

Committee of the Whole Agenda

April 23, 2026

Following Council

Council Chambers - Grey County Administration Building

	Pages
1. Call to Order	
2. Declaration of Interest	
3. Business Arising from Minutes	
4. Delegations	
4.a Kate Burns Gallagher - Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC) Update - Priorities and Achievements	6
5. Determination of Items Requiring Separate Discussion	
6. Consent Agenda	
That the following Consent Agenda items be received; and	
That staff be authorized to take the actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in the staff reports; and	
That the correspondence be supported or received for information as recommended in the consent agenda.	
6.a TR-CW-19-26 Award of Tender RFT-TS-13-26 for the Reconstruction of Structure 900-363	25
That report TR-CW-19-26 containing the tender results for RFT-TS-13-26 regarding the replacement of structure 900-363 located on the Euphrasia - St. Vincent Townline on the border of Municipality of Meaford and the Municipality of Grey Highlands be received; and	
That Lancoa Contracting Inc. be awarded the tender for a total amount of \$714,413.33, excluding HST; and	
That action take place prior to Council approval as per section 26.6 b of the Procedural By-law.	
6.b TR-CW-21-26 Award of Motor Grader	30
That report TR-CW-21-26 containing the quotation results for the award of a motor grader be received; and	

That the contract be awarded to Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound for a total amount of \$643,700.00, excluding HST.

- 6.c PDR-CW-15-26 Marlane Farms Minor Exemption 33

That report PDR-CW-15-26 be received; and

That the application for minor exemption under the County’s Forest Management By-law for Part of Lot 54, Concession 2 EGR, geographic Township of Holland, now in the Township of Chatsworth, municipally known as 395656 Concession 2, be approved.

- 6.d FR-CW-09-26 Quarterly Purchasing Report Quarter 1 2026 37

That Report FR-CW-09-26 regarding the quarterly purchasing report for Quarter 1 2026 be received for information.

- 6.e PSR-CW-03-26 Purchase of Three New Ambulances for 2026 40

That Report PSR-CW-03-26 regarding ambulance purchases be received and that the purchase of three ambulances be awarded to TriStar Ambulances in the amount of \$743,148.00 plus HST; and

That three ambulances will be disposed of in accordance with the purchasing policy.

- 6.f AORS Request for Provincial Legislation Amendments Unsafe Working Conditions, Oro-Medonte and East Zorra Tavistock 43

That the correspondence received from the AORS, The Township of Oro - Medonte and East Zorra Tavistock regarding a request for provincial legislation amendments to improve the health and safety of municipal workers, including unsafe working conditions caused by interference, harassment and dangerous actions towards municipal staff be supported by the County of Grey; and

That a letter of support be sent to AMO for advocacy.

7. Items For Direction and Discussion

- 7.a Joint Municipal Services minutes dated April 16, 2026 50

That the Joint Municipal Services Committee meeting minutes dated April 16, 2026, be adopted as presented and the following resolutions contained therein be endorsed:

- i. Whereas Grey County and its member municipalities increasingly use a variety of engagement tools to inform service delivery, support decision making and to provide information to**

their Councils; and,

- ii. Whereas striving to increase equitable access to information and opportunities to influence public services is essential in providing open and transparent governance; and,
- iii. Whereas emerging technology provides innovative means of engaging with residents and communities in enhanced ways that reduce barriers and increase opportunities; and
- iv. Whereas the Joint Municipal Services Committee has sought to identify opportunities, aligned with the Strategic Plan, Working Better Together, to maximize effective shared use of resources and that Social Point has extended beneficial rates for a potential enterprise engagement solution; it is therefore recommended:
 - i. That report CAOR-JMS-10-26 regarding the single source purchase of the Social Point engagement platform be received; and
 - ii. That Grey County move forward with the purchase of the Social Point digital engagement platform in-year in 2026; and
 - iii. That the purchase be funded from the one-time general reserve and the annual renewal be included in the 2027 communications operating budget.

7.b PDR-CW-17-26 University of Guelph Student Project – Best Practices in Rural Event Venues

53

That PDR-CW-17-26 regarding a University of Guelph Student project entitled ‘Best Practices in Rural Event Venues’ be received; and

That staff be directed to use the student report as a resource to inform future planning policy recommendations; and

That the student report be shared with member municipalities across Grey County.

7.c FR-CW-07-26 2025 Year End Transfers

115

That Council receive FR-CW-07-26 titled 2025 Year-End Transfers and approve the recommendations as contained and estimated in the report; and
That Council approve any surplus/deficit arising in the 2025 budget being transferred to/(from) the respective departmental reserve; and
That remaining unfunded capital costs as of December 31, 2025 for the administration building renovation, Chatsworth paramedic base and Grey Gables roof be funded by an unbudgeted transfer from the One Time Funding Reserve of \$4,144,174, further to resolution

CW187-25.

- 7.d PDR-CW-18-26 County Comments on Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act 129

That report PDR-CW-18-26 be received, regarding Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026, and the related Environmental Registry and Regulatory Registry postings; and

That report PDR-CW-18-26 be forwarded on to the province as the County of Grey's comments on the proposed legislative and policy updates as posted on the Environmental Registry through postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009; and

That this report be shared with; Members of Provincial Parliament Vickers and Saunderson, the County's Planning and Economic Development Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee, and member municipalities in Grey County; and

That the County of Grey support the correspondence received from the Municipal Engineers Association regarding its comments on the Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003 and that County staff submit such support and comments to the Province; and

That staff be authorized to proceed prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6(b) of Procedural By-law 5134-22.

- 7.e ITR-CW-02-26 Single Sourcing IT Infrastructure as a Service 157

That report ITR-CW-02-26 be received; and

That staff proceed with purchasing hosted infrastructure services from Stage 2 Data as a single source purchase, totaling \$175,700 (excluding HST) in 2026, plus a one-time implementation fee of \$6,000.

That action be taken prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6 (b) of the Procedural By-law.

- 7.f CAOR-CW-13-26 Board of Health Appointments 161

That Report CAOR-CW-13-26 regarding appointments to the Board of Health be received; and

That the following four members be appointed to the Board of Health for the remainder of the 2022-2026 Council term:

- (to be determined)

8. Closed Meeting Matters

That the Committee of the Whole does now go into closed session pursuant to Section 239 (2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, to discuss:

- i. advice subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose (Board of Health appointments)**
- ii. labour relations or employee negotiations (OPSEU)**

- 9. Other Business**
- 10. Notice of Motion**
- 11. Adjournment**

GREY COUNTY COUNCIL

2026-04-23

A UNIFIED VOICE FOR RURAL
WESTERN ONTARIO

WHO WE ARE

- ▶ 15 Upper and Single Tier Municipalities
- ▶ 300 Communities, 117 municipalities
- ▶ More than 1.6 million residents
- ▶ 250, 000 businesses
- ▶ 1/2 million square kilometers
- ▶ 90% rural



WHAT WE DO

- ▶ WOWC works collectively to:
 - ▶ Advocate with one unified voice
 - ▶ Advance shared regional priorities
 - ▶ Provide research and evidence-based solutions
 - ▶ Build strategic partnerships
 - ▶ Strengthen local government capacity



OUR MISSION

- ▶ Advocating with a unified voice to advance common needs and opportunities, supporting sustainable economies and prosperous communities across Western Ontario.



STRATEGIC GOALS

- ▶ Voice for the Region
- ▶ Information Source
- ▶ Asset for Counties
- ▶ Valued Partner of Government



VOICE FOR THE REGION: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Priority #1: Infrastructure Development and Funding



- ▶ Infrastructure drives growth
- ▶ Rural municipalities lack per-capita revenue capacity
- ▶ Investment needed for roads, bridges, broadband, transit
- ▶ Growth without infrastructure creates economic barriers

Priority #2: Housing Affordability and Availability



- ▶ Rural housing supply and affordability
- ▶ Infrastructure capacity to support growth
- ▶ Tools that recognize rural development realities

Priority 3#: Workforce Development & Preservation



- ▶ Retaining and attracting talent
- ▶ Aligning training with employment demand
- ▶ Supporting agriculture, manufacturing, skilled trades
- ▶ Infrastructure + housing = workforce capacity

Priority #4: Mental Health, Services and Support



- ▶ Dedicated rural supports
- ▶ Wrap-around models
- ▶ Funding relief
- ▶ A sustainable approach to health and housing services

INFORMATION SOURCE



OUR ROLE AS A RESEARCH & INFORMATION SOURCE

- ▶ Key initiatives:
 - ▶ Workforce research
 - ▶ Housing and infrastructure data
 - ▶ Regional analytical tools
 - ▶ Partnerships with post-secondary, government and industry



ASSET FOR COUNTIES



COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

- ▶ Western Ontario Workforce Strategy
- ▶ Rural housing systems research
- ▶ Supply chain mapping (TICP)
- ▶ Broadband partnerships
- ▶ Post-secondary research partnerships
- ▶ Western Ontario Municipal Conference
- ▶ Fall Funders Forum



VALUED PARTNER OF GOVERNMENT



STRONG ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ Minister meetings
- ▶ Submissions
- ▶ Legislative analysis
- ▶ Pre-budget advocacy
- ▶ Provincial & federal partnerships
- ▶ Policy briefings
- ▶ Attendance at major conferences (ROMA, AMO, FCM)



2026 AND BEYOND



OUR PATH FORWARD

- ▶ Strong engagement with senior governments
- ▶ Continued regional research
- ▶ Data-informed advocacy
- ▶ Advancing solutions, not just asking for support



WESTERN ONTARIO
WOWC
WARDENS CAUCUS



THANK YOU

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	TR-CW-19-26
Title:	Award of Tender RFT-TS-13-26 for the Reconstruction of Structure 900-363
Prepared by:	Trevor Ireton, Engineering Manager
Reviewed by:	Pat Hoy, Director of Transportation Services
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Municipality of Meaford, Municipality of Grey Highlands

Recommendation

1. That report TR-CW-19-26 containing the tender results for RFT-TS-13-26 regarding the replacement of structure 900-363 located on the Euphrasia - St. Vincent Townline on the border of Municipality of Meaford and the Municipality of Grey Highlands be received; and
2. That Lancoa Contracting Inc. be awarded the tender for a total amount of \$714,413.33, excluding HST; and
3. That action take place prior to Council approval as per section 26.6 b of the Procedural By-law.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the results of the tender RFT-TS-13-26 regarding the replacement of Structure 900-363 located on the Euphrasia-St. Vincent Townline, 0.65 kilometres west of the Blue Mountains-Meaford-Euphrasia Townline. Three bids were received for this project. This report recommends that the tender RFT-TS-13-26 be awarded to Lancoa Contracting Inc. for a total amount of \$714,413.33, excluding HST.

Background and Discussion

The tender was posted on the County's Bonfire portal from March 4, 2026, to April 1, 2026. The following bids were received.

RFT-TS-13-26 Tender Results

#	Name of Bidder	Bid Amount (Excluding HST)
---	----------------	-------------------------------

1.	Lancoa Contracting Inc.	\$714,413.33
2.	2274084 Ontario Ltd. o/a GMP Contracting	\$1,132,520.97
3.	E.C. King Contracting	\$1,319,878.81

The anticipated project window for the construction works is between July 6, 2026, and October 9, 2026, based on the Contractor's proposed schedule. There are two property owners who currently live on the west side of the existing structure and have no other means of access to their property outside of this structure. In order to provide these property owners with continued access to their property, the existing structure will be maintained in place throughout construction until the new structure is in place and the existing one can be removed.

The project includes the following work:

- Replacement of Bridge No. 900-363 with a single-span structural plate corrugated steel pipe (SPCSP) open-footing box culvert on a new alignment
- Removal of existing bridge structure
- Earth and rock excavation
- Construction of cast-in-place reinforced concrete footings with dowels into bedrock
- Fabrication, delivery, offloading, and installation of the SPCSP box culvert
- Placement of waterbody aggregate and rip rap
- Installation of mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) retaining walls
- Backfilling of SPCSP box culvert and MSE walls
- Temporary flow passage, environmental protection, erosion and sediment control
- Roadway reconstruction and paving
- Temporary traffic control
- Supply & Installation of steel beam guiderail & end treatments
- Reinstatement and landscaping of existing alignment

Financial and Resource Implications

Project Funding

Item	Excluding HST	Net HST
Approved Total Project Budget		\$1,377,500.00
Tender Award Amount	\$714,413.33	\$726,987.00
Construction Contingency (15%)	\$107,162.00	\$109,048.05
Contract Administration and Inspection	\$52,800.00	\$53,729.28

Total Tender Projected Costs	\$874,375.33	\$889,764.34
Project Surplus		\$487,735.66

The Reconstruction of Structure 900-363 project was budgeted to utilize \$1,377,500.00 from the Transportation Services Major Capital Reserve. The total projected surplus is \$487,735.66, after the HST rebate, or 35.41% of the budgeted amount. As the project is fully funded from the reserve, the projected surplus will be available for future eligible projects and does not create a surplus to the tax levy.

The 15.0% percent contingency is being applied to cover off possible fluctuations in the Asphalt Cement Index, the potential of imposed tariffs, and any unexpected field issues.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets: Reconstruction of structures provides an opportunity to review construction methods and material selection with an eye on reducing emissions.
- External (list)

Appendices and Attachments

- Structure 900-363 Replacement – Tender Award Report
- RFT-TS-13-26 Site Location Map – Structure 900-363

MEMORANDUM

Project Number: J23S146
 To: Sean Potter, Supervisor – Capital Assets
 Transportation, Trevor Ireton, P.Eng., Engineering
 Manager

Date: April 2, 2026
 From: Anjelica Kierans, P.Eng., Project Manager

Subject: RECOMMENDATION OF AWARD – RFT-TS-13-26 – Bridge No. 900-363 Replacement

Contract RFT-TS-13-26 closed April 1st, 2026, at 2 pm. In total, three bids were received:

BIDDER	TENDER PRICE
E.C. King Contracting	\$1,319,878.81
GMP Contracting Ltd.	\$1,132,520.97
Lancoa Contracting Inc	\$714,413.33

Elements Engineering’s cost estimate to complete the work is **\$910,343.93**. Upon review of the submissions, it was confirmed that the lowest price bid, submitted by Lancoa Consulting Inc successfully met the mandatory submission requirements, as summarized below:

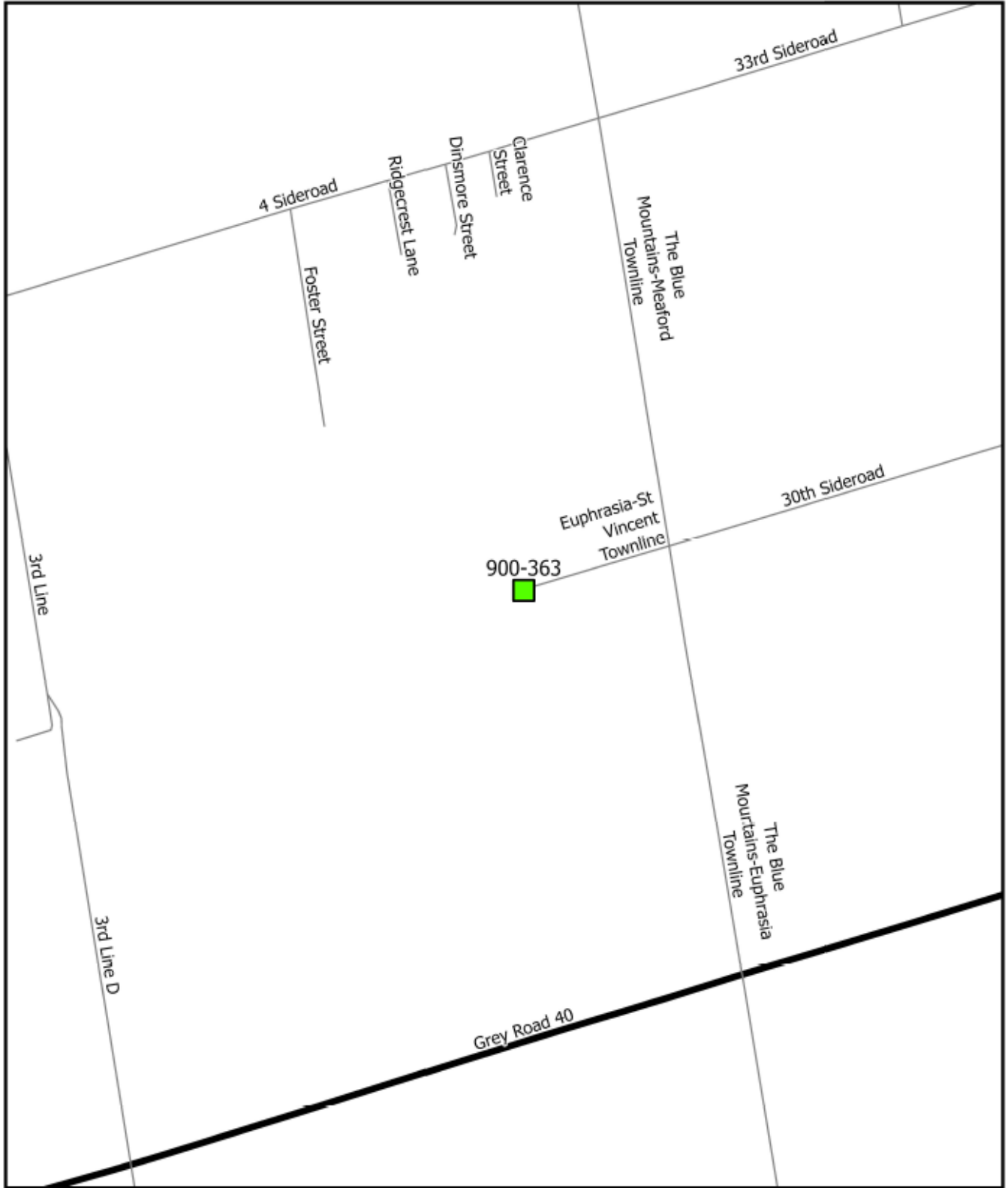
Mandatory Requirement	Evaluation Results
Bid Bond	Pass
Agreement to Bond	Pass
Tender Form	Pass
Acknowledge Addenda	Pass
Questionnaires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bidder Information • Ability and Experience • Subcontractor 	Pass
Bid Table	Pass


As a result of the review of the bids received, Elements Engineering Ltd. is recommending that The County of Grey consider proceeding with the conditional award of Contract RFT-TS-13-26 – Bridge No. 900-363 Replacement to the low bidder, Lancoa Contracting Inc. The award of this contract should be conditional upon funding and obtaining required permits.

Elements Engineering recommends the County of Grey carries a 15% contingency in their construction budget.

Yours truly,

Anjelica Kierans, P.Eng. – Project Manager/Bridge Engineer
 Elements Engineering Inc.
 Mobile: 416-712-4597
 Email: akierans@elementseng.ca



 Capital Structure

SITE LOCATION MAP STRUCTURE 900-363 REPLACEMENT

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	TR-CW-21-26
Title:	Award of Contract to Purchase Motor Grader
Prepared by:	Shaun Anthony, Operations Manager
Reviewed by:	Pat Hoy, Director of Transportation Services Mike Alguire, Purchasing Manager
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	None

Recommendation

1. That report TR-CW-21-26 containing the quotation results for the award of a motor grader be received; and
2. That the contract be awarded to Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound for a total amount of \$643,700.00, excluding HST.

Executive Summary

The request for quote for the provision of one 224 hp motor grader was sought through the Canoe Procurement Group of Canada, Contract: 011723-CAT. The quote came from Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound, a local dealer. The quote includes various attachments including but not limited to a snow package and one-way Viking plow. This procurement was included in the 2026 budget and 10-year capital plan and is a relatively like-for-like replacement of a 17-year-old unit. This report recommends that the supply contract be awarded to Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound for a total amount of \$643,700.00, excluding HST. As per the County's Purchasing Policy, Council approval is required for purchases over \$500,000.00.

Background and Discussion

Transportation Services and Finance staff sought a quote through the Canoe Procurement Group of Canada Program, Contract: 011723-CAT. "Canoe" is a Canadian public sector buying group and not-for-profit organization serving over 6,000 municipalities, public sector entities and not-for profit organizations across Canada. Canoe's procurement offers trade-compliant contracts already competitively tendered on the public sector's behalf. The County's Purchasing Policy permits the County's participation in group purchasing opportunities with Canoe.

A quote for a 224 hp motor grader was received from Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound in the amount of \$643,700.00 (excluding HST). The vendor has also provided a trade in value of \$104,000.00 for the used 2008 CAT 160M.

As per section 11.2 of the Purchasing Policy, Grey County’s member municipalities will have the opportunity to purchase the motor grader being replaced once the new grader has been received (estimated September 2026). Appropriate reserve bids are placed on equipment when offered for sale. If no bids are received or the reserve bid is not met, the equipment will proceed to a public auction. Similarly, if no bids are received or the reserve bid is not met at the public auction, the equipment will be traded in for the above-noted amount. In this case, the reserve bid will be the quoted trade in value of \$104,000.00.

