutional development are encouraged to be located in major transit station areas and other strategic growth areas. Municipalities will consider recent building permit data and development applications to assist with understanding market absorption and intensification potential.
- 4.13 The proposed approach for assessing employment needs considers demographic factors such as population growth and labour supply, in addition to other factors such as infrastructure capacity and government policies. The forecasts provide the basis for identifying how much land is needed to accommodate employment growth.

### **Land Needs Assessment**

- 4.14 The proposed PMG recognizes that different municipalities face various constraints on resources and sophistication to conduct a land needs assessment (LNA) for their communities. As such, it offers the choice of three methods for determining the land required for housing and jobs. Each approach aligns with the policies in the PPS, 2024, and considers local data and conditions.
- 4.15 The proposed PMG provides municipalities with a flexible framework for determining the amount of land required to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet a municipality's projected needs over a 20 to 30-year planning horizon.
- 4.16 Of the three possible methods proposed for the LNA, the first involves adding up the number of residents and jobs outside of employment areas. The residents and jobs would be simply divided by the planned density target for the municipality to determine the land need, and consequently the amount of additional land that is required. For employment areas, municipalities would follow a similar approach for employment land employment (e.g., manufacturing and warehousing jobs) and divide by an employment density target.
- 4.17 Method 2 is a more detailed approach and will provide the most accurate land assessment that is intended to lead to the most efficient use of land. It is similar to method 1 except that it uses specific densities for different housing types and job categories. Methods 1 and 2 are appropriate for most municipalities. Method 3 is a

simplified method, which provides steps to determining land needs when a municipality does not have detailed data available.

- 4.18 Municipalities should document their LNA through a detailed written report that justifies the specific outcomes. The results of the LNA determine the quantum of land that is required to accommodate growth. After considering how much intensification can reasonably be expected, it would be up to area municipalities to decide which locations are most appropriate for urban expansion and/or employment conversions.
- 4.19 **In general, Regional staff support the proposed PMG as a comprehensive tool to assist in future growth management.** It is helpful for municipalities to have flexibility to adopt a method which suits their local needs, resources and level of sophistication. Large, medium and small municipalities with different economic advantages should have different tools available to plan their communities. In Durham, lakeshore municipalities will most likely follow the more detailed method to make the most efficient use of land. Northern municipalities have less variability in land use and built form, and would most likely employ a more simplified method.

### **Implementation**

- 4.20 The proposed PMG outlines the significance of collaboration between municipalities and documentation of land needs assessment processes. It also identifies how land needs assessment results apply to the implementation of the PPS, 2024.
- 4.21 Coordination between the Regional and local area municipalities is fundamental for achieving the outcomes of all steps of the forecasting and land needs assessment processes. Collaboration is recommended to ensure that allocations for each municipality plan for future housing needs, infrastructure, and other constraints across the region. Some Regional services such as water and sewer are essential for neighbourhoods to be livable. Paramedics, police, transit and other Regional services, such as new waste management, social services and public health facilities are also important for communities to function properly.
- 4.22 The Region can be an effective partner to help municipalities monitor and manage growth in Durham. The Region will work with local area municipalities to monitor population, employment and development activity and identify local opportunities and constraints for growth. For example, the Region could provide projections (location and timing) of future water and sewer capital works needed to accommodate future growth.

4.23 This exercise is expected to be undertaken at the time of creating a new official plan and/or with each official plan update. Given that the PPS, 2024, removed the requirement for municipal comprehensive reviews, municipalities may now consider settlement area boundary expansions at any time. As a result, there is also no limitation on the ability of landowners from applying for such expansions.

4.24 **Concern remains with potential invitation of speculation and ad-hoc settlement area boundary expansion submissions**, lengthy appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT), and unnecessary challenges to long-term servicing and infrastructure planning. While the proposed PMG recognizes this work should be completed collaboratively between the local area municipalities and Region, where applicable, there is no acknowledgement or limitations placed on challenges or privately-led updates to municipally-led exercises that were undertaken as part of an official plan update/review and deemed in conformity with the PPS. The Region is already experiencing pressure to service growth outside of the areas recently approved through the Region's former official plan that are competing for resources to continue to service growth within the 2031 urban boundary and the new 2051 urban areas.

