

## The challenge: add 7,000 residents in 20 years

Orangeville Council has to make some hard decisions moving forward if they are going to meet the growth requirements outlined by the Province in the County's Official Plan (OP), which was finalized last year, within its present boundaries.

Following the development of the County's OP, each municipality moved forward with its own Official Plan to meet the terms. At the County level, the OP raised concerns amongst municipal leaders regarding the Province's expected growth plans, particularly within Orangeville, where there is not much land left for expansion while remaining a small community within large, natural areas. At Orangeville Council last week, Jim Dymont, a consultant from MHBC Planning, spoke to council and presented an Official Plan Review, outlining the changes Orangeville needs to plan for in order to reach the numbers determined by the Province by the year 2036.

During the period of review for Orangeville's Official Plan, MHBC worked with a market analyst company, Urban Metrics, to help identify how much industrial, commercial and residential growth would need to happen.

According to the report, in 2015, Orangeville's population sat at 29,540, with the government hoping to see that grow to 36,490 by 2036. While at first glance the increase might not seem that large, particularly with 20 more years left to reach it, providing enough housing, jobs and a strong enough economy to support another nearly 7000 people could be a challenge.

When it comes to housing growth, the plan outlines an intensification of 1800 units required, but Mr. Dymont suggested applying for a reduced number.

"We do not know how you could provide for 1800 intensified units and keep the character of this beautiful town," said Mr. Dymont.

"It would be very hard to achieve the 50 percent target and not affect the character of the area."

The reduced amount he suggested was 1,121, which was deemed as more realistic by the consultants.

Some of the suggestions for where these units could be included the re-designation of employment areas to residential, as well as the mixed use of older facilities that are currently in existence. Another suggestion involved the Humber Lands on Veterans Way, which could remain mostly designated as for institutions, but allow for specialized residential units. It could also be re-designated to mixed use for prestigious industrial uses and a master plan residential community designed to accommodate seniors.

The Town won't have to make any final decisions on the Official Plan until after opportunities for input from residents have been opened. Along with a public workshop to be held this evening (January 28) at Tony Rose Arena from 7 to 9 p.m., there will also be a statutory Open House on February 8, a special meeting of Council on March 7, and a tentative Statutory Public Meeting on March 21.

"These are such important things," Mayor Jeremy Williams said. "No wonder I have no hair, the number of times people ignore this stuff and then when this big monstrosity is put in their backyard, they come to council demanding to know where their opportunity for input was. This is it, this is where your input is required."

He added that regardless of how residents and Council feel, the Province feels this growth and intensification is important.

"They want to make use of the land," said Mayor Williams. "It is a challenge in Orangeville to preserve our way of life and meet the Province's demands. We want people to have their input. Don't do it three years from now when the plan is down in print. Do it now."

By Tabitha Wells