Canoe Contract 011723-CAT Quote Results

#	Name of Bidder	Bid Amount (Excluding HST)
1.	Toromont Cat – Grey County / Owen Sound	\$643,700.00

Financial and Resource Implications

Project Funding

Item	Excluding HST	Net HST
Approved Total Project Budget		\$663,000.00
Tender Award Amount	\$643,700.00	\$655,029.12
Estimated Sale of Used		(\$104,000.00)
Estimated Required Transfer from Reserve		\$551,029.12
Budget Transfer from Reserve		\$561,700.00

Project expenditures are under budget by \$7,970.88 and the estimated sale price is \$2,700.00 higher than budgeted. This will result in \$10,670.88 less being withdrawn from the Transportation Services Equipment Replacement Reserve than budgeted and therefore does not generate a surplus.

The Transportation Services Equipment Replacement Reserve is evaluated annually when estimating future replacement costs. The Transportation Services Equipment Replacement Reserve has a balance at December 31, 2025, of \$2,299,175.42 and a projected ending balance at December 31, 2026, of \$172,075.42. A higher amount than usual is being transferred from reserve in 2026 due to delays in receiving replacement tandems in 2024 and 2025.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
 - Finance
- External (list)

Appendices and Attachments

None.

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-15-26
Title:	Marlane Farms Minor Exemption
Prepared by:	Sarah Johnson, Trails and Forestry Coordinator
Reviewed by:	Scott Taylor, Director of Planning
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Township of Chatsworth

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-15-26 be received; and
2. That the application for minor exemption under the County’s Forest Management By-law for Part of Lot 54, Concession 2 EGR, geographic Township of Holland, now in the Township of Chatsworth, municipally known as 395656 Concession 2, be approved.

Executive Summary

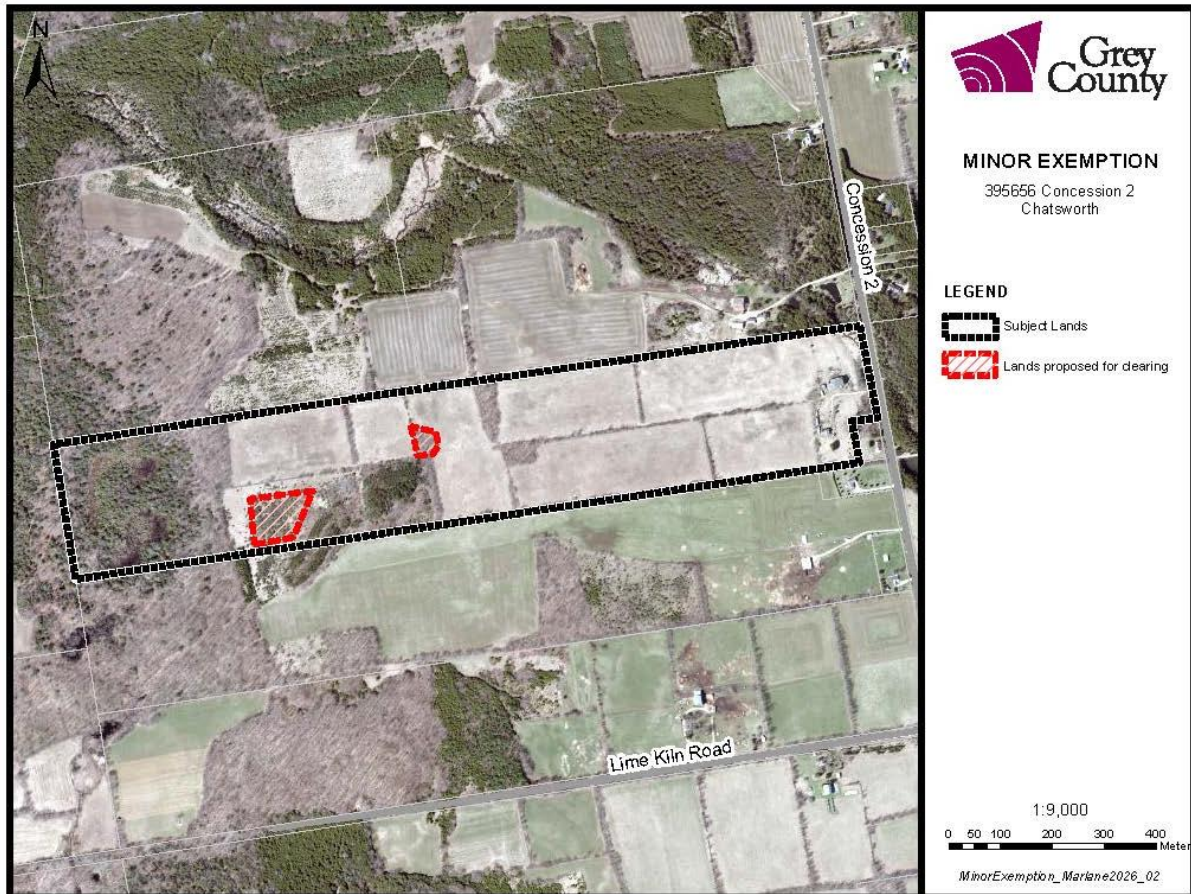
The County received a minor exemption application under the County’s Forest Management By-law in February 2026 to clear woodlands consisting of approximately 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of Scots Pine including a small area of Basswood, Sugar Maple and White Elm. The purpose of the clearing is for agricultural purposes. County staff are recommending approval of this minor exemption application.

Background and Discussion

An application for a minor exemption was received for clear-cutting in a woodland under the County’s Forest Management By-law. The application is seeking approval to clear approximately 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of Scots Pine including a small area of Basswood, Sugar Maple and White Elm. Map 1 below shows the subject lands, and those lands proposed for clearing.

The subject lands are located at Part of Lot 54, Concession 2 EGR, geographic Township of Holland, now in the Township of Chatsworth, municipally known as 395656 Concession 2. The majority of the property is farmed and cleared fields, with some woodlands and the total size of the property is 41.2 hectares (101.7 acres). As noted above, this application seeks to clear approximately 1.4 hectares for agricultural purposes. Surrounding the subject lands are mainly farmed and forested lands.

In the County official plan, this property is designated as 'Rural' and 'Hazard Lands' on Schedule A. The subject lands have a small portion designated as 'Aggregate Resource Area' on Schedule B to the official plan. This proposed tree clearing does not have any impact on the aggregate resources on-site. Portions of the subject lands are mapped as 'significant woodlands' and 'other wetlands' on Appendix B to the official plan. The proposed clearing doesn't occur within the significant woodlands or other wetlands. This application has been reviewed and supported by Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) and Planning Ecology staff, and a summary of their comments has been included below.



Map 1 – Proposed area for tree removal

The County's climate change action plan, Going Green in Grey, promotes tree planting across the County, including setting tree planting targets. The County's current Forest Management By-law predates Going Green in Grey. The County's by-law is currently under review. One of the objectives of this review is to consider the by-law's relationship to other County plans and strategies such as Recolour Grey, the County official plan, and Going Green in Grey, the climate change action plan. Strictly speaking this minor exemption application is being tested against the current forest management by-law. Staff are however cognizant that the future updated by-law may consider woodland clearing differently, including possibly considering replanting plans or offsetting approaches.

Agency and Public Comments Received

Under the County Forest Management By-law, adjacent landowners, conservation authorities, and municipalities are to be notified and/or consulted when a minor exemption application is received.

Public Comments

No public comments were received during the processing of this application.

Agency Comments

The SVCA, the Township of Chatsworth, the County's Forestry By-law Enforcement Officer, and the County's Planning Ecologist provided comments on this application. A summary of each of their comments is as follows:

- SVCA staff have no concerns.
- The County's By-law Enforcement Officer does not have concerns with the removal of the trees. There would be minimal impact to the loss of the forested habitat given that the Scots Pine is not native to Canada, is prone to numerous diseases and limb failure, and is invasive in many situations. The smaller pocket of deciduous trees is separated from the existing forest by means of an active farm lane/field. Its removal would round off the field edge and could be considered a Normal Farming Practice.
- The Township of Chatsworth had no concerns but noted that it was currently half load season and that those restrictions are in place until May 1, 2026.
- The County's Planning Ecologist noted that the property contains and/or is adjacent to significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, potential habitat for threatened and/or endangered species, and other wetlands. It is staff's understanding that the proposed tree cutting will be of non-significant woodlands that provide no ecological benefit to surrounding woodlands. As such, it is staff's opinion that the potential impact to natural heritage would be negligible.

Based on the above, staff are recommending approval of the minor exemption application.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning, Grey County By-law Enforcement Officer, Planning Ecology
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets: see commentary in the report regarding the relationship between Going Green in Grey and the County's current forest management by-law review.
- External: SVCA, Township of Chatsworth, and the public

Appendices and Attachments

None.

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	FR-CW-09-26
Title:	Quarterly Purchasing Report Quarter 1 2026
Prepared by:	Mike Alguire, Purchasing Manager Sherri Adams, Buyer
Reviewed by:	Mary Lou Spicer, Director of Finance
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	N/A

Recommendation

1. That Report FR-CW-09-26 regarding the quarterly purchasing report for Quarter 1 2026 be received for information.

Executive Summary

Grey County's Purchasing Policy 7-9, as endorsed by County Council on December 12, 2024, through By-law 5209-24, gives Directors the authority to award items and services up to \$500,000 that have prior budget approval. This policy requires Directors to provide a summary of all purchases between \$75,000 and \$500,000 quarterly.

Background and Discussion

The attached chart summarizes all purchases made between \$75,000 and \$500,000 by departments between January 1, 2026, and March 31, 2026.

Transportation

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFT-TS-20-26 (joint tender with Owen Sound)	Milling and Hot Mix Asphalt Paving	4	E.C. King	\$300,000	\$271,121.30*

Long Term Care

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFP-LTC-01-26	Design Consultant for Rockwood	3	Dillon Consulting	\$95,000	\$92,000**

Economic Development Tourism and Culture

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFT-EDTC-02-26	Roof Replacement Section 4.0	5	Nedlaw Roofing	\$385,000	\$302,607

Chief Administrative Officer's Office

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFT-CAO-01-26	Consultant for Waste Management Study	4	Dillon Consulting	\$250,000	\$216,320

Community Services

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFT-HOU-03-26 Schedule 1	Roof Replacement 41 Mark, Markdale	12	Integriland Inc.	\$200,000	\$120,000

Contract	Description	# of Bids	Awarded Bid	Budget Amount	Awarded Amount (excl. HST)
RFT-HOU-03-26 Schedule 2	Roof Replacement 208 Queen, Durham	12	Integriland Inc.	\$350,000	\$208,000

Legislated Requirements

There are no legislated requirements.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations.

Financial and Resource Implications

* RFT-TS-20-26 was a joint tender with Owen Sound. Financials included here are for Grey County’s schedule only. Owen Sound will issue their own award for their schedule.

**RFP-LTC-01-26 funding approved through LTCR-CM-03-26 January 15, 2026 Long- Term Care Committee of Management report.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal
 - AODA Compliance
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets
- External

Appendices and Attachments

None.

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PSR-CW-03-26
Title:	Purchase of 3 New Ambulances
Prepared by:	Kevin McNab, Director of Paramedic Services
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	None

Recommendation

1. That Report PSR-CW-03-26 regarding ambulance purchases be received and that the purchase of three ambulances be awarded to TriStar Ambulances in the amount of \$743,148.00 plus HST; and
2. That three ambulances will be disposed of in accordance with the purchasing policy.

Executive Summary

The approved 2026 capital budget includes funding for the replacement of three ambulances. This report seeks Council approval to proceed with an award of three ambulances to TriStar Ambulances in the amount of \$743,148.00 plus HST. In recent years, delivery delays from manufacturers have resulted in ambulances remaining in frontline service longer than planned, leading to higher mileage and increased maintenance and repair costs. Where possible ordering ambulances one year in advance continues to be recommended to support fleet reliability.

Background and Discussion

Paramedic Services maintains a fleet of 19 ambulances that are replaced on a six-year cycle. At the time of replacement, these vehicles typically exceed 275,000 kilometers. In recent years, delivery delays from manufacturers have resulted in ambulances remaining in service longer than planned, leading to higher mileage and higher fleet maintenance and repair costs. Looking to 2026 and beyond, ambulance delivery timelines are expected to improve; however, due to the current delivery time, ordering vehicles one year in advance will continue to be recommended where possible.

The approved 2026 capital budget calls for the replacement of three ambulances. Three submissions were received in response to the ambulance tender, one of which was deemed non-compliant. The successful bidder was TriStar Ambulances of Nova Scotia. TriStar has a long history of supplying ambulances throughout Eastern Canada and began supplying vehicles to the Ontario market in 2025. The award price is \$247,716.00 per vehicle, excluding HST.

Based on the recommendation of the service's mechanics, three ambulances will be identified for disposal. These vehicles will be disposed of in accordance with the County's Purchasing and Disposal Policy.

Legislated Requirements

All ambulances purchased for use in the department must be certified compliant with the current Ontario Provincial Land Ambulance and Emergency Response Vehicle Standard (Version 7.0, November 2025).

Financial and Resource Implications

Project Funding

Item	Excluding HST	Net HST
Approved Budget for 3 ambulances	N/A	\$818,964
Tender Award Amount	\$743,148	\$756,227
Estimated Sale of Used	(\$31,578)	(\$32,133)
Total Project Costs	\$711,570	\$724,094
Project Surplus	\$93,229	\$94,870

The 2026 approved budget provides funding at a cost per vehicle of \$272,988, therefore the TriStar bid price is \$20,912 under budget per vehicle after the HST rebate is considered. This ambulance replacement capital project is funded by the Paramedic Services Equipment Reserve and is offset by proceeds from the sale of ambulances being replaced. As a result, this results in a lower transfer from reserve than budgeted. The 2027-2036 capital forecast will be updated to reflect the adjustment in pricing.

Relevant Consultation

Internal: CAO, Finance

April 2, 2026

Re: Township of Oro-Medonte – Association of Ontario Road Supervisors Request for Provincial Legislation Amendments

Please be advised that at their regular meeting on April 1, 2026, the Council of the Corporation of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock carried the following resolution:

Moved by Councillor Scott Zehr
Seconded by Councillor Matthew Gillespie

THAT Council supports the resolution from Township of Oro-Medonte regarding the Association of Ontario Road Supervisors request for Provincial Legislation Amendments to strengthen protections for municipal workers and contractors.

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to:

- The Premier of Ontario
- Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General of Ontario
- Jill Dunlop, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Prabmeet Sakaria, Minister of Transportation
- MPP Ernie Hardeman
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Association of Ontario Roads Supervisors (AORS)
- Ontario municipalities

CARRIED

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours truly,

Meaghan Vader

Meaghan Vader
Corporate Initiatives Manager/Clerk
mvader@ezt.ca

March 13, 2026

Hon. David Piccini
Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor, 400 University Ave
Toronto ON M7A 1T7

Re: Request for Provincial Legislation Amendments, Health and Safety Concerns

Dear Minister Piccini,

At its meeting of Council on March 11, 2026, the Council of the Township of Oro-Medonte received correspondence from Association of Ontario Road Supervisors (AORS) regarding the above-mentioned request for support.

The Township of Oro-Medonte fully supports AORS in their request, as our staff have, on numerous occasions, been subjected to abusive and aggressive behaviour from members of the public. We respectfully request your support in advancing measures that will strengthen protections for municipal workers and contractors. With provincial partnership, municipalities can better safeguard the individuals who work tirelessly to maintain critical services and keep our communities functioning safely.

Sincerely,



Mayor Randy Greenlaw

Cc: Premier Doug Ford
Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General of Ontario
Hon. Jill Dunlop, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response
Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Hon. Prabmeet Sakaria, Minister of Transportation
Hon. Todd McCarthy, Acting Minister of Infrastructure
Doug Downey, MPP Barrie – Springwater - Oro-Medonte
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Association of Ontario Roads Supervisors (AORS)
Ontario Municipalities
Members of Oro-Medonte Council



Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development David Piccini
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

February 5, 2026

Dear Minister Piccini,

On behalf of Ontario's municipal public works professionals, we are writing to raise an urgent health and safety concern that is increasingly placing municipal workers and subcontractors at risk while they maintain the critical infrastructure our communities rely on every day.

While the Occupational Health and Safety Act establishes important protections against workplace hazards, it does not adequately address a growing and very real threat: unsafe working conditions created by interference, harassment, and dangerous actions from members of the public.

Through consultations with AORS members across the province, we are hearing consistent and deeply troubling examples of escalating behaviour directed at municipal workers - particularly winter maintenance operators. These are not isolated incidents, but a pattern that is becoming increasingly normalized during significant weather events. Examples reported to AORS include:

- An individual throwing a large chunk of ice at an active piece of municipal equipment while it was operating.
- A resident threatening to kill a sidewalk plow operator.
- A man climbing onto a snow plow and refusing to get off until the operator agreed to plow his road next.
- Two municipal staff members being confronted, accosted, and aggressively yelled at in public - one at a gas station and another while simply standing in line for coffee - by individuals angry about road conditions that were not even under that municipality's jurisdiction, as well as a mailbox that had been struck.
- A voicemail left by a resident threatening to shoot a municipal plow driver with a shotgun the next time the street was plowed.
- A resident angry about snow at the end of their driveway jumping in front of an active plow and refusing to move. The plow was delayed for over an hour during a major snow event, placing service levels and the municipality's overall emergency response at risk. The situation was only resolved once supervisors and by-law officers arrived on scene.

These incidents represent only a small sample of what municipal plow drivers and winter maintenance crews are experiencing across Ontario. What was once limited to disgruntled complaints has escalated into direct threats, physical interference, and dangerous confrontations that place workers, subcontractors, and the public at risk. This issue is becoming a systematic threat to municipal service delivery and is only amplified during significant weather events.

Municipal workers and their contracted partners are responsible for maintaining roads, bridges, sidewalks, and other essential services - often in extreme weather and high-risk environments. When these workers are threatened or obstructed, it becomes not only a workplace safety issue, but a broader public safety concern. In some cases, conditions have become so unsafe that

municipal staff and subcontractors have walked off job sites, jeopardizing timely service delivery during critical events.

We respectfully ask the Province to consider the following changes:

- Under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, when a municipality declares a Significant Weather Event, municipal winter maintenance vehicles and operators - including subcontractors working on behalf of municipalities - should be afforded enhanced protection, with interference or obstruction treated with the same severity as interference with police, fire, or paramedic services.
- Establish clear public-safety interference provisions, similar in intent to Ontario's Slow Down, Move Over legislation, that recognize the essential role of municipal roadside workers.
- Consider adopting provisions similar to Manitoba's recently passed Bill 38, an amendment to their Highway Traffic Act effective January 1, 2026, which requires motorists to maintain a minimum distance of 30 metres behind snowplows where speed limits are 80 km/h or lower, and 100 metres where speed limits exceed 80 km/h.

These changes would provide clarity, deterrence, and enforceability—sending a strong message that interference with municipal workers performing essential services will not be tolerated. Just as Ontario protects first responders from obstruction during emergencies, we must extend similar protections to the public works professionals who keep our communities safe, connected, and functioning.

AORS would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss these concerns further and to collaborate on legislative solutions that better protect municipal workers and subcontractors while strengthening public safety across the province.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Karla Musso-Garcia, CRS-I
President, Association of Ontario Road Supervisors
Operations Manager, Township of Oro-Medonte



Kelly Elliott
Interim Executive Director
Association of Ontario Road Supervisors

Cc (via e-mail)

Premier Doug Ford

Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response Jill Dunlop

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack

Minister of Transportation Prabmeet Sarkaria

Acting Minister of Infrastructure Todd McCarthy

Scott Butler, Good Roads Executive Director

Walid Abou-Hamde, Ontario Road Builders' Association Chief Executive Officer



Solicitor General of Ontario Michael Kerzner
George Drew Building, 25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

February 5, 2026

Dear Solicitor General Kerzner,

On behalf of Ontario's municipal public works professionals, we are writing to raise serious concerns regarding the safety of municipal workers and subcontractors who are increasingly facing harassment, threats, and dangerous interference from members of the public while delivering essential municipal services - particularly during winter maintenance and emergency operations.

Across Ontario, municipal public works teams are responsible for maintaining critical infrastructure that residents depend on every day, including roads, sidewalks, bridges, and drainage systems. During significant weather events, these workers are frontline responders, ensuring emergency vehicles can travel safely and that communities remain connected and accessible. However, the behaviour directed at them has escalated well beyond routine complaints and has become a direct threat to both worker safety and public safety.

Through consultations with AORS members province-wide, we continue to receive troubling reports that illustrate the seriousness of this issue. These include:

- An individual throwing a large chunk of ice at an active piece of municipal equipment while it was operating.
- A resident threatening to kill a sidewalk plow operator.
- A man climbing onto a snowplow and refusing to get off until the driver agreed to plow his road next.
- Two staff members confronted and aggressively accosted in public - one at a gas station and another while simply waiting in line for coffee - by individuals angry about road conditions and a mailbox strike that were not even related to that municipality.
- A voicemail threatening to shoot a plow driver with a shotgun the next time the street was plowed.
- A resident jumping in front of an active plow during a major snow event and refusing to move, delaying operations for over an hour and jeopardizing service levels and overall emergency response.