## 5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

5.1 This report aligns with the following Strategic Directions in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C1. Align Regional infrastructure and asset management with projected growth, climate impacts, and community needs.
- C2. Enable a full range of housing options, including housing that is affordable and close to transit.
- C3. Improve public transit system connectivity, reliability, and competitiveness.
- C5. Improve digital connectivity and multi-channel access to information, resources, and service navigation.

b. Strong Relationships

- S3. Collaborate across local area municipalities, with agencies, non-profits, and community partners to deliver co-ordinated and efficient services.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In general, Regional staff support the proposed PMG. It is helpful for municipalities to have flexibility to adopt a method which suites their local needs, resources and level of sophistication.
- 6.2 To effectively plan for infrastructure, it may be necessary for infrastructure and service providers to use longer planning horizons than the 30 years included in the projection methodology guideline, and adjust as necessary, to effectively match investment and service implementation to the pace of development.
- 6.3 Future updates to the MOF population projections should consider constraints and opportunities for population growth, and include household and employment forecasts, allocated to the area municipal level of geography.
- 6.4 The PMG should include direction for municipalities to align work on housing needs assessments with housing and homelessness plans like At Home in Durham.
- 6.5 The Region is committed to working with area municipalities to monitor population, employment and development activity and identify local opportunities and constraints for growth.
- 6.6 The PMG should acknowledge and provide direction on the challenges faced by municipalities from privately-led applications for settlement area boundary expansions.
- 6.7 For additional information, contact: Michael Blake, Principal Planner, at [michael.blake@durham.ca](mailto:michael.blake@durham.ca).

## 7. Attachments

Attachment #1: Letter to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Durham Region Staff Comments on Environmental Registry of Ontario Postings #025-0844, Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline

Attachment # 2: [Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Sandra Austin  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer



October 8, 2025

**The Regional Municipality of  
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**Community Growth and  
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**Community Growth Division**

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**Sandra Austin**  
Commissioner of Community  
Growth and Economic  
Development

The Honourable Rob Flack  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Flack:

**Re: Region of Durham Staff Response to Environmental  
Registry of Ontario Postings #025-0844 related to the  
Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology  
Guideline to support the implementation of the  
Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024)**

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024) released for comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (Postings #025-0844).

The proposed updates were introduced on August 12, 2025, with a commenting period of 60 days (feedback requested by October 11, 2025), which closes prior to our next Regional Council meeting. Please accept the enclosed Commissioner's Report #2025-CG-10 and the following staff comments, which were presented to the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Committee at its October 7, 2025, meeting.

- 1) In general, Regional staff support the proposed Projection Methodology Guideline. It is helpful for municipalities to have flexibility to adopt a method which suits their local needs, resources and level of sophistication.
- 2) Future updates to the Ministry of Finance population projections should consider constraints and opportunities for population growth, and include household and employment forecasts, allocated to the area municipal level of geography.



**The Regional Municipality of Durham**

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**Sandra Austin**  
Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development

- 3) The Projection Methodology Guideline should include direction for municipalities to align work on housing needs assessments with housing and homelessness plans like At Home in Durham.
- 4) The Projection Methodology Guideline should acknowledge and provide direction on the challenges faced by municipalities from privately-led applications for settlement area boundary expansions.
- 5) The Region is committed to working with area municipalities to monitor population, employment and development activity and identify local opportunities and constraints for growth.

The Region is looking forward to collaborating with local area municipalities to implement the updated Projection Methodology Guideline, once finalized, to ensure that allocations for each municipality adequately plans for future housing needs and growth-related infrastructure across the region.

The enclosed report and comments will be considered at the October 29, 2025, Regional Council meeting. Should Regional Council make any changes to the comments, Regional staff will follow up accordingly. If you have any questions about the above noted comments, please contact Michael Blake, Principal Planner at [michael.blake@durham.ca](mailto:michael.blake@durham.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Austin', written in a cursive style.

Sandra Austin  
Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development

Encl.