These examples represent only a small sample of the experiences municipal plow drivers and winter maintenance crews are facing across the province. What was once occasional frustration has escalated into intimidation, threats of violence, and direct interference with equipment and operations.

Equally concerning is that municipalities do not always receive consistent enforcement support when these incidents occur. We have heard directly from members who contacted the Ontario Provincial Police for assistance and were advised that, unless a physical assault had already taken place, the situation was "not a police matter." Waiting until a worker has been physically harmed before intervention is neither preventative nor acceptable.

This gap leaves municipalities and workers vulnerable and sends an unintended message that threatening or obstructive behaviour toward municipal staff carries little consequence. It also places supervisors and by-law officers in situations that may exceed their authority or capacity to manage safely.

We believe a proactive and coordinated response is needed. Municipal workers and their subcontractors should not have to choose between their personal safety and providing critical services during storms and emergencies.

We respectfully ask that the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Provincial Police take a clear and strong stance that interference, threats, and harassment directed at municipal public works staff will not be tolerated. Specifically, we would welcome:

- Clear direction and guidance to police services, including the OPP, that threats, intimidation, and obstruction of municipal workers performing essential duties warrant timely enforcement and support.
- Recognition that interference with winter maintenance and emergency public works operations presents a broader public safety risk, not merely a municipal operational issue.
- Enhanced coordination between municipalities and local police services during significant weather events and emergency responses to ensure worker safety and continuity of service.
- Consideration of legislative or policy tools that provide stronger deterrence and consequences for those who threaten or obstruct municipal staff and contractors.

Municipal public works professionals are essential workers. They keep roads open for ambulances, fire trucks, school buses, and the travelling public. Their safety should be treated with the same seriousness as that of other frontline responders.

AORS would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss these concerns and explore practical steps to ensure consistent enforcement support and stronger protections for municipal workers across Ontario.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued leadership in public safety.

Sincerely,



Karla Musso-Garcia, CRS-I
President, Association of Ontario Road Supervisors
Operations Manager, Township of Oro-Medonte



Kelly Elliott
Interim Executive Director
Association of Ontario Road Supervisors

Cc (via e-mail)
Premier Doug Ford

Minutes

Joint Municipal Services Committee

April 16, 2026

Present: Councillor Ian Boddy, Councillor Warren Dickert , Councillor Shirley Keaveney, Councillor Terry McKay, Councillor Grant Pringle

Staff Present: Randy Scherzer, CAO, Niall Loble, Deputy CAO, Robert Hatten, Communications Manager, Kayla Rier, Executive Advisor, Katrina Peredun, Communications Officer, Tara Warder, Clerk, Brittany Rier, Deputy Clerk

1. Call to Order

The Joint Municipal Services Committee met at the Grey County Administration Building on the above date. The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. with all members present.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Items for Direction or Discussion

4.a CAOR-JMS-10-26 Single Source Purchase of Digital Engagement Platform

Mike McInerney provided a demo on the Social Point engagement platform. He noted that the platform is simple for staff to run in the background where community members have the ability to engage. The platform has the ability to filter and moderate topics and comments through AI which can be shaped around the County's terms of use.

The platform has a multitude of capabilities including a question-and-answer section that can engage staff; staff can then respond directly to a question or concern publicly or privately. The platform helps to engage

both the County and lower-tiers through one channel which is one of the main purposes of the platform while helping to inform the community on upcoming projects while receiving their feedback.

Mr. McInerney noted that the platform can be used as an extension of the website, and can be molded based on how each member municipality would like to use it. Staff noted that the mapping tool, event promotions and surveys are some of the ways the County would like to implement the platform. The platform has tracking tools that help to summarize results which in-turn can help streamline information brought back to Council. Tracking can be used to show engagement, areas of interest and concern while honing in on demographics if needed.

The Committee discussed accessibility of the platform where Mr. McInerney confirmed the platform has an accessibility widget that can be added to help community members meet their accessibility needs.

The Committee discussed how staff will get the word out on the tool. Staff noted that there would need to be a marketing and communication plan to launch the site using current channels. Funds from the 2026 advertising budget would be used to increase public awareness.

The Committee expressed the value and opportunity for a centralized platform and noted the potential not only with collaboration and awareness across the community, but amongst the nine member municipalities.

JMSC03-26

Moved by: Councillor Keaveney

Seconded by: Councillor Dickert

Whereas Grey County and its member municipalities increasingly use a variety of engagement tools to inform service delivery, support decision making and to provide information to their Councils; and,

Whereas striving to increase equitable access to information and opportunities to influence public services is essential in providing open and transparent governance; and,

Whereas emerging technology provides innovative means of engaging with residents and communities in enhanced ways that reduce barriers and increase opportunities; and,

Whereas the Joint Municipal Services Committee has sought to identify opportunities, aligned with the Strategic Plan, Working Better Together, to maximize effective shared use of resources and that

Social Point has extended beneficial rates for a potential enterprise engagement solution; it is therefore recommended,

That report CAOR-JMS-10-26 regarding the single source purchase of the Social Point engagement platform be received; and

That Grey County move forward with the purchase of the Social Point digital engagement platform in-year in 2026; and

That the purchase be funded from the one-time general reserve and the annual renewal be included in the 2027 communications operating budget.

Carried

5. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6. Other Business

The Committee discussed the announcement from the office of Paul Vickers today in regards to increased funding for primary care access in the region.

The Committee discussed the introduction of the Better Regional Governance Act and how it will affect municipalities across Ontario.

7. Next Meeting Date

Monday, June 22, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

8. Adjournment

On motion of Councillors Pringle and McKay, the Joint Municipal Services Committee adjourned at 3:04 p.m. to the call of the Chair.

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-17-26
Title:	Addendum to PDR-CW-05-26, Rural Event Venues
Prepared by:	Cassandra Dillman, Intermediate Planner
Reviewed by:	Scott Taylor, Director of Planning
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All Municipalities in Grey County except for the City of Owen Sound and Town of Hanover

Recommendation

1. That PDR-CW-17-26 regarding a University of Guelph Student project entitled ‘Best Practices in Rural Event Venues’ be received; and
2. That staff be directed to use the student report as a resource to inform future planning policy recommendations; and
3. That the student report be shared with member municipalities across Grey County.

Executive Summary

The County partnered with a team of students from the University of Guelph Masters of Rural Planning and Development program to undertake a study to inform best planning practices and considerations for rural event venues. The project was completed as part of coursework for their Masters of Planning and will benefit the County and member municipalities.

Background research, a review of other municipal approaches, interviews with local planners, were completed to inform the study. The recommendations from this work may be used to inform future County or municipal planning policy updates.

Background and Discussion

From January to April 2026, County Planning staff worked with students from the University of Guelph Masters of Rural Planning and Development program on a student project:

- Best Practices in Rural Event Venues completed by Ashely Feeney, Bailey Cole and Negin BamouEIFard

A link to their report can be found in the Attachment section of this report.

Summary

Grey County has a diverse rural economy. Land uses in the countryside include farmland, natural areas, recreational areas, and areas for resource extraction. The County is also a tourist destination. From wedding barns to rural concert venues, staff receive many inquiries for rural event venues. Yet, managing the opportunities and challenges that stem from these diverse rural business opportunities can be difficult.

Based on direction from the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and the Grey County official plan, the County promotes a diverse rural economy, opportunities for sustainable tourism, and permits a wide range of on-farm economic opportunities. Permitting and operating rural event venues can also cause concern within our communities. Members of the public have expressed concerns such as noise, traffic management, servicing, environmental impacts, and emergency service access. Balancing these needs when designing, siting, permitting, and operating a rural event venue is crucial to its success.

To support the County and member municipalities regarding the review of rural event venue proposals, the student team undertook the following research:

- a policy review and jurisdictional scan of other municipal approaches,
- a review of existing County and Municipal policies and background documents,
- a review of provincial policy including the PPS,
- interviewed local planners, and
- identified key issues and recommended best practices.

The student report contains several best practice recommendations that staff can consider, including those listed in Table 1 below.

Best Practice	Summary
Require Site-Specific Approvals Rather Than As-of-Right Permissions	A consistent best practice is to avoid permitting rural event venues as- of- right in rural or agricultural zones. Instead, venues should proceed through site- specific Zoning By- Law Amendments (ZBLAs). This allows municipalities to tailor permissions to site conditions.
Clearly Distinguish On- Farm Diversified Uses (OFDUs) from Commercial Event Uses	Best practice is to clearly identify when an event remains a secondary, farm- supportive use versus when it functions as more of a standalone commercial operation. Larger or more frequent events, that go beyond ODFU scale and sizing, should be treated as independent land uses requiring higher levels of scrutiny.
Establish Clear Performance Standards Through Zoning	Include clear quantitative performance standards, embedded directly into site-specific zoning, such as maximum number of events per year, maximum number of attendees per event,

	permitted hours of operation, limits on outdoor events or amplified sound, and minimum parking requirements.
Use Technical Studies to Shape Zoning Provisions	Use study findings to directly inform zoning provisions. For example, noise studies inform hours of operation and sound mitigation measures, traffic studies inform parking requirements, access design, and event caps, and servicing studies to confirm capacity limits for events. This approach improves defensibility and consistency and aligns technical evidence with land use permissions.
Manage Compatibility Proactively	Effective rural event venues address compatibility concerns up front, not reactively. Best practices include locating event spaces away from nearby dwellings where possible, prioritizing indoor events or enclosed structures, providing buffering, setbacks, and landscape screening, and limiting lighting spillover and evening activities.
Treat Overnight Accommodation as a Separate and Distinct Issue	The report highlights that best practice is to regulate accommodation separately from event uses, rather than assuming it is a natural accessory. Small scale beds and breakfasts within existing dwellings may be appropriate if clearly defined and limited. Cabins, glamping, or multiple accommodation units significantly increases intensity and servicing demands.
Apply Consistent Evaluation Criteria Across the County	A key best practice is alignment between County and local municipal policy. County level policies should establish common evaluation criteria, while local municipalities should implement those criteria through local official plan polices, zoning, and approvals. This reduces uncertainty, prevents conflicting interpretations, and supports fair decision making
Plan for Long Term Enforcement and Compliance	Successful municipalities anticipate that event venues may evolve over time. Best practices include embedding clear limits and definitions in zoning using site plan agreements or holding provisions.
Encourage Early Pre- Submission Consultation	Early engagement can clarify expectations for applicants, identifies required studies early, reduces processing delays, and can improve project design before public review. Consultation may need to occur with County and municipal staff (i.e. planning, fire department, building, transportation, and public works), Indigenous communities, Ministry of Transportation, and/or the local conservation authority. Pre- submission consultation is particularly valuable in rural

	contexts with private servicing and sensitive neighbouring uses.
--	--

Table 1: Summary of Student Recommendations

The report concludes that the issue is not whether rural event venues should be permitted, but how they should be regulated consistently, transparently, and with enforceability, to balance rural economic diversification with agricultural protection and community compatibility.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislative considerations at this time.

Financial and Resource Implications

The work completed by the student consulting team is largely without cost to the County and done as part of the coursework for their Masters degree. County staff are grateful for the students' efforts in this regard and would note that having to pay a consultant to complete a similar guideline would likely cost between \$25,000 - \$35,000.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning and Economic Development, Tourism, and Culture staff
- External: Municipal staff, and relevant stakeholders

Appendices and Attachments

[Best Practices in Rural Event Venues Guelph Student Project](#)



Best Practices in Rural Event Venues

Grey County, Ontario

Bailey Cole, Negin BamouEIFard, and
Ashley Feeney

April 14, 2026

RPD6280 – Planning Practice
University of Guelph

Table of Contents

Certification iii

Executive Summaryiv

1. Introduction 1

2. Background 2

2.1. AI Use Disclaimer 3

3. Policy Review 4

3.1. Planning Act 4

3.2. Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 5

3.3. On-Farm Diversified Use 5

3.3.1. Municipal Policies for On-Farm Diversified Uses 6

4. Grey County 8

4.1. Grey County Official Plan 10

4.1.1. Official Plan Amendment 23 11

4.2. Municipal Frameworks 14

4.2.1. Town of The Blue Mountains 14

4.2.2. Municipality of Grey Highlands 15

4.3. Learnings from Interviews with Planners 16

4.4. Grey County Case Studies 16

4.4.1. Spy Cider House and Distillery 16

4.4.2. Highland Estates 18

5. Other Municipalities..... 20

5.1. Haldimand County 20

5.1.1. Haldimand County Case Study – Cottonwood Mansion Museum 24

5.2. Essa Township 25

5.3. Essa Township Case Study 28

5.3.1. Ivy Ridge 28

5.4. Teeswater (Bruce County) Case Study 31

5.4.1. The Post and Beam 31

6. Ontario Building Code 35

7. Discussion 36

7.1. Feedback from Online Sources 36

7.2. Feedback from Highland Estates, Spy Cider House and Distillery 36

8.	Key Issues.....	38
8.1.	Key Issue #1 – Clear Definitions	38
8.2.	Key Issue #2 – Distinction Between Small-Scale Farm & Large-Scale Commercial	38
8.3.	Key Issue #3 – Scale and Intensity	39
8.4.	Key Issue #4 – Land Use Compatibility	39
8.5.	Key Issue #5 – Overnight Accommodations and Ancillary Uses	39
8.6.	Key Issue #6 – Servicing Capacity	40
8.7.	Key Issue #7 – Protections of Agricultural Land	40
8.8.	Key Issue #8 – Planning Structure	40
8.9.	Key Issue #9 – Enforcement and Compliance	40
9.	Recommendations	41
9.1.	Grey County Official Plan	42
9.2.	Local Municipal Official Plans	44
9.3.	Local Zoning-Bylaws	44
9.4.	Best Practices for Applicants	45
10.	Conclusion	48
11.	References	49

List of Figures

Figure 1-1.	Cover Photo of the Spy Cidery (Spy Cider House and Distillery, 2019)	v
Figure 3-1.	Legislative Framework in Ontario	4
Figure 3-2.	On-Farm Diversified Uses (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).	6
Figure 4-1.	Grey County Rural Areas (Grey County, n.d.).	8
Figure 4-2.	Grey County Map, with member municipalities (Grey County, 2023).	10
Figure 4-3.	Spy Cidery (Spy Cider House and Distillery, 2019)	18
Figure 5-1.	Cottonwood Mansion Museum (Cottonwood Mansion Museum, n.d.).	24
Figure 5-2.	Cottonwood Mansion Museum (Cottonwood Mansion Museum, n.d.).	25
Figure 5-3.	Essa Agriplex, a large-scale event venue (2026).	26
Figure 5-4.	Ivy Ridge Wedding Space (Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events, n.d.).	29
Figure 5-5.	Ivy Ridge Wedding Space (Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events, n.d.).	30
Figure 5-6.	The Post and Beam Event Space (Bruce County, 2026).	31
Figure 5-7.	The Post and Beam Event Space (The Post & Beam, 2024a).	32
Figure 5-8.	The Post and Beam Event Space (The Post & Beam, 2024a)	34

Certification

PREPARED BY:



Ashley Feeney, MBA, PMP
Master of Planning Student
University of Guelph



Negin BamouEIFard, B.Eng.(UP)
Master of Planning Student
University of Guelph



Bailey Cole, B.Sc., CAN-CISEC
Master of Planning Student
University of Guelph

Executive Summary

This report examines best practices for regulating rural event venues in Grey County, in response to increasing interest in uses such as wedding venues, agri-tourism destinations, and rural event spaces. While these uses present opportunities to support farm viability, diversify the rural economy, and enhance tourism, they also introduce planning challenges related to land use compatibility, servicing, and policy clarity.

A review of the provincial framework confirms that rural economic diversification is supported through the Provincial Planning Statement, particularly where development builds on rural character and is sustainable within existing service levels. However, in prime agricultural areas, uses must remain secondary to the agricultural operation and limited in scale. This distinction is critical in evaluating rural event venues, particularly where proposals begin to function as standalone commercial operations rather than on-farm diversified uses.

An analysis of Grey County's Official Plan and local zoning by-laws indicated that while some policy direction exists at the County level, including recent updates by way of Official Plan Amendment 23, rural event venues are not consistently defined or regulated. As a result, municipalities often rely on site-specific zoning by-law amendments and case-by-case evaluations. This approach provides flexibility but creates uncertainty, complex decision-making, and challenges in managing cumulative impacts. To reduce these challenges, the County is looking to provide a clear and consistent framework for evaluating proposals.

Case studies from Grey County and other municipalities, including Haldimand County, Essa Township, and Teeswater Township, highlight common issues and approaches. Successful applications, such as Spy Cider House and Distillery, demonstrate the importance of having clear and well-defined provisions that establish expectations for scale, ensure the use remains secondary to the principal agricultural operation, limit the size and frequency of events, and address servicing, access, and compatibility with surrounding rural uses. Whereas the Highland Estates proposal illustrates the challenges associated with larger, hybrid developments that include both event venues and overnight accommodations, particularly where policy direction is unclear, and community concerns are significant.

Based on this analysis, several key issues were identified. These include a lack of clear definitions, difficulty distinguishing between small-scale and commercial uses, the absence of thresholds for scale and intensity, land use compatibility concerns, and the increasing complexity of hybrid developments that include accommodations. Additional challenges relate to servicing capacity, protection of prime agricultural lands, inconsistent implementation across the two-tier planning system, and enforcement of approved conditions.

In response, this report recommends a coordinated, two-tier policy approach. At the County level, clear policy direction, definitions, and evaluation criteria should be established, along with a standardized framework for required studies. At the local level, recommendations for member municipalities should implement these policies through their Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws, requiring site-specific zoning by-law amendments for all rural event venues. By working together, both the County and the member municipalities can apply consistent performance standards for rural event venues.

Overall, the recommendation approach seeks to balance economic development opportunities with the protection of agricultural resources and rural character. By providing clearer policy direction and improving coordination between the County and its member municipalities, Grey County can support appropriate rural event venues while ensuring that land use impacts are effectively managed and community interests are protected.

Figure 1-1. Cover Photo of the Spy Cidery (Spy Cider House and Distillery, 2019)

1. Introduction

Grey County’s rural economy is characterized by a diverse range of activities that reflect evolving opportunities in agriculture, tourism, and rural enterprise. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in proposals for rural event venues, including wedding barns, concert spaces, and agri-tourism destinations. These proposals vary significantly in scale and intensity. Some are modest and align with policy considerations for on-farm diversified uses, while others are larger operations that may generate broader economic benefits but also introduce more complex land use conflicts. In certain cases, event venues are integrated with existing agricultural operations such as small-scale wineries or cideries, while in others, they are proposed on scenic rural or natural properties that are not active agricultural operations and may include other accessory uses such as camping or glamping.

This growing interest presents both opportunities and challenges for municipalities, including Grey County. On one hand, rural event venues can contribute to farm viability, support tourism, and enhance local economic development. On the other hand, they highlight important planning considerations related to land use compatibility, infrastructure capacity, environmental impacts, and potential conflicts with neighbouring properties. Existing policy frameworks, including permissions for on-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism, do not always provide sufficient clarity to address the range and scale of proposals currently being considered. These policies were generally developed to support small-scale, accessory activities that complement and remain secondary to the principal agricultural use. However, many contemporary proposals, particularly those involving weddings, event venues, and accommodations, operate at a scale and intensity that extend beyond what was originally contemplated.

This report will provide an objective and comprehensive assessment of these issues. It draws on a review of comparable municipalities that have faced similar development pressures. Case studies from the Town of The Blue Mountains, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, Haldimand County, Essa Township, and Teeswater Township illustrate a variety of regulatory approaches, including zoning provisions, licensing systems, and site-specific controls. These examples offer valuable insight into how municipalities have sought to balance economic development objectives with the need to minimize land use conflicts and protect rural character.

Building on this analysis, the report identifies key issues, evaluates policy alternatives, and presents recommendations tailored to the Grey County context. The intent is to support a clear, consistent, and defensible approach to managing rural event venues, enabling appropriate forms of rural diversification while safeguarding the long-term sustainability and compatibility of the County’s rural landscape.

2. Background

While rural event venues are not a new concept, they have seen a significant increase in popularity over the last 10 years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant push for Canadians to stay and shop local. This change in habitats has resulted in an interesting growth and diversification within the rural event sector.

Just some of the rural event venue types we are currently seeing across the province include:

- Private island weddings (Muskoka District Rentals, n.d.);
- Laid-back outdoor weddings (Sara Monika, n.d.);
- Private and secluded yurts (GlampingHub, n.d.);
- Sleep in a bunkie next to Highland cows (AirBnB, 2026)
- Stay in a 26 ft geodesic/glass dome on the shoreline of a northern lake (Sunrise Eco-Resort, n.d.)
- Stay in a Japanese-style cottage, overlooking sixteen-mile creek, and complete with a cherry blossom orchard (Destination Ontario, 2026; Inn The Orchard, 2026)

To support the push to stay and shop local, Destination Ontario (and many local municipalities) has created tourist guides, including:

- Cideries worth a road trip in Ontario (Destination Ontario, 2026a);
- Farm Stays and Agritourism Vacations in Ontario (Destination Ontario, 2026b);
- Things to Do, Farm Experiences (Destination Ontario, 2026c);
- Spas and Wellness Retreats (Destination Ontario, 2026d); and
- Charming Small Towns (Destination Ontario, 2026e).

As a result, two conditions have created challenges for members of the public and municipal planners alike:

- Diversification within the sector has resulted in operations and proposals which don't fit clearly 'inside the box' (i.e. definitions) laid out in municipal official plans and zoning by-laws; and
- The number, size, and complexity of event venues proposed each year have increased.

To help alleviate this problem, we have prepared this Recommendation Report, which outlines the best practices for rural event venues. As part of this Recommendation Report, our team

completed a comprehensive review of the policies for rural event venues across Grey County, compared those policies with those of other rural municipalities, highlighted key issues and challenges, and prepared a detailed set of recommendations and best practices for future implementation.

2.1. AI Use Disclaimer

As part of this project, artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been used in a limited and supportive capacity to assist with research and communication tasks. The use of AI includes:

- An initial scan or first-pass review of Official Plans, Zoning By-Laws, and other policy documents to identify relevant themes and provisions, with all findings subject to subsequent review, interpretation, and validation by the project team; and
- Preparation of meeting minutes.

While a useful tool, it is important to note that AI-generated outputs have not replaced professional judgment, academic analysis, or planning expertise. All substantive analysis, conclusions, policy interpretations, and recommendations have been developed, reviewed, and finalized by the student team. Responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and appropriateness of all project deliverables remains with the student team.

3. Policy Review

In Ontario, provincial legislation and policies set the tone for development. The province outlines a series of goals and minimum requirements, and the municipalities prepare Official Plans which must be consistent with the provincial policies. While these are considered the minimums, municipalities can go above and beyond these goals and policies within their local official plan documents to address matters of importance to their communities, unless doing so conflicts with any policy in the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS).

Figure 3-1. Legislative Framework in Ontario



3.1. Planning Act

The *Planning Act* (Government of Ontario, 1990) was developed to manage land use planning conflicts within the province. It identifies several provincial goals, including the goal of promoting sustainable economic development (Section 1.1). The Planning Act also identifies several matters of provincial interest (Section 2), which include, but are not limited to:

- (a) the protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions;
- (b) the protection of the agricultural resources of the Province;
- (h.1) the accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters;

- (o) the protection of public health and safety; and
- (p) the appropriate location of growth and development,

To support these goals, the province developed the *Provincial Planning Statement* (PPS; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2024), which is a policy statement issued under the authority of Section 3 of the *Planning Act* and came into effect on October 20, 2024. The *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, Publication 851* (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016) provides additional policy guidance and is intended to explain the intent of some PPS policies and definitions related to permitted uses in prime agricultural areas

3.2. Provincial Planning Statement (PPS)

The Provincial Planning Statement provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. Some of the key policies for rural areas in municipalities are outlined in Chapter 2.5 and include:

- “a) building upon rural character, and leveraging rural amenities and assets”;
- “e) promoting diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities through goods and services, including value-added products...”; and
- “f) providing opportunities for sustainable and diversified tourism, including leveraging historical, cultural, and natural assets”; among others.

The PPS also recognizes that growth and development should be considered firstly within rural settlement areas, then rural lands, and then prime agricultural areas. The PPS goes a step further to also state that on rural lands, “development that can be sustained by rural service levels should be promoted” (Section 2.6.2).

In prime agricultural areas (PAA's), permitted uses include agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses (Section 4.3.2.1).

3.3. On-Farm Diversified Use

On-farm diversified uses (OFDUs) are a type of permitted use in rural areas intended to enable farm operators to diversify and supplement their farm income, and to accommodate value-added and agri-tourism uses in prime agricultural areas. The *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas* (Publication 851) provides direction on how these policies should be interpreted and applied (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).

According to the Guidelines, OFDUs must be secondary to the principal agricultural use, limited in scale and area, and compatible with surrounding agricultural operations. These uses are

intended to supplement farm income while maintaining the agricultural function of the property and should not remove significant amounts of land from production or require major servicing or infrastructure (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).

Examples of OFDUs include agri-tourism activities, farm retail, home occupations, and other value-added uses that support agricultural operations, as illustrated in **Figure 3-2** below.

In the context of rural event venues, OFDUs represent a potential pathway for permitting event-related activities where they remain occasional, small-scale, and clearly secondary to farming operations. However, larger or more intensive event venues, such as those involving frequent events, permanent infrastructure, or commercial-scale operations, typically exceed the scope of OFDUs (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).

Figure 3-2. On-Farm Diversified Uses (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016).



Value-added uses that could use feedstock from outside the surrounding agricultural area (e.g., processor, packager, winery, cheese factory, bakery, abattoir)



Home occupations (e.g., professional office, bookkeeper, land surveyor, art studio, hairdresser, massage therapist, daycare, veterinary clinic, kennel, classes or workshops)*



Home industries (e.g., sawmill, welding or woodworking shop, manufacturing/fabrication, equipment repair, seasonal storage of boats or trailers)



Agri-tourism and recreation uses (e.g., farm vacation suite, bed and breakfast, hay rides, petting zoo, farm-themed playground, horse trail rides, corn maze, seasonal events, equine events, wine tasting, retreats, zip lines)*



Retail uses (e.g., farm market, antique business, seed supplier, tack shop)*



Café/small restaurant, cooking classes, food store (e.g., cheese, ice cream)*

3.3.1. Municipal Policies for On-Farm Diversified Uses

Across the province, the designation of Agricultural lands and the uses that are permitted within them, are generally the same as Municipalities aim to conform to the same minimums within the PPS.

Within Official Plans, lands that comprise the Ontario Agricultural System are designated as Agriculture (or PAA in some municipalities). These designations prioritize the protection of agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of agricultural operations.

Development within Agricultural areas is generally limited to uses that support agricultural production and related activities, such as livestock, cash crops, and local food. Permitted uses include:

- Agricultural uses and normal farm practices;
- Agriculture-related uses;
- OFDU's;
- Farm dwellings;
- An accessory residential use associated with farming operations.

OFDU's can further include:

- agritourism activities;
- farm retail operations (produce outlets, wineries, etc.);
- seasonal events or farm-based experiences; and
- farm-related hospitality uses.

In most municipalities where small-scale home industries or retail operations are permitted as an OFDU, there are limits to both the size and proportion of usage, as well as the number of employees.

4. Grey County

Grey County is an upper-tier municipality located in southwestern Ontario, characterized by a diverse rural landscape that includes agricultural lands, small rural communities, and natural features such as the Niagara Escarpment and the Georgian Bay shoreline. Agriculture plays a significant role in the County’s economy, alongside tourism and other rural economic activities.

Grey County is a powerhouse in agricultural diversity, with over 2,300 active farms generating more than \$460 million in annual revenue (Hatten, 2017). The region plays a leading role in Ontario’s agricultural sector, ranking first in direct-to-consumer farm sales with over 400 producers selling directly to buyers (Made in Grey, n.d.). It is also a major hub for livestock and specialty crops, including beef cattle, sheep, and apples, producing approximately 24% of Ontario’s total apple acreage (Made in Grey, n.d.). Beyond production, Grey County’s agricultural strength is supported by initiatives such as Grey Agricultural Services, land use planning that protects prime agricultural areas, and programs that promote sustainability and biodiversity. This strong and evolving agricultural base reinforces the importance of maintaining policies that prioritize agricultural viability while carefully managing non-farm uses within the rural landscape.

In recent years, planning staff have received an increasing number of inquiries related to rural event venues, including wedding barns, agricultural tourism venues, and event spaces associated with wineries, cideries, and other farm-based businesses. While these uses can provide important economic opportunities for rural landowners, they can also introduce potential land use conflicts related to noise, traffic, servicing, and compatibility with surrounding agricultural and rural land uses.

Figure 4-1. Grey County Rural Areas (Grey County, n.d.).



Grey County operates within a two-tier municipal planning framework. The County establishes overarching land use policies through the Grey County Official Plan (GCOP), which guides growth, development, and land use across the region. Within the County, there are nine member municipalities responsible for implementing these policies through local official plans, zoning by-laws, and development approvals.

As interest in rural event venues continues to grow, municipalities are increasingly required to consider how such uses can be permitted while maintaining compatibility with surrounding agricultural and rural land uses. This study reviews existing policy frameworks and regulatory approaches to rural event venues, beginning with an examination of the Grey County Official Plan and related policy context.

As an upper-tier municipality, Grey County is comprised of nine member municipalities:

- City of Owen Sound,
- Municipality of Grey Highlands,
- Municipality of Meaford,
- Municipality of West Grey,
- Town of Hanover,
- Town of The Blue Mountains,
- Township of Chatsworth,
- Township of Georgian Bluffs, and
- Township of Southgate (Grey County, 2024).

Each member municipality has their own Zoning By-law, and some have a local Official Plan, which must conform to the GCOP. Grey County is the approval authority for local official plans, changes to the Grey County Official Plan, and all plans of subdivision/condominium, except for those within the City of Owen Sound. All municipalities in Grey County, except for the Town of Hanover and the City of Owen Sound, have rural and agricultural lands as described in this study.

Figure 4-2. Grey County Map, with member municipalities (Grey County, 2023).



4.1. Grey County Official Plan

The Grey County Official Plan (2019) provides the overarching policy framework guiding land use planning across the County for the next 25 years. As an upper-tier municipality, Grey County establishes policy direction that must be implemented through the Official Plans and zoning by-laws of its member municipalities. Grey County’s countryside consists of farmlands, recreational areas, and resource areas. Farming, resource production, and tourism are critical to the County’s economy. Given the County’s location – close to the GTA and along the shores of Georgian Bay – and its natural features like the Niagara Escarpment and river valleys, Grey County is also experiencing increasing interest in rural tourism and farm diversification, including agritourism activities, farm-based hospitality uses, and rural event venues. As a result, the Official Plan contains policy direction intended to balance opportunities and the protection of the countryside with the need for continued economic growth. (Grey County, 2019).

Rural Lands

The Rural designation within the Official Plan permits a broader range of land uses compared to Agricultural areas while still maintaining the rural character of the countryside.

Permitted uses within the Rural designation include:

- Agricultural uses (i.e. all those permitted with Agricultural lands);
- Resource based recreational uses;
- Small-scale buildings and yards associated with skilled trades;
- Residential farm cooperatives;
- Agri-minimums;
- Institutional uses;
- Recreational or tourist-based rural clusters (i.e. cottages, yurts, etc.); and
- Small-scale special event venues (Section 5.4.1).

The above noted uses are subject to additional policies related to lot size, lot coverage, MDS, building code requirements, etc.

4.1.1. Official Plan Amendment 23

Through Official Plan Amendment 23 (OPA 23), Grey County introduced policy language recognizing small-scale rural event venues within the Rural designation. These venues may be permitted where they meet applicable policy requirements and demonstrate compatibility with surrounding land uses (Grey County, 2019). In practice, however, municipalities are not typically encountering challenges with small-scale venues that clearly function as on-farm diversified uses. Rather, it is the larger, more intensive event venue proposals that are creating difficulty.

The County initiated OPA 23 as a result of changes to the PPS 2024, and to clarify interpretation issues with respect to the Rural land use designation policies. In response to increasing interest in rural event venues, OPA 23 also added some policy direction regarding how these uses should be evaluated within the County's planning framework. The amendment establishes that such uses must remain appropriately scaled and consistent with the rural context, rather than functioning as standalone commercial developments.

OPA 23 also contains the concept of recreational or tourist-based rural clusters. While this term is not explicitly defined within the Official Plan, it relates to similar tourist-based uses that form an interconnected network, i.e. are generally reliant on one another.

The amendment also outlines more specific criteria that must be addressed when evaluating a proposal:

5.4.2 13) Small Scale special event venues, such as dedicated wedding, concert, or performance venues, may be considered subject to a site-specific amendment to the municipal zoning by-law, which addresses the following criteria:

- a) A description of the proposed facility, including the proposed indoor and outdoor event uses proposed,*
- b) How the size and scale of the use are compatible with neighbouring land uses,*
- c) How noise and light impacts will be mitigated to neighbouring land uses,*
- d) A description of the frequency and size of proposed events,*
- e) How the use will minimize the removal of land from active agricultural production and minimize impacts to future resource uses such as aggregate extraction,*
- f) How the use will be serviced in accordance with Section 8 of this Plan, and whether the servicing will be permanent or seasonal/portable in nature,*
- g) How the local road network will serve the traffic demands of the proposed use,*
- h) How parking or shuttle transportation needs will be addressed,*
- i) Whether the use is co-located with other complimentary permitted uses, and*
- j) How the use will minimize impact on surrounding natural heritage features as per Section 7 of this Plan and how these impacts will be mitigated.*

Small scale special event venues are encouraged to:

- a) Limit amplified noise or performance spaces to indoor or enclosed sections of the site to minimize impacts on neighbours,*
- b) Adaptively reuse existing buildings or structures on-site, provided the reuse does not significantly limit agricultural uses or other types of resource use onsite,*
- c) Consider which buildings and structures are permanently sited, versus which buildings and structures may be temporary or seasonal in nature (e.g., tents, porta-potties, etc.), and*
- d) Co-locate with agricultural uses or agricultural-related uses, which provide added agri-tourism opportunities on-site, such as wineries or cideries.*

Notwithstanding this section of the Plan, the following uses shall not be considered a small-scale special event venue, and therefore are not subject to this section of the Plan:

- i) Infrequent agriculturally focused events (i.e., annual or bi-annual), such as but not limited to; harvest festivals, maple syrup festivals, farm education events, or farm equipment demonstrations, etc., or*
- ii) Small event spaces co-located within an agricultural-related use (e.g., a tasting room within a winery or cidery), which are not intended for weddings, concerts, or large performances, but may hold short-term tours, tastings, or meetings, or*
- iii) One-off special events such as a single wedding or a family reunion in a temporary facility (e.g., a tent) and shall be permitted subject to any municipal policies or by-laws in place for such special events (Grey County, 2019).*

OPA 23 reflects an effort by Grey County to provide clearer guidance for evaluating rural event venues; however, the policies remain relatively high-level. The intent is for municipalities to rely on site-specific zoning by-law amendments and technical studies to assess small-scale special event venue proposals and manage site-specific impacts (Grey County, 2025).

Path Forward

Applicants seeking to establish a rural event venue within Grey County may be required to obtain several planning approvals depending on the scale and location of the proposed development. For example, this may include a(n):

- **Official Plan Amendment** through the County or member municipality, where the proposed use does not meet the current policy framework;
- **Zoning By-law Amendment** through the applicable lower-tier municipality where the use is not permitted within the existing zoning framework;
- **Site Plan Approval** to address matters such as building placement, parking areas, landscaping, lighting, and site access; and
- **Additional Technical Studies** to support a proposal on an as-needed basis:
 - **Traffic Impact Study** where the proposed use may generate significant traffic volumes on rural roads;
 - **Noise Study** where amplified music or late evening events are anticipated;
 - **Servicing Studies** to demonstrate adequate water supply and/or septic capacity; and

- **Environmental Impact Study** where development is proposed near natural heritage features.

These approvals and supporting studies allow municipalities to evaluate potential impacts and ensure that rural event venues remain compatible with surrounding agricultural and rural land uses.

Summary

The Grey County Official Plan supports opportunities for rural economic diversification while maintaining strong protection for agricultural lands. On-farm diversified uses and certain small-scale rural event venues may be permitted where they remain secondary to agricultural operations. Larger or more intensive event venues may require additional planning approvals. Through this policy framework, Grey County seeks to balance rural economic development with the protection of agricultural resources and rural land use compatibility.

4.2. Municipal Frameworks

The following section reviews how selected member municipalities regulate rural event-related uses through their official plan and zoning frameworks.

4.2.1. *Town of The Blue Mountains*

The Town of The Blue Mountains is located in Grey County along the southern shoreline of Georgian Bay. The municipality includes several small settlement areas as well as extensive rural and agricultural lands. Agriculture, tourism, and recreation are major economic drivers within the municipality, particularly due to its proximity to Georgian Bay, the Niagara Escarpment, and regional tourism destinations.

Land use within the municipality is designated/regulated through the Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan (2016) and the Town of The Blue Mountains Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2018-65 (2018), which establishes permitted uses, zoning standards, and development regulations across the Town.

Official Plan Approach to Event Venues

The Town of Blue Mountains supports their agricultural sector by permitting agri-tourism uses within their Agricultural, Special Agricultural, and Rural land use designations (Section B4.1.2). This allows a larger variety of uses, including equipment exhibitions, farm tours, petting zoos, hayrides and sleigh rides, small-scale themed playgrounds, and small-scale educational facilities, subject to some minor restrictions related to parking, sewage, and compatibility. The Town of The

Blue Mountains also permits Estate Wineries and Farm Wineries within these areas (Section B4.1.3, and B4.1.4).

Zoning Approach to Event Venues

The Town of The Blue Mountains zoning by-law does not contain a specific land use category for rural event venues. Instead, activities commonly associated with event venues are interpreted through other land use categories such as agri-tourism uses, farm wineries, or assembly-related uses.

Because of this, larger or more intensive event venues are typically addressed through site-specific zoning by-law amendments. These amendments allow municipalities to establish regulations tailored to the individual property, including limits on building size, parking requirements, and operational considerations.

4.2.2. Municipality of Grey Highlands

The Municipality of Grey Highlands is located in the southern portion of Grey County and is characterized by a predominantly rural landscape consisting of agricultural lands, forests, natural heritage features, and small rural communities. Agriculture remains an important land use within the municipality, alongside growing interest in rural tourism, farm diversification, and recreation-related activities.

Land use within Grey Highlands is designated/regulated through the Municipality of Grey Highlands Official Plan (2017) and the Municipality of Grey Highlands Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2004-50 (2004), which establishes permitted land uses, zoning standards, and development regulations across the municipality.

Official Plan Approach to Event Venues

The Municipality of Grey Highlands does not permit any types of rural event venues as-of-right within any land use designations, regardless of type or size. The only type of venue that could be permitted without an Official Plan Amendment is a Resource Based Recreational Use within their Rural lands, subject to a site-specific zoning by-law amendment. Where resource-based recreational uses is defined as:

“shall mean those recreational uses where the prime reason for location by their very nature, require certain natural attributes for their location including the availability of large lots or land areas. Uses permitted may include passive and active recreational facilities and associated commercial and residential uses. Such uses shall be defined to include golf courses, water based recreation, campgrounds, lodges/resorts and skiing/snowboarding facilities.” (Municipality of Grey Highlands, 2017).

Zoning Approach to Event Venues

Within the Municipality of Grey Highlands, all rural event venues are addressed through a site-specific zoning by-law amendment. These amendments allow the municipality to regulate the scale and intensity of the proposed use and may include provisions related to building size, parking requirements, and operational considerations.

4.3. Learnings from Interviews with Planners

In addition to formal policy documents such as the Official Plan and zoning by-laws, interviews with County and member municipal planning staff provided important insight into how rural event venues are being interpreted and implemented in practice. These discussions indicated that in the absence of clearly defined and consistently applied policy frameworks, planners are frequently required to evaluate proposals on a case-by-case basis.

Across interviews, County and municipal planning staff consistently identified a common set of considerations that inform their review of rural event venue applications. These include potential noise impacts on surrounding residents, traffic generation and road capacity, the adequacy of private servicing, and overall compatibility with adjacent agricultural operations. Planners also emphasized ongoing challenges in establishing appropriate thresholds for size, scale, and frequency of events.

A key theme emerging from these interviews is the difficulty in classifying larger or hybrid proposals, especially those that incorporate multiple components such as event spaces, food services, and overnight accommodations. Planners noted that these types of developments do not fit neatly within existing policy categories, leading to varied interpretations across municipalities and, at times, within the same jurisdiction.

In practice, municipalities frequently rely on site-specific zoning by-law amendments and tailored planning approvals to regulate rural event venues. This approach allows flexibility in addressing unique site conditions but may also result in inconsistencies and uncertainty for applicants. As a result, there is a recognized need for clearer policy direction and standardized guidance to support decision-making related to evaluating rural event venues.

4.4. Grey County Case Studies

4.4.1. *Spy Cider House and Distillery*

Spy Cider House and Distillery is located at 808108 24th Sideroad in the Town of The Blue Mountains and operates as a farm-based cider production and agri-tourism destination. A recent expansion of the proposal involved the development of a new event building to support rural event functions such as weddings, corporate events, and community gatherings, and provide

additional agriculture-related storage areas (apples) and office space. The application was intended to expand on-farm diversified uses and enhance agri-tourism activities associated with the existing agricultural operation.

Planning Framework and Approvals

The proposal was reviewed under the Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan and Zoning By-law, the Grey County Official Plan, and provincial policy related to on-farm diversified uses. A complete application was received in early 2025 and evaluated through Staff Report PBS.25.015. Supporting materials included a Planning Justification Report, Noise Impact Study, and other technical submissions.

The application required a site-specific Zoning By-law Amendment, as event venue uses are not permitted as-of-right. Through this process, a site-specific zone was established to permit event-related uses while regulating the scale and operation of the venue.

Key Planning Considerations

Several key planning considerations were identified through the review process:

- **On-farm diversified use status:** whether the event space remained secondary to the agricultural operation and met the size criteria per the GCOP;
- **Agricultural function:** ensuring the primary farm use, being specialty agriculture for apple production, was maintained;
- **Noise impacts:** potential impacts on neighbouring properties and mitigation measures;
- **Servicing:** reliance on private servicing to support event-related uses;
- **Traffic and access:** impacts on rural road infrastructure; and
- **Scale and intensity:** appropriateness of recurring events within an agricultural context.

Outcome

Staff recommended approval of the application through Staff Report PBS.25.015, and the Zoning By-law Amendment was approved by Town Council on June 2, 2025 (Town of The Blue Mountains, 2025). The proposal received strong community support, including multiple letters of support submitted during the review process.

Considerations

The Spy Cidery case illustrates how municipalities may use site-specific zoning by-law amendments to accommodate rural event venues within agricultural areas while maintaining control over their scale and intensity. By framing the proposal as an on-farm diversified use, the application was able to align with existing policy direction supporting agricultural viability and agri-tourism.

At the same time, the case highlights ongoing challenges in clearly defining the limits of on-farm diversified uses, particularly where event venues begin to function on a more commercial scale. While the intent is to review these proposals on a case-by-case basis through site-specific zoning by-law amendments, this approach underscores a broader gap in standardizing policy direction. Greater consistency is needed in how site-specific zones are structured, including the use of technical studies to inform and establish clear, defensible zoning provisions.

Figure 4-3. Spy Cidery (Spy Cider House and Distillery, 2019)



4.4.2. Highland Estates

The proposed Highland Estates development in Grey County provides a detailed local example of the policy and approval challenges associated with rural event venues that exceed the scope of existing agricultural and rural permissions. The proposal included a wedding and event venue supported by accessory accommodation in the form of cabins and tent sites. Given the scale and nature of the use, amendments were required at both the upper-tier and lower-tier levels.

At the County level, an Official Plan Amendment was required to permit a special event venue for up to 95 guests with accessory accommodation for up to 50 guests.

At the local level, an amendment to the Municipality of Grey Highlands zoning By-law was required. The Zoning By-law amendment would have established a new or modified zone category to permit the use. This included provisions related to event functions, number and type of short-term accommodation units, parking requirements, setbacks, and buffering measures. Performance standards addressing noise, traffic generation, hours of operation, and minimum separation distances from sensitive land uses would also have been necessary to address compatibility concerns.

During the application review and circulation process, numerous comments were received from members of the public, both for and against the proposed development. Those in favour of the development consisted predominantly of local businesses. Those against were largely

neighbouring property owners who were concerned about the noise, traffic and environmental impacts of the proposed development.

Outcome

The refusal of the application reflects the complexity of interpreting and applying existing County and local policy frameworks to larger, hybrid proposals. It is noteworthy that these proposed applications were processed prior to the County adopting OPA 23 into its Official Plan. In this case, both County and Municipal planning staff recommended approval, concluding that the proposal was consistent with the intent of the County and Local Official Plans and represented an appropriate form of rural diversification, subject to conditions and further technical review (Hillyer, Taylor, 2025). However, Council ultimately refused the application, illustrating a divergence in how policy was interpreted and applied in decision-making. No matter the policy alignment, the impact of public opinion and comments received during the application review process has the potential to influence the Council's decision-making.

Considerations

While the proposal did not necessarily conflict with the broader intent of the policy framework, it raised concerns regarding scale, intensity, and long-term impact. As identified in the staff report, considerations such as the size of the proposed event venue, the inclusion of overnight accommodations, traffic generation, and potential compatibility impacts were central to the evaluation (Hillyer, Taylor, 2025). Council's decision suggests that these factors were viewed as extending beyond what would typically be considered ancillary or secondary to the rural context.

The case further demonstrates that, in the absence of clearly defined thresholds or criteria for large-scale, hybrid developments, decision-making relies heavily on interpretation. The staff report acknowledged the need to assess the proposal through site-specific zoning provisions and supporting technical studies; however, without more explicit policy direction, this approach can result in differing conclusions between staff and Council and contribute to uncertainty in the evaluation process (Hillyer, Taylor, 2025).

As a case study, Highland Estates illustrates the level of policy change that may be required to accommodate similar proposals in the future. It highlights the need for coordinated amendments between upper-tier and lower-tier planning documents, as well as the importance of clearly defined criteria to manage scale, intensity, and land use compatibility. This example reinforces the value of establishing a proactive and comprehensive policy framework to guide decision-making for rural event venues across Grey County.

5. Other Municipalities

5.1. Haldimand County

Haldimand County is located in southern Ontario along the north shore of Lake Erie, southeast of Hamilton and southwest of the Niagara Region, and operates as a single-tier municipality. The County is predominantly rural and includes several urban communities such as Dunnville, Caledonia, Hagersville, Cayuga, Jarvis, and Townsend, in addition to numerous rural hamlets and agricultural areas. Municipal water and sewer services are generally available in larger urban settlements, whereas the majority of rural properties rely on private wells and septic systems.

Agriculture is a dominant land use within the County, with extensive areas of prime agricultural land supporting crop production, livestock operations, and greenhouse agriculture. In recent years, the County has also experienced growing interest in rural economic diversification, including agritourism, farm-based experiences, and rural event venues.

Rural event venues in Haldimand County are subject to the Haldimand County Official Plan (2024), the Haldimand County Comprehensive Zoning By-law HC-1-2020, and applicable provincial planning policies, including the Provincial Planning Statement.

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural land use policy places a strong emphasis on protecting the long-term viability of agricultural lands while allowing for limited, appropriate diversification. Within this context, agricultural events that exceed the scale of an on-farm diversified use are subject to a more rigorous planning framework to ensure that agricultural priorities are maintained (Haldimand, 2024).

Specifically, larger-scale agricultural events are only permitted temporarily through a Temporary Zoning By-law Amendment. Where such events are intended to occur on a recurring or permanent basis, a full Zoning By-law Amendment is required and must be justified to the satisfaction of the County. Approval is contingent on meeting key criteria, including avoiding specialty crop areas, prioritizing locations on poorer quality soils where no reasonable alternatives exist, and directing such uses to lands that are already fragmented or less suitable for agricultural production due to topography. In addition, proposals must demonstrate compatibility with surrounding agricultural and sensitive land uses and minimize the amount of land removed from active agricultural production (Haldimand, 2024).

Together, these provisions reinforce the principle that larger-scale event uses should only be permitted where they do not undermine the agricultural land base and are carefully located and designed to mitigate potential impacts.

Agricultural events, that are beyond the scale of an on-farm diversified use, shall only be permitted on a temporary basis through a temporary Zoning By-law amendment. Where the event is of a recurring or permanent nature, a Zoning By-law amendment will be required and the use can be justified, to the satisfaction of the County, in accordance with the following criteria:

- i) The land does not comprise a specialty crop area;*
- ii) The use is proposed in an area of poorer quality soils and there are no alternative sites available on poorer agricultural land;*
- iii) The use is proposed in an area where the fragmentation of lands is evident or the topography of the lands is such that the site is less suitable for agriculture;*
- iv) The use is compatible with surrounding agricultural and sensitive uses; and*
- v) The use minimizes land taken out of agricultural production. (Haldimand, 2024).*

Notably, Haldimand County has established Zoning By-law HAL36.455, which provides clear and specific direction regarding what types of events are permitted within an agricultural context:

a) Section 28.1 (Permitted Uses) of the “Agriculture Zone (A)” shall also include:

- i) Overnight accommodations be permitted in the form of the four (4) modular units that currently exist on the site and the five (5) rooms in the clubhouse facility.*
- ii) Corporate meetings and team building events are permitted up to three (3) days in length and may occur up to ten (10) times per year.*
- iii) Receptions and similar social events are permitted up to ten (10) days per year.*
- iv) Cooking demonstrations are permitted up to five (5) times per year.*
- v) Fundraising events, including barbeques, car shows, craft sales, birds of prey demonstrations and similar events, may take place up to ten (10) days per year.*
- vi) The aggregate of all events is permitted to a maximum of forty (40) days per calendar year.*
- vii) The organizer will be required to obtain a clearance letter from the General Manager of Community and Development Services*

prior to the commencement of one of the above noted events.

The following details must be submitted for review:

- a) Submission of a written description of the events and anticipated number of attendees;*
 - b) Submission of a parking plan for the anticipated number of attendees;*
 - c) Description of any outdoor noise associated with the event including identification of the sources and intensities, and the hours at which they will occur;*
 - d) Description of any outdoor activities associated with the event and duration of same;*
 - e) Written clearance from the OPP and Emergency Services (EMS) prior to the event, if required (depends on the type/ scale of the event); and*
 - f) Notice to abutting property owners for any events where more than one hundred (100) people are expected to attend.*
- viii) The uses are to be limited in size and aerial extent to what exists on the date of passing of this by-law (Haldimand, 2020).*

Rural Lands

The Rural designation permits a broader range of land uses; however, these uses are generally directed to designated Hamlets and are not permitted as-of-right, requiring a development application and planning approval.

New commercial, industrial, institutional and agriculturally related uses may also be permitted within Hamlets in accordance with the following criteria:

- a) The use employs a small number of persons, does not require significant quantities of water, does not produce undue amounts of sewage waste and where serviced by an on-site sanitary sewage system, such system is designed and installed as per the Ontario Building Code and such use is compatible with surrounding uses;*
- b) The use will not generate undue noise, traffic, odour, fumes, dust or vibration to the extent of interfering with the ordinary enjoyment of surrounding properties;*
- c) Adequate on-site parking for the use must be provided;*
- d) The development should be buffered, where possible, from adjacent residential areas by planted, landscaped areas;*

- e) *The designation and development of land for industrial purposes shall be considered in accordance with the appropriate Provincial guidelines regarding separation distances between industrial and sensitive land uses; and*
- f) *To the extent possible, commercial, industrial and institutional uses shall be separated from residential uses and shall be consolidated into groups rather than scattered throughout the Hamlet (Haldimand, 2024).*

Establishing a Rural Event Venue in Haldimand County

Applicants seeking to establish a rural event venue within Haldimand County may be required to undertake a range of planning approvals and submit supporting studies depending on the scale and location of the proposal. These reports are noted in the Official Plan.

While certain agritourism uses may be permitted where they meet the definition of on-farm diversified uses, rural event venues are typically not permitted as-of-right within the Agricultural zone due to their scale and potential impacts.

Within the Rural Lands, a wider range of uses may be permitted, including rural residential uses and small-scale rural commercial activities. However, larger tourism or entertainment uses typically require a site-specific zoning amendment.

Site-Specific Zoning

Haldimand County has addressed rural event venues in several instances through site-specific zoning provisions. These amendments allow a specific property to operate an event venue while imposing conditions that regulate the scale and intensity of the use.

Typical regulations within site-specific zones may include:

- maximum building size,
- minimum parking requirements,
- limits on the number of events per year,
- maximum number of attendees per event, and
- restrictions on outdoor events or amplified music.

These site-specific zoning provisions allow the County to manage potential impacts while enabling rural economic diversification.

Summary

Based on the policies contained within the Haldimand County Official Plan and Zoning By-law HC-1-2020, rural event venues are generally not considered permitted uses within the Agricultural designation unless they qualify as on-farm diversified uses.

Larger or more intensive event venues that do not fit within OFDU classification typically require:

- a Zoning By-law Amendment;
- supporting technical studies; and/or
- Site Plan Approval.

Through this approach, Haldimand County seeks to balance opportunities for rural tourism and economic diversification with the protection of prime agricultural land and compatibility with surrounding rural land uses.

5.1.1. Haldimand County Case Study – Cottonwood Mansion Museum

The Cottonwood Mansion Museum case provides a clear example of how Haldimand has used site-specific zoning to recognize and regulate event-related activities within an agricultural context.

Figure 5-1. Cottonwood Mansion Museum (Cottonwood Mansion Museum, n.d.).



Cottonwood Mansion is a historic 1860s estate that operates as a house museum offering tours, educational programming, and a range of events, including weddings, rentals, and community gatherings. These activities are generally small-scale and tied to the heritage function of the

property, such as intimate weddings, cultural programming, and scheduled events that activate the site while maintaining its historic character.

Through Zoning By-law Amendment 1344-HC-23, Haldimand County rezoned the property to a site-specific Agriculture (A.8) zone to formally recognize the existing museum use and its associated activities. The amendment permits a museum and accessory uses, including special events, but introduces a key limitation by restricting such events to a maximum of 10 days per year. It also requires site plan control, ensuring that operational and site-specific considerations are addressed through detailed review.

Importantly, the amendment was intended to reflect and legitimize activities already occurring on-site, acknowledging that the property functions as a cultural and tourism asset within the agricultural area. Rather than treating events as a standalone commercial use or attempting to fit them within agricultural definitions, the municipality clearly framed them as an accessory to the primary museum use.

This case demonstrates a structured and controlled approach to event permissions. By explicitly permitting events as an accessory use, limiting their frequency, and tying them to the principal institutional function, Haldimand County was able to support heritage tourism while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding context.

Figure 5-2. Cottonwood Mansion Museum (Cottonwood Mansion Museum, n.d.).



5.2. Essa Township

Essa Township is located within Simcoe County, in central Ontario, immediately east of Barrie. Essa Township is comprised of 3 communities, Angus, Baxter, and Thornton, plus several smaller

hamlets (Township of Essa, 2012). One of its communities (Angus) has municipal servicing, but the remainder are privately serviced. Its demographics are predominantly middle-aged (i.e. 25-64), with the vast majority working at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Borden.

Rural event venues in Essa Township are subject to the *Official Plan of the Township of Essa* (The Corporation of the Township of Essa, 2001), the *Zoning By-law 2003-50* (The Corporation of the Township of Essa, 2003), and the *County of Simcoe Official Plan* (County of Simcoe, 2013). Essa Township is predominantly comprised of and designated as Agricultural (Schedule A of their OP).

Figure 5-3. Essa Agriplex, a large-scale event venue (2026).



Rural Lands

Section 7.2 of the Essa Township OP allows most types of development within the rural designation. Permitted uses include:

- *those uses permitted in the Agricultural designation,*
- *uses such as forestry, resource management, small-scale industrial, and commercial uses which are agriculturally-related,*
- *home occupation and home industry, farm produce stands, bed and breakfast establishments,*
- *single detached dwelling on existing vacant lots,*

- *Non-agricultural uses such as highway and service commercial, tourist commercial, public use, institutional, kennels, private club and open space may also be permitted,*
- *In filling in accordance with the policies of Section 26.3.1.k is also permitted, and*
- *A garden suite is also a permitted use and is subject to the policies of Section 6.3.14.*

Section 7.3.5 of the Essa Township OP also permits the following uses, subject to an amendment of their ZBL:

Minor non-agricultural rural uses such as highway and service commercial uses, tourist and recreational commercial uses, public uses, institutional uses, private clubs and open space uses may be permitted subject to an amendment to the Zoning By-law.

With the clarification that:

For the purposes of this Section, the term “minor” shall be generally defined as a use having low traffic generation, no nuisance effects on surrounding uses, a scale consistent with existing uses, and no negative environmental impact there shall be recognition of the cumulative impacts of these non-agricultural uses to the surroundings.

While uses are somewhat flexible with the Rural designation, the Essa Township OP includes a strong statement that: *Agricultural uses which exist within the Rural designation shall be preserved and protected from incompatible land uses and shall take precedence over all other land uses* (Section 7.3.1)

Establishing a Rural Event Venue in Essa Township

Applicants seeking to develop a rural event venue on lands that are currently designated as rural may be required to produce the following:

- Agricultural Justification Report (Section 7.3.6) describes why a location within a settlement or a business park area is not more appropriate
- MDSF (Section 7.3.2) to demonstrate that the proposed development would not interfere with or hinder existing or future agricultural operations
- Zoning By-Law amendment (Section 7.3.5) for certain use types
- Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (Section 13.2.4) where structures or landscapes are identified in the Township’s Cultural Heritage Resource Inventory;
- Archaeological Assessment (Section 13.2.6) where the property contains archaeological resources and/or there is a moderate to high potential for resources;

- Environmental Impact Study (Section 21.3.1.c) where development is proposed within or adjacent to lands designated as Environmental, a natural heritage or a natural hazard feature;
- Permit from Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (Section 21.3.1.g) where development is occurring within their regulated areas;
- Detailed Hydrogeological and Engineering Design Studies (Section 25.1.c) for certain types of sewage facilities;
- Contaminated Sites Assessment (Section 27.2.1) where sensitive uses are proposed, and contamination may be present; and
- Stormwater Management Plan (27.2.3) at Council’s discretion.

Zoning By-Law

While home occupations are a permitted use within the Agricultural Zone, they are severely limited in their extent, and most rural event venues would not be considered a home occupation. Therefore, event venues would not be a permitted use within the agricultural zone, except where they are considered an OFDU.

The Township of Essa has taken a blanket approach with its rural zone, which has the same permitted uses described in Section 7.2 as their agricultural zone. As such, a rural event venue would not be considered an as-of-right permitted use within the Rural zone. However, as discussed previously, they can be permitted through a ZBA.

Summary

Based on the policies contained within the Essa Township OP and their ZBL, rural event venues are not considered permitted uses within the agricultural or rural designation unless they are considered an OFDU. While the Essa Township OP allows rural event venues within rural lands, as per their OP, they are not considered an as-of-right use, and a site-specific ZBA is required for all proposals. While Essa Township’s OP does not provide a clear list of additional studies and requirements for rural event venues, it provides general policies and requirements for all types of development.

5.3. Essa Township Case Study

5.3.1. Ivy Ridge

Ivy Ridge Weddings and Events offers “dream weddings in the historic spirit of Ivy Ridge” with dedicated ceremony, cocktail, and dinner spaces. They mainly focus on weddings; however, they also host other social or corporate events and large parties (Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events, n.d.).

Located at 7511 9th Line in Essa Township, their event space is nestled into the side of a woodland and surrounded by agricultural uses. The Ivy Orange Hall (a community center) and the Essa Agriplex (hosts fairs and shows) are both located nearby. Within the community of Ivy, there are some lands designated as R1 Low Density Residential; however, outside of the main intersection (9th Line and 20th Sideroad) the remaining lands are generally zoned Rural (Schedule A of the ZBL; Township of Essa, 2003).

Figure 5-4. Ivy Ridge Wedding Space (Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events, n.d.).



As described in **Section 5.2** above, no rural event venue types are permitted within Essa County as of right. In order to permit their current use of the property, Ivy Ridge Weddings and Events (also known as The County Event Facility) sought a ZBA (2020-28).

East Part Lot 21, Concession 9 (7511 9th Line) Country Event Facility (2020-28)

Notwithstanding any provisions of this Zoning By-law, By-law No. 2003-50, to the contrary, on those lands zoned “RL-2” on Schedule “A” of this By-law an on-farm diversified use in the form of a Country Event Facility shall be permitted in addition to all other uses permitted within a “RL” Zone subject to the following:

(1) for the purposes of this subsection a Country Event Facility is defined as a building designated in accordance with the Ontario Building Code to accommodate group gatherings for wedding ceremonies, wedding receptions, wedding showers, engagement parties, anniversaries, birthdays, family reunions, art shows, seminars, debate forums and similar uses;

(2) on those lands zoned “RL-2 Zone”, the following special zoning regulations shall apply:

- Maximum building area – 350 m²
- Minimum number of parking spaces – 70
- Maximum number of events per operational season is in accordance with the current Site Plan Control Agreement applicable to this property
- Maximum cumulative number of persons permitted at one time – 230 (inclusive of all persons related to an event)
- Overnight accommodations, including camping, are prohibited in conjunction with any permitted events (Section 7.4.2.1).

Through this ZBA, the Township of Essa provided a new definition for ‘County Event Venue’ with a description of the permitted uses within the use type. Ivy Ridge also obtained permission to hold events for up to 230 people, but did not obtain permission to accommodate overnight visitors. The Township of Essa opted to use the Site Plan Control process to manage other common issues with rural event venues, like the total number of events per year. Although this document is not publicly available, it can also be used to prescribe restrictions related to parking, traffic, noise, lights, nuisances, etc.

Figure 5-5. Ivy Ridge Wedding Space (Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events, n.d.).



Considerations

Ivy Ridge Wedding & Events has an ideal location within a rural event cluster. It has maintained its boutique atmosphere, where limited services are offered. Many of the structures located at Ivy Ridge and showcased on their website are open-air, whether it be the gazebos or barns within large open doors. While the site-specific ZBA did not require a noise assessment, this is likely due to their location and the existing compatibility with nearby uses.

5.4. Teeswater (Bruce County) Case Study

5.4.1. The Post and Beam

The Post and Beam is “an exclusive, luxurious riverside retreat for private events” located in Teeswater, Ontario (The Post & Beam, 2024a). They offer event space for corporate retreats, weddings (including accommodations), private events, and holiday rentals, in addition to partnering with other local businesses to offer ‘package’ deals for golfing, cannabis or beer tours. In total, they have 10 rooms and accommodation for up to 20 people.

The Post and Beam, which is located at 33 Andrew Street, is at the end of a residential street, with approximately 20 other homes. While it is located within the urban boundary of Teeswater, it fits into the rural event venues category due to its size (approximately 9 ha), location along natural features, and agriculturally-related current and historic uses (as shown in Figure 5-6 below). The remaining properties along Andrew Street are zoned R1 Low-Density Residential. R1 zoning permits single detached dwellings, duplexes, accessory residential uses (ARUs), and Home Occupation – Domestic and Professional, as well as Home Occupation – Bed & Breakfast Establishment, among other uses (Section 8.2 of the ZBL).

Figure 5-6. The Post and Beam Event Space (Bruce County, 2026).

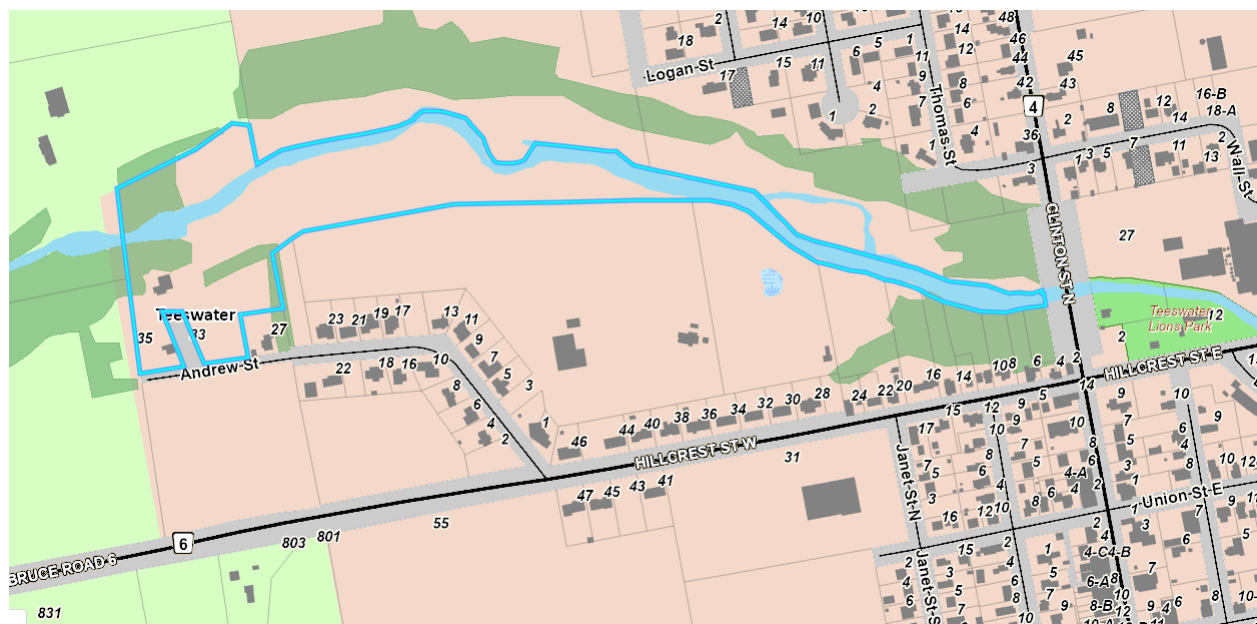


Figure 5-7. The Post and Beam Event Space (The Post & Beam, 2024a).



To support the use of the property as a rural event venue, a site-specific ZBA was obtained (By-law No. 2023-20),

South Bruce By-law No. 2023-20 (Dalgard and Billings,– Con 7 Pt Lot 18 Plan 144;Park Pt Lot15 Andrew St Pt;Blk J Water Course And Tail;Race Over 2-144 [33 Andrew St], Teeswater)

8.5.4 Notwithstanding their 'R1' zoning designation, those lands delineated as 'R1-4-H' on Schedule 'A' to this By-law shall be used in compliance with the 'R1' zone provisions contained in this By-law, and shall comply with the following regulations which shall prevail in the event of conflict:

(i) Outdoor weddings and similar outdoor ceremonies shall be a permitted 'Home Occupation – Domestic and Professional Use' and shall comply with the following regulations which shall prevail in the event of conflict with Section 3.9 Section 3.8 of By-law No. 2011-63:

a) The maximum number of people permitted per ceremony shall be 100, including but not limited to guests, vendors, the property owners and two (2) assistants.

b) The ceremonies, including set-up and clean-up, shall be permitted Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday between the hours of 10:00 am and 8:00 pm local time.

- c) *Portable washroom facilities shall be provided.*
- d) *The ceremonies shall not include a reception; and*
- e) *The 'H' Holding Zone provision may only be removed by Council once the following conditions have been met:*
 - a. *A traffic analysis has been received to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator and Operations Manager at the Municipality of South Bruce and the recommendations of that report (if any) have been implemented to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator and Operations Manager.*
 - b. *The number of off-street parking spaces has been confirmed to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator and Operations Manager at the Municipality of South Bruce; and*
 - c. *A detailed Site Plan has been received to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator and Operations Manager at the Municipality of South Bruce and the details of that Site Plan have been implemented to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator and Operations Manager, including but not limited to installation of off-street parking in accordance with II. above.*

Through this site-specific ZBA, the Post and Beam obtained permission to hold ceremonies (i.e. events), with up to 100 people in attendance. The ZBA required that traffic and parking be considered, but did not include any noise provisions. While it specifically prohibits 'reception' type events, this is a somewhat vague use type that is not defined. Instead, they rely on Section 3.9, which outlines that "The Home Occupation - Domestic and Professional Uses shall not create or become a 'nuisance' in regard to noise, odours, vibrations, traffic generated or parking."

While the site-specific ZBA provided permissions for the Post and Beam to hold wedding ceremonies, it does not consider their use as an overnight accommodation. Bed and Breakfast Establishments, which are a permitted use within the R1 and subsequently R1-4-H zone only permit up to 3 guest rooms or 6 guests; the Post and Beam currently have 10 rooms for up to 20 guests (The Post & Beam, 2024b). Based on their current accommodation options, they would fit under the definition of a Hotel/Motel within the ZBL which permits over 6 guest rooms, recreational facilities, restaurants, etc.

Considerations

The Post and Beam has a less-than-ideal location at the end of a rural residential road with lots of neighbours in close proximity. While they initially received a ZBA to permit weddings and corporate events, they have since expanded their business model significantly to also include motel-like accommodations and other services. As not all documents are publicly available (i.e. Site Plan Approval and any other contracts), it is difficult to determine whether additional agreements have since been implemented that permit these additional uses. Nevertheless, this case study is a prime example of the challenges faced by municipalities in the approval of varying and growing rural event venues and the challenges of ensuring compliance.

Figure 5-8. The Post and Beam Event Space (The Post & Beam, 2024a)



6. Ontario Building Code

In addition to the relevant planning policies at the provincial, county and local level, rural event venues are also subject to the Ontario Building Code (OBC; collectively Government of Ontario, 1992; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2025a-b).

The OBC was implemented to regulate the construction, demolition, conversion, and general use of buildings to address ongoing and future/potential risks to public health and safety and property across the province. In 2025, the OBC received significant updates to ‘catch up’ to modernizations in construction, including changes to construction methods, building types and uses.

Where the use of a building or structure is primarily agricultural occupancy, there are fewer requirements to be met under the OBC; most of which relate to fire protection, occupant safety, hazardous substances, and structural loads (Volume 1, Part 2). However, the OBC classifies building types based on their occupancy; and therefore, once a building has more than 1 person per 40 m², the building is considered a major occupancy, and the agricultural exemptions no longer apply (Volume 1, Part 2, Section 2.1.2.2(2)).

This can pose significant challenges to those looking to open a rural event venue, specifically those intending to upgrade or use existing agricultural facilities like barns. As the use type has changed, the structure or building now has substantially more requirements to be met under the building code (Volume 1, Part 3). This includes fire protection and safety, accessibility and barrier-free design, height and area of rooms, window and door/exit designs, roof coverings, glass, plumbing, food, among others.

7. Discussion

7.1. Feedback from Online Sources

A review of online sources, including local news articles and municipal planning materials, highlights several recurring concerns related to rural event venues within Grey County and surrounding municipalities.

A key issue identified is the appropriateness of rural event venues within agricultural areas, particularly in relation to on-farm diversified use policies. In Grey County, a proposed wedding venue was refused after planning staff and council determined that the use did not meet the criteria for an on-farm diversified use and was not appropriate within the agricultural designation (CollingwoodToday, 2024a).

Compliance and enforcement challenges are also evident. In Grey Highlands, a rural event venue sought retroactive planning approvals after being constructed and operated without the required permits, raising concerns about the municipality's ability to regulate development and ensure compliance with planning policies and regulations (CollingwoodToday, 2024b).

Noise impacts are consistently identified as a concern in both public discussions and municipal processes. In the Town of The Blue Mountains, municipal staff reports highlight noise associated with event-based uses as an ongoing issue requiring consideration through by-law enforcement and regulatory controls (Town of The Blue Mountains, 2024).

7.2. Feedback from Highland Estates, Spy Cider House and Distillery

Feedback gathered from the Highland Estates and Spy Cider House and Distillery project examples reveal several consistent themes related to policy clarity, process coordination, and the management of land use impacts.

The Highland Estates proposal highlights the challenges that arise when existing policy frameworks do not clearly address the scale and nature of rural event venues. A key issue identified through both the application materials and stakeholder feedback was the absence of clear direction on whether the use should be classified as an on-farm diversified use, a resource-based recreational use, or a standalone commercial operation. This resulted in differing interpretations between the County and local municipality, particularly regarding the need for an Official Plan Amendment. The lack of alignment created uncertainty in the review process and contributed to complexities in decision-making (Cole, 2026).

From a land use compatibility perspective, the Highland Estates application raised significant concerns related to noise, servicing, and the intensity of use. The proposal had been operating

without full approvals prior to the application, which negatively affected public trust and heightened community opposition. Noise impacts emerged as the most prominent issue, requiring detailed technical review and the use of peer-reviewed acoustic studies to support the evaluation. Despite staff recommendations that considered the proposal acceptable with conditions, Council ultimately refused the application, reflecting the weight of public concerns and the perceived risk of setting a precedent for similar developments (Cole, 2026).

In contrast, the Spy Cider House and Distillery application demonstrates a more supportive and streamlined approval process, largely due to stronger alignment with policy intent and positive community reception. The proposal was generally consistent with the concept of an on-farm diversified use and did not present the same level of conflict with surrounding land uses. Council supported the project due to demonstrated economic benefits and an established track record of events without complaints (Cole, 2026).

The Spy case also illustrates how municipalities can manage these uses through site-specific zoning provisions, including controls on the timing and frequency of events. However, it also revealed challenges in existing policy and regulatory tools. Staff identified challenges in defining key terms such as “special event venue” and distinguishing these uses from broader commercial activities. (Cole, 2026).

Across both case studies, several key lessons emerge. First, there is a clear need for more precise and consistent policy language to guide the classification and evaluation of rural event venues. Ambiguity in definitions for small to large-scale operations that do not fall under an OFDU can lead to inconsistent interpretations. Second, coordination between the County and local municipalities is critical to ensure a unified approach to approvals, required studies, and policy application. Third, managing operational impacts such as noise, traffic, and frequency of events requires clearly defined performance standards that can be implemented and enforced over time.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that while rural event venues can support economic diversification, their successful integration into rural areas depends on clear policy direction, strong inter-municipal coordination, and proactive management of land use impacts.

8. Key Issues

8.1. Key Issue #1 – Clear Definitions

A primary issue is the lack of clear definitions. Presently, rural events are often interpreted through related categories such as on-farm diversified uses, agri-tourism, tourist commercial uses, assembly uses, or resource-based recreational uses. This creates uncertainty for applicants, staff, and councils. It can lead to inconsistent interpretations between approval authorities. Clear definitions are needed for rural event venue, special event venue, agri-tourism, and associated accessory uses to establish a common understanding and improve decision-making consistency.

However, the challenge may not rest solely with the absence or quality of definitions themselves, but also with the inherently large classification of event venues. Rural event venues often span multiple use categories depending on their scale, frequency, location, and operational uses. For example, a single venue may function as an agricultural use when tied to farm operations, a tourism use when attracting visitors, and an assembly use when hosting large gatherings. This overlap makes it difficult to neatly classify event venues within a single definition, even where definitions do exist.

As a result, the issue may be less about creating entirely new definitions and more about recognizing that event venues do not fit cleanly into one category. A more efficient approach may involve clarifying how event venues are to be interpreted across multiple use permissions or establishing a framework that identifies when and how a use transitions between categories. Without this clarity, even well-defined terms may continue to produce ambiguity and inconsistent application across municipalities.

8.2. Key Issue #2 – Distinction Between Small-Scale Farm & Large-Scale Commercial

A related issue is the need to distinguish between small-scale farm-based events and larger commercial operations. Provincial policy supports on-farm diversified uses only where they are secondary to the principal agricultural operation. Many recent proposals, however, include weddings, catering, amplified music, and overnight stays in a way that begins to function as a standalone commercial business. Policy should more clearly identify when a proposal remains an on-farm diversified use and when it becomes a separate commercial land use requiring a higher level of review by the County and its member municipalities.

It is recommended that the County establish a clear policy framework that distinguishes between small-scale, farm-based events permitted as on-farm diversified uses and larger, standalone commercial event operations. This framework should introduce defined criteria and thresholds

that determine when an event use remains secondary to the principal agricultural operation and when it transitions into a commercial land use.

Key considerations should include the scale and frequency of events, number of attendees, extent of built form, provision of services such as catering and overnight accommodations, parking requirements, and the degree to which the use generates traffic, noise, and other off-site impacts. Where these factors exceed defined thresholds, the use should no longer be considered accessory to agriculture and should instead be classified as a commercial or assembly-type use.

The policy should also require applicants to demonstrate that on-farm diversified event uses remain clearly subordinate to and supportive of the agricultural operation. For proposals that meet or exceed the established thresholds, a higher level of planning review should be triggered.

8.3. Key Issue #3 – Scale and Intensity

The third key issue is the lack of clear thresholds for scale and intensity. Municipalities are frequently left to determine on a site-specific basis what is an acceptable number of events, parking, hours of operations, and building size and type. This creates uncertainty and raises concerns about precedent. Grey County would benefit from clearer policy direction on scale, frequency, and intensity so that proposals can be assessed more consistently across the County.

8.4. Key Issue #4 – Land Use Compatibility

Land use compatibility is also a central issue. The case studies presented in this report identify noise, traffic, lighting, servicing, and neighbourhood impacts as the main concerns brought forth by the community and municipality staff. These issues are especially significant where venues are located closer to residences or active farm operations. Stronger compatibility criteria are needed to guide setbacks, buffering, event timing, outdoor vs indoor activity, and other operational impacts.

8.5. Key Issue #5 – Overnight Accommodations and Ancillary Uses

Another key issue is the treatment of overnight accommodation and ancillary uses. These hybrid developments that look to incorporate cabins, camping, glamping, bed and breakfast, or other accommodations create more intensive use of the land, and create additional servicing, environmental, and other compatibility concerns. Policy should clarify whether and where such uses would be permitted, or considered, and whether they should be evaluated separately from the event venue itself.

Specific attention should be given to bed and breakfast uses within the existing residential building on the property. A modest bed and breakfast in an existing dwelling may be appropriate as an accessory use in rural contexts, particularly where it remains clearly secondary and limited

in scale. However, policy should prevent this type of use from gradually expanding into a larger inn, lodge, or motel-style operation. Clear limitations should be established on matters such as the number of guest rooms, whether meals will be provided, if new accommodation buildings are permitted, and when a proposal exceeds the scope of a bed and breakfast and must instead be treated as a commercial accommodation use.

8.6. Key Issue #6 – Servicing Capacity

Servicing capacity on privately serviced rural lands may become another issue. Event venues and associated accommodations can place significant demands on existing wells, septic systems, stormwater facilities, and rural roads. Grey County should provide clearer direction by establishing defined thresholds and criteria that trigger the requirement for technical studies, such as servicing capacity, hydrogeological, traffic, and noise assessments and explore when temporary servicing, such as portable toilets, may be considered. This direction should specify when such studies are required based on factors such as event size, frequency, site intensity, and introduction of features like overnight accommodation or permanent event structures, ensuring that potential impacts are appropriately evaluated and managed.

8.7. Key Issue #7 – Protections of Agricultural Land

Protection of agricultural land remains a key policy concern. In prime agricultural areas, event-related uses must not undermine the long-term viability of farming, remove significant land from production or create conflicts with normal farm practices. Policy should continue to clearly distinguish between opportunities that support farm viability and uses that are more appropriately directed to rural or settlement areas.

8.8. Key Issue #8 – Planning Structure

There is also an implementation challenge with Grey County’s two-tier planning structure. The Highland Estates example showed that inconsistent interpretation between the County and its member municipalities can complicate the approval process. Clearer County-level policy and shared guidance would help create a more consistent approach across all the member municipalities.

8.9. Key Issue #9 – Enforcement and Compliance

Lastly, enforcement and compliance should be considered. Several case studies show that even where approvals are granted, municipalities may face challenges in monitoring event frequency, noise, attendance, and unauthorized expansion of uses. Grey County and member municipalities should consider whether zoning, site plan control, licensing, or other tools are needed to better manage operations after their approval.

9. Recommendations

Based on the review of the current policies within Grey County and other comparable rural municipalities across Southern Ontario, the following approach is recommended for regulating rural event venues:

County Level

Rural event venues, including a range of types, scales and operational characteristics, should be permitted within rural designations, subject to a site-specific Zoning By-Law Amendment and appropriate supporting studies. The County Official Plan should establish overarching policy direction, including evaluation criteria and a standardized list of potential studies (i.e. noise, traffic, servicing, environmental), while allowing flexibility for refinement at the local level.

Evaluation criteria could include, for example, the scale and intensity of the proposed use (e.g., maximum number of attendees, frequency of events), the extent of built form and permanent infrastructure, and whether the use remains secondary to a principal agricultural or rural use. Additional considerations may include compatibility with surrounding land uses (including minimum separation distances and buffering), impacts on rural road networks and access, adequacy of private servicing (wells, septic systems, stormwater management), and potential noise or nuisance effects on nearby sensitive receptors. Environmental constraints such as natural heritage features, floodplains, and topography should also be assessed, along with the extent to which the proposal minimizes the removal of land from active agricultural production.

By establishing these types of criteria at the County level, Grey County can support a more consistent and transparent approach to evaluating rural event venue applications, while still allowing municipalities to tailor site-specific zoning provisions based on local context and technical findings.

Local Official Plan Level

Local municipalities should permit rural event venues within rural areas where appropriate, subject to a site-specific Zoning By-Law Amendment and supporting studies. Local Official Plans should provide clear direction on required and optional studies, as well as criteria related to scale, intensity, compatibility, and servicing. This will support consistent and transparent decision-making aligned with County policy.

Local Zoning By-Law Level

Rural event venues should not be permitted as-of-right in any land use zone. Instead, all proposals should proceed through a site-specific Zoning By-Law Amendment process. Zoning By-Laws

should include clear and explicit definitions for rural event venues and related uses, along with standardization provisions that can be applied through site-specific exceptions to regulate scale, intensity, and operational impacts.

Best practices for zoning by-law implementation include establishing a consistent suite of core provisions that are applied to all approved event venues, with flexibility to refine them through site-specific zoning. These provisions may include maximum attendance limits, caps on the number of events per year, and defined hours of operation (particularly for amplified sound). Zoning should also address built form by limiting the size, location, and permanence of event-related structures, and clearly regulating accessory uses such as food service areas or accommodations.

Additional best practices include requiring minimum setbacks, buffering, and landscaping to protect adjacent agricultural and rural residential uses, as well as specifying parking standards, access requirements, and internal circulation. Zoning provisions can also incorporate performance-based standards informed by technical studies, such as noise limits at property lines, demonstrated servicing capacity for private wells and septic systems, and requirements tied to road capacity or traffic impacts.

To improve consistency across applications, municipalities and/or the County may also develop standard zoning templates or schedules for rural event venues that outline typical provisions, which can then be tailored through site-specific exceptions. This approach supports greater predictability while still allowing flexibility to respond to unique site conditions. Overall, embedding these best practices within zoning by-laws helps ensure that rural event venues are appropriately scaled, compatible with their surroundings, and supported by clear, defensible planning controls.

9.1. Grey County Official Plan

OPA 23 to the Grey County OP already provides for some additional event venue usage types within rural lands, including on Agricultural land, and as OFDUs. However, larger-scale rural event venues may require a site-specific OPA.

Moving forward, we recommend that Grey County:

- Continue providing definitions for rural event venues and associated land-use types;
- Consider implementing the idea of rural event clusters by including a definition, and/or identifying suitable areas where they might be preferred;
- Add in language that requires all local municipalities to adopt policies into their OP that are related to rural event venues, specifically that require:
 - A site-specific ZBA for all rural event venues; and

- A list of mandatory and supplementary studies and reports.
- Continue to permit rural event venues within rural land designations, subject to a site-specific ZBA and the completion of necessary studies (as determined through pre-consultation).

At the County level, we recommend that the following reports be identified to support all Rural Event Venues:

- Planning Justification Report;
- Traffic Management Plan;
- Hydrogeological and Servicing Studies; and
- Noise Impact Assessment.
- Detailed site plan, showing all structures, setbacks, parking areas, signage, lighting, garbage storage areas, servicing (well, septic, stormwater, etc.), mapped natural heritage features, fencing, etc.

Where additional site-specific features are present, within the property or on nearby properties, the following additional reports may also be required:

- Agricultural Impact Assessment;
- Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Setbacks;
- Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment;
- Archaeological Assessment;
- Environmental Impact Study and/or Arborist Report;
- Contaminated Sites Assessment; and
- Stormwater Management Plan.
- Landscaping Plan

As for all development within the County, additional permits and approvals may be required from other levels of government, including but not limited to:

- Permit/Approval from regulating conservation authority; and
- Environmental Compliance Approval, from the MECP.

The number and scope of supplemental studies and approvals required should be discussed during a pre-consultation meeting with the County and the local municipality.

9.2. Local Municipal Official Plans

As seen through our review of the Town of The Blue Mountains OP and the Municipality of Grey Highlands OP, most (if not all) of the local municipalities within Grey County do not contain any policies, definitions, or requirements for rural event venues.

For the local municipalities, a similar approach as described in **Section 9.1** is recommended. In order for the approval process for rural event venues to flow smoothly, for both the planners and the public, County and Local OPs must be updated concurrently to reflect the same goals and objectives, and the local OP builds upon the County OP. As such, we have provided the following recommendations:

- Update definitions for rural event venues and associated land-use types to match those used within the County OP, add in new and diverse definitions as the economy changes;
- Add in language that requires all rural event venues to complete;
 - A site-specific ZBA; and
 - A list of mandatory and supplementary studies and reports.

The list of required and supplementary studies and reports, and additional approvals, as described in **Section 9.1** should remain the same within the local OP.

9.3. Local Zoning-Bylaws

Similar to the local OPs, most local ZBLs within Grey County do not contain policies, definitions, or requirements for rural event venues. To support the proposed changes to the County OP as described in **Section 9.1**, and the proposed changes to the Local OP's as described in **Section 9.2**. The following additional updates are recommended:

- Continue permitting OFDUs in agricultural areas, in accordance with provincial legislation;
- Continue to require site-specific zoning by-law amendment for rural event venues. For clarity, rural event venues should not be considered as an 'as-of-right' use; and
- Ensure that definitions are clear, consistent with local and county OP's, and are updated frequently to ensure that they represent the current economic market and event types.

Within a site-specific ZBA, it is important to include the following details:

- Type of rural event venue (including a definition if it is not already a pre-defined use);
- The portion of the property to be used as part of the rural event venue;
- The type of events;

- The maximum number of events to be held each year (using Spy Cider as an example, allowing for a maximum of 22 events per year would allow the venue to hold an event each weekend during the peak season);
- The maximum number of occupants at each event should be established based on the site-specific factors such as lot size, parking capacity, servicing limitations and proximity to sensitive uses;
- Whether the event venue will also be utilizing other as-of-right zoning permissions, such as the bed & breakfast or hotel provisions (including a specification on the number of rooms and their location). As a guideline, properties that will be utilizing an existing residential dwelling should be limited to the existing by-law for bed and breakfast use. If additional permanent or temporary structures are being introduced, those limits need to be established based on site-specific factors such as lot size, parking capacity, servicing limitations and proximity to sensitive uses; and
- Whether additional studies are required before lifting a holding provision (i.e. noise assessment, traffic impact assessment, etc.).

In many situations, it is also advisable to prepare a contract between the rural event venue and the local municipality. This contract should outline any additional concerns and how the event venue intends to address those concerns over the short and long-term. This agreement could include further details on how the business intends to comply with other local bylaws, such as garbage, noise, property standards, etc. In some instances, the preparation of pamphlets for both nearby residents and facility attendees is a great opportunity to educate, show respect for, and truly appreciate the local community.

9.4. Best Practices for Applicants

Applying for a site-specific Zoning By-law Amendment can be a complex process that requires careful planning, coordination, and communication. The following best practices are intended to help applicants better understand expectations, avoid common challenges, and improve the overall efficiency of the review process. Taking a proactive and informed approach from the outset can help streamline approvals and lead to stronger, more successful development proposals.

1. Engage Qualified Professionals Early

- Work with a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) to guide and manage the application process;
- Retain additional experts as needed, such as engineers, environmental consultants, acoustic specialists, or architects; and

- Ensure all studies and materials are prepared by qualified professionals.

2. Participate in a Pre-Submission Consultation Meeting

- Meet with municipal planning staff early to confirm project requirements and to identify potential concerns;
- Consult with both the County and member municipalities, where applicable; and
- Be honest, open, and up front about project goals, priorities, and hurdles.

3. Understand the Policy Framework

- Review the County and member municipality Official Plans, the Zoning By-law, and other applicable legislation (i.e. provincial planning statement, noise bylaws, etc.);
- Ensure your proposal aligns with applicable policies and demonstrates good planning; and
- Clearly demonstrate through your application how your proposal fits within the broader planning context.

4. Be Realistic About Timelines and Budget

- Recognize that planning applications can take time, especially if revisions or additional supporting materials are needed;
- Budget for application fees, consultation costs, and supporting studies; and
- Allow flexibility for unexpected delays or additional work.

5. Prioritize Meaningful and Early Public Engagement

- Speak with neighbours and project stakeholders early in the process;
- Clearly communicate your proposal and listen to feedback; and
- Demonstrate in your application how community input has been considered in your design.

6. Design with Context in Mind

- Ensure the proposal 'fits' within the surrounding land uses and community character;
- Consider building height, proposal scale, and its compatibility with adjacent properties; and
- Address potential impacts such as privacy, shadowing, and noise.

7. Minimize Impacts on Infrastructure and Natural Features

- Incorporate design approaches that reduce strain on infrastructure;
- Consider low-impact options such as advanced septic systems and permeable paving; and
- Limit tree removal and protect natural heritage features, wherever possible.

8. Prepare a Complete and High-Quality Submission

- Submit all required materials as outlined by the County and member municipality during the pre-consultation process;
- Ensure plans and reports are clear, consistent, and professionally prepared; and
- Double-check submissions to avoid delays caused by incomplete applications or errors in submission materials.

9. Be Responsive and Collaborative

- Respond to municipal and agency comments promptly;
- Be open to revising plans and addressing feedback; and
- Maintain clear and ongoing communication with staff.

10. Anticipate Council and Public Considerations

- Understand that Council decisions are influenced by planning merit and public input;
- Be prepared to clearly explain the purpose and benefits of your proposal; and
- Consider how your application will be perceived by the broader community.

11. Think Long-Term

- Consider how the proposal will function, evolve, and/or grow over time;
- Plan for servicing, maintenance, and future compatibility with surrounding uses; and
- Demonstrate long-term sustainability and good planning practices.

12. Overall Approach

- Focus on early planning, clear communication, and thoughtful design;
- Take a proactive and collaborative approach throughout the process; and
- Going beyond minimum requirements can help strengthen relationships, creating a smoother and more efficient approval process.

10. Conclusion

Rural event venues represent a growing and evolving component of Grey County’s rural economy. As demonstrated throughout this report, these uses can support farm viability, enhance tourism, and contribute to local economic development. However, they also introduce complex planning considerations, particularly where proposals increase in scale, intensity, or deviate from traditional agricultural or OFDU’s.

The review of provincial policy, Grey County’s existing framework, and comparable municipalities highlights that the primary challenge is not whether rural event venues should be permitted, but rather how they should be regulated. Current approaches, which rely heavily on case-by-case evaluations and site-specific zoning amendments, provide flexibility but lack consistency and clarity. This can result in uncertainty for applicants, inefficiencies in the approval process, and difficulties in managing land use compatibility and long-term impacts.

The case studies further reinforce the importance of clear policy direction. Projects that align with agricultural uses and are supported by well-defined conditions are more likely to be approved and accepted by the community. In contrast, proposals that exceed existing policy frameworks or lack clear classification can face significant opposition and uncertainty. These examples demonstrate the need for a more proactive and coordinated policy approach.

Moving forward, Grey County can strengthen its policy framework by establishing clear definitions, thresholds for scale and intensity, and consistent evaluation criteria. Improved alignment between the County and its member municipalities will be critical to ensuring a unified and transparent approach. In addition, stronger tools for managing operational impacts and enforcing conditions will help maintain compatibility with surrounding rural and agricultural uses.

In conclusion, a clear, consistent, and coordinated policy framework will enable Grey County to support appropriate rural event venues while protecting agricultural land, maintaining rural character, and addressing community concerns. By proactively addressing these issues, the County can better position itself to manage future development pressures and support sustainable rural growth.

11. References

- AirBnB. (2026). Highland Cow Farm Stay – The Highland Bunkie. https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/800986291703653840?fbclid=IwY2xjawQtO3hleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFQMEZIWfHkWU00VVF0UkhRc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODlwMDg5MgABHibvj2S8w_lihb3ysYPM37UrAJO_n4GgeJ-e4Mg5fzp5c-FiG7ckNcwyXAiM_aem_cEp5Z_7AkWaUrcjsYdFe7A&locale=en&_set_bev_on_new_domain=1774214184_EAY2M5Ytg1YWM2Mm&set_everest_cookie_on_new_domain=1774214184.EAMDgyN2E3MTJkMzBhYj.E1qj9Uet7qjaMUjFs05egXaYQwF7FDAo2WVBj979kM4&source_impression_id=p3_1774214185_P3sP-RnbDX0OyeBk
- Bruce County. (2026). Bruce County Maps. <https://maps.brucecounty.on.ca/Geocortex/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=BruceMaps>
- Cole, Bailey. (2026, March 4). Meeting with Becky. University of Guelph. LINK
- Cole, Bailey. (2026, March 4). Meeting with Diksha. University of Guelph. LINK
- CollingwoodToday. (2024a). Grey County council says “I don’t” to wedding venue proposal. <https://www.collingwoodtoday.ca/the-blue-mountains-and-grey-highlands/grey-county-council-says-i-dont-to-wedding-venue-proposal-11100054>
- CollingwoodToday. (2024b). Wedding venue built without permits seeks retroactive approvals from Grey Highlands. <https://www.collingwoodtoday.ca/the-blue-mountains-and-grey-highlands/wedding-venue-built-without-permits-seeks-retroactive-approvals-from-grey-highlands-9728410>
- Cottonwood Mansion Museum. (n.d.). Tours & Events. <https://cottonwoodmansionmuseum.com/tours-and-events>
- County of Simcoe. (2013, April 19). County of Simcoe Official Plan. Consolidated February 2023. <https://simcoe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SCOP-Office-Consolidation-February-2023-FINAL-Certified.pdf>
- Destination Ontario. (2026a). Cideries Worth a Road Trip in Ontario. <https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca/articles/cideries-worth-road-trip-ontario>
- Destination Ontario. (2026b). Farm Stays and Agritourism Vacations in Ontario. <https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca/articles/ontario-farm-stays-and-food-experiences>
- Destination Ontario. (2026c). Things to Do, Farm Experiences. <https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca/things-to-do/farm-experiences>
- Destination Ontario. (2026d). Spas and Wellness Retreats. <https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca/things-to-do/spas-and-wellness-retreats>
- Destination Ontario. (2026e). Charming Small Towns. <https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca/travel-resources/itineraries-road-trips#category-7>

- Essa Agriplex. (2026). Welcome. <https://www.essaagriplex.ca/home>
- Fernandes, M.T. (2025, June 26). Grey Highlands' answer is « no”, to Highland Estates wedding venue proposal. https://www.pentictonherald.ca/spare_news/article_c1d9aa62-58fe-5ece-830c-43abcc34efa6.html
- GlampingHub. (n.d.). Yurt Camping Rentals in Ontario. <https://glampinghub.com/rentalsearch/unique-yurt-rentals-ontario-canada/>
- Government of Ontario. (1990). Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13. Consolidated November 27, 2025.
- Government of Ontario. (1992). Building Code Act, 1992, S.O. 1992, c.23. Consolidated July 1, 2025.
- Grey Agricultural Services. (n.d.). <https://www.greyagservices.ca/>
- Grey County. (n.d.) Official Plan Amendment 23. <https://www.grey.ca/government/special-projects/official-plan-amendment-23>
- Grey County. (2019, June 7). Recolour Grey: County of Grey Official Plan. Consolidated May 6, 2025. <https://countyofgrey.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Extranet/EbFuRoZ5xNBCmuslC3K4-IQBUpxg0h39nglDqb3XXanlpQ?e=mhzh9b>
- Grey County. (2023, March 31). Municipal Boundary. Updated March 31, 2023. <https://maps.grey.ca/datasets/grey::municipality-boundary-2/explore?location=44.415031%2C-80.812466%2C9>
- Grey County. (2025). Amendment No. 23 to the County of Grey Official Plan. DRAFT. <https://countyofgrey.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Extranet/EUslUuNfkABKmjPXeCsXeGYBOM75uQtrL0wK2fM1CnWhIA?e=ESJfrp>
- Haldimand County. (2020). Comprehensive Zoning By-Law HC 1-2020. <https://www.haldimandcounty.ca/media/ssybo5g4/pdd-haldimand-county-comprehensive-zoning-by-law-hc-1-2020-04-2025.pdf>
- Haldimand County. (2023). By-Law Number 1344-HC/23. <https://www.haldimandcounty.ca/media/yohl5143/pdd-zoning-by-law-amendment-1344-hc-23.pdf>
- Haldimand County. (2024). Official Plan. <https://www.haldimandcounty.ca/media/utdf4fjl/haldimand-county-official-plan-2024.pdf>
- Hatten, Rob. (2017). Agriculture in Grey County by the Numbers. <https://www.grey.ca/news/agriculture-grey-county-numbers>
- Hillyer, Becky, and Taylor, Scott. (2025). Committee Report: 42-08-180-OPA-22 Beacalm Inc. (Highland Estate) Recommendation Report. <https://pub-grey.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=f630928e-37cd-4957-a8c5-7de43768dfa7&lang=English&Agenda=Merged&Item=13&Tab=attachments>
- Inn The Orchard. (2026). Home Away From Home. <https://inntheorchard.com/>

- Ivy Ridge Weddings & Events. (n.d.) Ceremony. <https://ivyridge.ca/the-grounds/multi-gallery.php?id=2>
- Made in Grey. (n.d.). Agriculture. <https://madeingrey.ca/business-environment/agriculture#:~:text=Grey%20County%20ranks%20number%20one,to%20download%20the%20rack%20cards>.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (2016). Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, Publication 851. <https://www.ontario.ca/files/2024-04/omafra-publication-851-guidelines-on-permitted-uses-in-ontarios-prime-agricultural-areas-en-04-02-2024.pdf>
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2024). Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2025a, January 16). 2024 Building Code Compendium. Volume 1.
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2025b, January 16). 2024 Building Code Compendium. Volume 2.
- Municipality of Grey Highlands. (2004). Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2004-50 (Office consolidation 2024). <https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/filepro/document/327512/Zoning%20By-law%202004-50%20-%20Office%20Consolidation%202024.pdf>
- Municipality of Grey Highlands. (2017, September 22). Official Plan. Consolidated February 11, 2022. <https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/187671/?preview=187365>
- Muskoka District Rentals. (n.d.). Cherry Island. <https://muskokadistrictrentals.com/rent-a-cottage/lake-of-bays-cottage-rentals/cherry-island/>
- Sara Monika. (n.d.). Top 10 Laid-back Outdoor Wedding Venues in Ontario. <https://www.saramonika.com/wedding-planning-tips/top-10-laid-back-outdoor-wedding-venues-in-ontario>
- Spy Cider House and Distillery. <https://www.spydistillery.com/>
- Spy Cider House and Distillery. (2019). Visit Us. https://www.spydistillery.com/?srsltid=AfmBOooAcznmFT7gVOnTbDxS8N_-XFcaDNrqmG--sTdza9dAEtq1Ymqo
- Sunrise Eco-Resort. (n.d.) Your Private Retreat in the Forest. <https://www.sunndecoresort.com/>
- The Corporation of the Municipality of South Bruce. (2024, April 4). By-Law Number 2024-34. A By-law to Regulate the Use of Lands and the Character, Location and Use of Buildings and Structures in the Municipality of South Bruce. https://www.southbruce.ca/media/jf0ccgcs/south-bruce-zoning-by-law_040424-1.pdf
- The Corporation of the Township of Essa. (2003) Zoning By-law 2003-50. <https://www.essatownship.on.ca/media/xoph05gq/zbl-master-updated-january-12th-2026.pdf>
- The Corporation of the Township of Essa. (2001, July 6). Official Plan of the Township of Essa. https://www.essatownship.on.ca/media/vwflxzip/official-plan-2001_upd_jan_12_2025.pdf

The Post & Beam. (2024a). Welcome to the Post and Beam. <https://thepostandbeam.ca/>

The Post & Beam. (2024b). Floorplan. <https://thepostandbeam.ca/floorplan>

The Town of the Blue Mountains. (2016, June). Town of the Blue Mountains Official Plan. https://www.thebluемountains.ca/sites/default/files/2021-06/document_viewer%20%2810%29.pdf

Town of The Blue Mountains. (2018). Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2018-65 (Office consolidation May 2024). <https://www.thebluемountains.ca/sites/default/files/2024-05/Comprehensive%20Zoning%20By-law%20-Town%20of%20The%20Blue%20Mountains%202018-65%20Office%20Consolidation%20%28May%202024%29.pdf>

Town of The Blue Mountains. (2024). Staff report regarding noise and event-related concerns. <https://pub-bluemountains.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=21484>

Town of The Blue Mountains. (2025). Spy Cider House and Distillery. <https://www.thebluемountains.ca/planning-building-construction/current-projects/planning-development-projects/spy-cider-house-and-distillery>

Township of Essa. (2012). Community Profile. <https://www.essatownship.on.ca/media/rhfnztn1/community-profile.pdf>

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	FR-CW-07-26
Title:	2025 Year End Transfers
Prepared by:	Garrett Reed, Manager of Accounting
Reviewed by:	Mary Lou Spicer, Director of Finance and Sue Murray, Deputy Treasurer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	

Recommendation

1. That Council receive FR-CW-07-26 titled 2025 Year-End Transfers and approve the recommendations as contained and estimated in the report; and
2. That Council approve any surplus/deficit arising in the 2025 budget being transferred to/(from) the respective departmental reserve; and
3. That remaining unfunded capital costs as of December 31, 2025 for the administration building renovation, Chatsworth paramedic base and Grey Gables roof be funded by an unbudgeted transfer from the One Time Funding Reserve of \$4,144,174, further to resolution CW187-25.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the estimated year-end surplus/deficit amounts by functional area and to provide staff with the authority to make the following adjustments necessary to finalize the County's 2025 year-end financials:

- Year-end surplus and deficit transfers – identifies estimated surplus and/or deficit and recommends how to allocate these surplus or deficit funds.
- Year-end transfers for donations – donations received for specific purposes are recommended to be transferred to reserve to be utilized for these purposes when work is undertaken.
- Unbudgeted Transfer from One Time Funding Reserve to fund the early repayment of the County's internally financed debentures.

Background and Discussion

The financial statements have been reviewed for each functional area and projections have been made to estimate the year-end surplus or deficit for the 2025 audit. These projections have been used to recommend the 2025 transfers to and from reserves and are considered estimates until MNP completes the audit. Committee of the Whole will receive the final year-end figures when the audited financial statements are presented in June 2026.

During the course of the year, donations are received that are intended for specific purposes; these donations are required to be transferred to a reserve for use when eligible work is undertaken.

The administration building renovation, Chatsworth paramedic base and Grey Gables roof replacement were financed through internally financed debentures. To find reductions in the 2026 budget and future budget years, Council approved removing the annual principal and interest repayments. These debentures were internally financed and shown as an unfinanced liability on the County's books that was repaid through annual levy contributions. To fund the unfunded liability at December 31, 2025, an unbudgeted transfer from the One Time Funding Reserve of \$4,144,174 is required. This report and motion provide staff with the authority to make this unbudgeted transfer. After this transfer and other recommended transfers in this report, the One Time Funding Reserve has a \$6,924,000 projected 2025 year-end balance.

Summary

The following table summarizes the projected year-end surplus or deficit by functional area that have been estimated by Finance with input from each department. The 2025 year-end financial review projects a corporate year-end surplus of \$1,814,500; this is broken down into a \$495,400 operating budget shortfall and a \$2,309,900 capital surplus.

The 2025 budget required \$78,362,800 to be raised from taxation; the projected 2025 surplus represents 2.32% of the taxation (also known as levy) amount. Many services that Grey County delivers are supported by provincial and federal funding that is a best estimate based on historical increases at the time the budget is prepared. The 2025 budgeted gross expenditures totaled \$302.5M, with \$176.0M for operating purposes and \$126.5M for capital purposes (\$51.2M of the capital budget is for the Rockwood Terrace Redevelopment project). As a percentage of gross budgeted expenditures, this represents 0.60%, this number is relevant as it provides context to the County's entire budget which includes levy, grants and user fees.

The year-end surplus/deficit has been influenced by the following:

- Higher supplemental taxes and lower write-offs resulting in a \$785,000 surplus.
- Savings in salaries and benefit costs due to staffing vacancies and lower than budgeted benefit rates
- Deficit in Long Term Care of \$602,200. There are a number of reasons for the shortfall that include collective agreement retroactive payments for 2023 and 2024 following an arbitrated award in 2025 which exceeded accruals made during those years as well as work to harmonize rates in two other collective agreements. The difference between the accruals and estimated payouts were transferred as surpluses, transferred to reserve, in

2023 and 2024 and will offset this deficit in 2025. Other variances differ depending on the home and are discussed below.

- Childcare savings of \$344,200 in Early Learning and Child Care due to provincial funding changes resulting in a reduced County minimum contribution and prior year funding reconciliation
- County owned housing surplus of \$315,800 and \$225,000 surplus from lower than budgeted subsidy provided to non-profit housing providers
- Transportation Major Construction surplus of \$3,152,700, which was reduced by the unbudgeted replacement of the Chatsworth sand storage building and operating deficit for winter and vehicle maintenance to a departmental surplus of \$42,900

Summary of Projected Year-End Surplus / (Deficit) by Functional Area

2025 Budget by Function	Projected Year-End Surplus/(Deficit)
Corporate Services	\$1,294,400
Planning and Community Development	\$139,500
Human Services	\$337,800
Transportation Services	\$42,900
Total	\$1,814,500

Department/Function	Reserve / Notes	Projected Surplus/ (Deficit)	Estimated To/(From) Reserve Amount
Corporate Services	Portfolio Projected Surplus/(Deficit)	\$1,294,400	
	Administration – Council Communications Reserve		\$77,700
	Administration - One-Time Funding Reserve		\$403,600
	Information Services – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(27,800)
	Assessment - One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(18,400)
	Council - One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(30,700)
	Property - Administration Properties Reserve		\$(75,900)
	POA - One-Time Funding Reserve		\$102,900
	Supplemental Taxes and Write-offs – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$785,000
	Self-Insured Plans - One-Time Funding Reserve		\$90,500
	Climate Change – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$76,300
	Climate Change – Energy Audit Reserve		\$31,200
	Court Security – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(120,000)
Planning & Community Development	Portfolio Projected Surplus/(Deficit)	\$139,500	
	Planning – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(95,200)
	Civic Addressing – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$8,000
	Agriculture – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$(30,300)
	Forestry and Trails – One-Time Funding Reserve		\$71,600
	Economic Development & Tourism – One Time Funding Reserve		\$41,700
	Economic Development & Tourism – Tourism General Reserve		\$(700)
	Community Transportation – One Time Funding Reserve		\$82,300
	Grey Roots – Grey Roots Capital Renewal and Replacements Reserve		\$62,100
Human Services	Portfolio Projected Surplus/(Deficit)	\$337,800	

	Social Services - Social Services General Reserve		\$61,600
	Social Services – EarlyON Centre Building Reserve		\$344,200
	Housing – Housing Capital Renewal and Replacements Reserve		\$540,800
	LTC – Grey Gables Operating – Grey Gables Capital Renewal Reserve		\$(503,400)
	LTC- Grey Gables Capital- Grey Gables Capital Renewal Reserve		\$135,400
	LTC – Lee Manor Operating – Lee Manor Capital Renewal Reserve		\$(718,000)
	LTC- Lee Manor Capital- Lee Manor Capital Renewal Reserve		\$14,800
	LTC – Rockwood Terrace Operating – Capital Renewal Reserve		\$337,200
	LTC – Rockwood Terrace Capital – Capital Renewal Reserve		\$131,800
	LTC – Redevelopment		\$0
	Paramedic Services - Paramedic Equipment Reserve		\$(6,600)
Transportation Services	Portfolio Projected Surplus/(Deficit)	\$42,800	
	Transportation Services Operating – Structures and Major Capital Reserve		\$(1,966,000)
	Transportation Services Capital – Structures and Major Capital Reserve		\$2,008,800
Total Surplus/(Deficit)		\$1,814,500	\$1,814,500

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services operating and capital budget is projected to have a \$1,294,400 surplus. This surplus is comprised of an operating surplus of \$1,289,100 and a capital surplus of \$5,300.

Administration

The budgets for administration departments (Clerks, CAO, Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Communications, IT and General Administration) are projecting an operating and capital surplus totaling \$481,300; \$480,500 of this amount is operating surplus. This surplus is driven primarily by surpluses in salaries and benefits due to temporary staffing vacancies throughout the year and lower than budgeted benefits costs in the Finance, Communication, CAO, Human Resources and IT departments. Additional surpluses are found in the Legal Services and Human Resources departmental budgets from lower than budgeted external legal fees.

Staff recommend that the communications specific surplus of \$77,700 be transferred to the Council Communications Reserve to cover potential additional expenses in 2026 for the replacement of the council chamber's audio-visual system. This adjustment to the reserve balance is expected to minimize future annual increases to the reserve contribution. The remaining administration budget surplus is proposed to be transferred to the One-Time Funding Reserve.

Investment income in 2025 was \$279,500 higher than budgeted. There is a \$554,200 surplus due to higher-than-expected cash balances and higher than budgeted interest rates on bank account balances and renewed investments. This surplus revenue is offset by a \$274,700 write down of an investment to its actual fair market value; this investment has been in the County's portfolio since 2013 and has been below the book value since 2021. As per the Cash and Investment Management Policy, the net revenue budgeted from investment income that exceeds 1% of the County's own purpose levy will be transferred to the One Time Funding Reserve to cover any future deficits or to provide funds for special one-time projects. As the additional investment revenue is transferred into the One Time Funding Reserve; it does not create a surplus or deficit.

The IT Department is projecting a capital surplus of \$800 due to higher than budgeted revenue collected for tower rentals.

Information Services

The Information Services budget is projecting a deficit of \$27,800. The budgeted 2025 costs of \$1.2M for this department were allocated to the various County departments and therefore it has no budgeted levy. However, higher than anticipated software costs have resulted in a deficit that staff propose be funded from the One Time Funding Reserve. These cost increases will be taken into consideration for future Information Services allocations to departments.

Assessment

The costs related to the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation's (MPAC) services are projecting a deficit of \$18,400. Staff budgeted for a 2.5% increase in 2025 over 2024 actuals, but the increase was closer to 3.4%.

Council

The Council budget is projecting a deficit of \$30,700. The deficit is caused by higher than budgeted professional fees, conferences, travel and meals.

Property

The Property budget (which supports repairs and maintenance at the Administration Building and the adjacent building that is leased to the Canadian Mental Health Association) is projecting an operating and capital deficit of \$75,900. The operating budget is projecting a deficit of \$59,200; this deficit is a result of significant overage in repairs and maintenance to the building's heating and cooling systems and elevator as well as overages in the budget for snow removal. The capital budget is projecting a deficit of \$16,700 which is the result of overages for the HVAC control system upgrades in 2025; this work results in the renovated and original section of the building being on the same system. Additionally, there were unbudgeted costs for repairs to the admin building roof that were approved through CSR-CW-19-25. The project was scheduled to be completed in 2025 and postponed due to weather, this will therefore create a deficit in 2026 when the work is completed. Staff are proposing the total property budget deficit be funded by the Administration Properties Reserve.

Provincial Offences

The Provincial Offences budget is projecting a surplus of \$102,900 after cost sharing with Bruce County. The surplus is primarily a result of higher ticket revenue than budgeted. Overall ticket volume remains consistent, but a few higher value tickets created a surplus in this budget. These charges are difficult to budget and forecast based on the variability of when charges are laid and when they are paid. Additionally, direct court operating costs continue to increase year over year. To offset this impact, the court is continuing to expand collection efforts to collect defaulted fines.

Court Security

Court Security is projecting a deficit of \$120,000. As presented in CAOR-CW-15-25, there are a variety of reasons for this deficit, including increased prisoner transport and higher in person court attendance. This deficit will be funded from the overall surplus for Corporate Services.

Tax and Other

Supplemental taxes and write-offs project a surplus of \$785,000, this is made up of an additional \$676,300 in supplemental taxes than budgeted and \$108,700 less in write-offs.

Health Unit, Health Care and Education Funding

The budget for Grey County's contribution to Grey Bruce Public Health is projected to end the year on budget.

WSIB and Weekly Indemnity

Grey County's self-insured plans are projecting a combined surplus of \$90,500. The WSIB budget is projecting a surplus of \$46,500 and the Weekly Indemnity budget is projecting a surplus of \$44,000. The number and duration of claims trended lower compared to 2024.

Climate Change

Climate Change is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$107,500. The operating budget is projected to have a surplus of \$76,300 due to staffing vacancies throughout the year and the ability to use provincial and federal funding to cover operating costs that were budgeted to be funded by levy. In addition, an unbudgeted grant from Enbridge totaling \$10,000 has assisted this budget. The capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$31,200 due to reduced spending in the Support for Sustainable Agriculture projects and the Climate Changes Opportunity Fund. Staff recommend that the capital surplus and \$10,000 Enbridge grant be transferred to the Energy Audit Reserve and the remaining balance be transferred to the One-Time Funding Reserve.

Planning and Community Development

Planning

The Planning operating budget is projecting a deficit of \$95,200. The deficit is a result of overages in salaries and benefits and lower local and subdivision application fee revenue than budgeted. Revenue is difficult to budget due to the uncertainty of when applications will be submitted. Staff propose using the net surplus between the civic addressing, agriculture and forestry and trails departments to offset the deficit and fund the remaining \$45,900 shortfall from the One Time Funding Reserve.

The Planning capital budget is projected to end the year on budget as all projects are funded from reserve and do not generate a surplus. The Civic Addressing department is projecting a surplus of \$8,000 due to less spending than expected on signage.

Agriculture and Forestry and Trails

The Agriculture budget is projecting a deficit of \$30,300 due to increase professional fees as Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GCSA) spent more time on bylaw work in 2025 than expected. These overages are offset by reduced fees for GCSA staff spending less time

working on trails. These overages are also offset by savings from lower than budgeted spending on beaver and coyote grants paid by the County.

The Forestry and Trails budget is projecting an operating surplus of \$71,600. This surplus is primarily due to the savings from GCSA spending less time on forestry management as mentioned above. Additionally, unbudgeted provincial grants were received to fund a portion of the Buckthorn management in County forests that were budgeted to be funded by levy.

The Forestry and Trails capital budget is projecting to end the year on budget as all projects are funded from reserve and do not generate a surplus

Economic Development and Tourism

The Economic Development and Tourism budget is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$41,000. The operating budget is projecting a surplus of \$41,700, due to temporary staffing vacancies, lower than budgeted benefit rates and utilizing federal grants to fund a portion of a position budgeted from levy. These savings were offset slightly by increased snow removal cost at the Sydenham campus.

The Economic Development and Tourism capital budget is projecting a deficit of \$700 due to slightly higher costs than budgeted for the tourism website upgrade project.

Community Transportation

The Community Transportation program is projecting a surplus of \$82,300 and is the result of staff completing the final 2019 to 2025 claim submission for the Grey Transit Route program. Grey County's funding contributions in earlier years were not fully needed based on final expenditures over the 6 year grant and results in a surplus. In addition to this surplus, the \$178,000 that was budgeted from the One Time Funding Reserve was not needed and therefore remained in reserve.

Grey Roots

Grey Roots is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$62,100 with the operating budget projecting a \$86,100 surplus. This surplus is driven primarily by higher than budgeted admission revenue due to some very popular exhibits last year. Additionally, there were temporary staffing vacancies because of the village LEAN pilot project as well as benefit savings that contributed to the overall operating surplus. The Community Cultural Initiatives Fund was not used in 2025 and was re-budgeted for 2026 to better align with the proposed Indigenous Advisory Circle project timeline.

The Grey Roots capital budget is projecting a deficit of \$24,000 due to higher than anticipated costs for the air handling unit, archive upgrade and theatre upgrade projects. The overages for the archive project are offset by an unbudgeted donation in the operating budget, with the remaining shortfall funded by the Grey Roots operating budget surplus.

Human Services

Ontario Works

Ontario Works is projecting a surplus of \$61,600. The surplus is primarily due to lower than budgeted expenses for Social Assistance non-shareable costs. These costs relate to funerals for non-social assistance recipients. Expenditures to support social assistance recipients are under budget as caseload growth was lower than budgeted; these costs are 100% provincially funded and do not generate a surplus. There are additional savings in Ontario Works Administration due to some temporary staffing vacancies and lower than budgeted benefit rates, 50% of these costs are funded by the province.

Early Learning and Child Care

The budget for Early Learning and Childcare is projecting a surplus of \$344,200. This surplus is primarily the result of changes in provincial funding under the new Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program. The required municipal cost share is lower than the previous model; staff did not have these details when developing the 2025 budget. Additionally, an unbudgeted increase to the EarlyON grant resulted in no municipal funding being required for the program. Lastly, a funding adjustment was made when the ministry reviewed the 2022 and 2023 funding years, this resulted in less funding being recovered by the ministry for these years than staff had accounted for and created a 2025 surplus. Staff are recommending this surplus be transferred to the EarlyON Centre Capital Replacement Reserve to offset the 2026 higher than budgeted project costs that were approved through CSR-CW-07-26.

Housing

Housing is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$540,800 with \$400,900 from the operating budget. The portion of the budget for County owned housing (administration and property budgets) combines for an overall surplus of \$175,900 and is primarily the result of:

- \$250,000 surplus for changes in tenant rent revenue and reduced vacancy unit turnover timing

- \$141,000 surplus for salaries and benefits due to staffing vacancies and lower benefit rates, less overages in contracted services for custodial support during vacancies
- \$221,800 deficit for snow removal due to severe winter and hauling snow
- \$6,700 surplus from various other budget lines

The non-profit housing budget has a surplus of \$225,000; this is due to agreements and mortgages ending in 2025, as well as annual funding reconciliations that resulted in less subsidy required by providers that is being repaid by providers.

The housing capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$139,800. This surplus is the result of three capital projects funded from levy totaling \$264,700 that were not completed in 2025; these projects were re-budgeted in 2026. This is offset by an unbudgeted \$100,000 insurance deductible for the roof at 248 7th Avenue East; during fire remediation work, damage was discovered that was unrelated to the fire. Additionally, the cost of demolition for the Rowes Lane property in Dundalk was budgeted in 2024, completed in 2025 and resulted in an in-year shortfall. Staff are proposing that the net surplus be transferred to the Housing Capital Renewal and Replacements Reserve to cover the costs of the projects in 2026.

Long Term Care

As mentioned in the summary, in all three homes there were retroactive wage payments made in 2025 that were based on an arbitrated award that affected prior years.

Estimates of post-settlement wages were budgeted in 2023 and 2024 with costs estimated each year; estimates were less than budget and generated surpluses in those years. Surplus was transferred to reserve as part of the year end reconciliation for each year.

Following an arbitrated award in 2025, retroactive payments were made to affected staff across all three Long Term Care homes. These retroactive payments exceeded accruals made to date, resulting in salary and wage overages in 2025.

As a result, the balance (difference between the payout and accrual) will be funded by each respective homes reserves.

Grey Gables

Grey Gables is projecting an operating and capital deficit of \$368,000. The operating budget is projecting a deficit of \$503,400; as mentioned above, the deficit is influenced by current year and retroactive wage costs. It is also driven by higher costs for legal and association fees, utilities, food and waste removal, as well as lower than budgeted tenant revenue. The capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$135,400. The surplus is a result of savings across various capital projects and utilizing comprehensive minor capital funding that was announced by the province after the 2025 budget was approved.

Lee Manor

Lee Manor is projecting an operating and capital deficit of \$703,200. The operating budget is projecting a deficit of \$718,000; similar to Grey Gables, the impact of current year and retroactive payments is contributing to the deficit. There were additional deficits for higher than budgeted legal fees, computer purchases, training, medical supplies, physician on call and

staffing costs due to higher acuity of residents and increased building maintenance expenses that were offset by savings in the budget line for software costs and higher preferred accommodation revenue than anticipated. The capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$14,800 which is due to minor cost savings on various capital projects.

Rockwood Terrace

Rockwood Terrace is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$469,000, of this amount, \$337,200 relates to the operating budget. The capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$131,800. The surplus is the result of budgeting a provision for building repairs should work be required prior to moving into the new building and having the ability to use comprehensive minor capital funding that was provided by the province after the 2025 budget was approved.

Long Term Care Redevelopment

When the Rockwood Terrace redevelopment budget for 2025 was developed, it assumed that almost \$51.2 million in expenditures would occur in the year to be funded by provincial grants, levy and an Infrastructure Ontario construction loan. Due to timing differences, only \$22.1 million in expenditures occurred during the year. A construction loan was not taken in 2025, therefore \$10.6 million of costs are unfinanced at year end and will be rolled into a construction loan in 2026. This does not generate a surplus or a deficit.

Paramedic Services

Paramedic Services is projecting an operating and capital deficit of \$6,600. The operating budget is projecting a surplus of \$94,800. The operating surplus is due to an unbudgeted increase to the Community Paramedicine for Long Term Care grant, resulting in a lower contribution from the County for the program. There were significant savings within salaries and benefits due to lower than budgeted lost time, benefit rates and OMERS enrolment for part-time staff. Based on these savings, staff were able to significantly reduce the amount transferred from reserve that was budgeted to smooth the levy increases over the 10 year term of the Paramedic Services enhancement plan. These savings are offset by overages in medical supplies and medications; increased call volumes resulted in increased supply usage and the cost of the supplies is also increasing higher than the standard inflation rate.

Paramedic Services is projecting a capital deficit of \$101,400. This deficit is primarily the result of the conversion of 2 duty supervisor trucks that were budgeted in 2024 and due to delays, the work was not completed until early 2025. Staff purchase the base vehicle from dealers and then send the vehicles away for conversion to a responding paramedic vehicle based on ministry guidelines. Staff are proposing to fund this deficit from the Paramedic Services General Equipment Reserve.

Transportation Services

Transportation Services is projecting an operating and capital surplus of \$42,800. The operating budget is projecting a deficit of \$1,966,000 that is the result of two significantly bad halves of winter in 2025 and by far, the largest shortfall in the review of the past five years' financial statements. Significant weather events in the County resulted in overages in staff costs as plow operators worked overtime to maintain the roads and mechanics worked overtime to maintain

the fleet. Overages for materials such as salt, sand and fuel are the result of increased consumption and overages in contracted services were seen as external parties were brought in to remove snow when needed. Vehicle and machinery budgets also projecting a deficit due to increased usage in 2025; additional supply chain delays have required the County to keep tandems beyond their expected useful life, this has also contributed to repair costs. Lastly, there is a deficit in the facilities' operating budget due to damage to depots and storage buildings during the winter.

The transportation capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$2,008,800. The Major Road and Bridge Construction budget anticipated \$33.3M in work would be completed in 2025, this budget is projected to have a surplus of 9.5% or \$3,152,700. Tendering early in the year resulted in competitive bids and cost savings. Higher than expected surpluses were realized due to lower than expected costs for contingencies and change orders in 2025, staff typically budget for a 10% allowance on major road projects. Additionally, there were significant savings in the non-project specific capital budgets such as minor capital, bridge design, structure investigations, land acquisitions and traffic signal upgrades. These budgets are used on an as needed basis and can vary significantly year to year.

All budgeted projects were completed in 2025 with the exception of Grey Road 19 and 21 Intersection upgrades, Structure 900-164 Glenelg Road 23 and Structure 900-363 Euphrasia - St. Vincent Townline, which have all been re-budgeted. Staff are seeking permission to transfer the unused levy funds allocated to \$378,200 for Grey Road 19 and 21 to a project specific reserve for use in the 2027 capital budget. The other funding sources for these projects are development charges and reserves, therefore they will stay in reserve and do not generate a surplus in 2025.

Facilities, Depots and Domes capital is projecting a deficit of \$1,509,500. The deficit is the result of unbudgeted costs for the demolition and reconstruction of the Chatsworth sand storage building due to its structural failure in early 2025. Budgeted projects are all funded from reserve and federal grants, therefore do not generate a surplus. Most of the budget for a new Patrol D Depot has been re-budgeted in 2026; the land was acquired and assessments were completed in 2025 with the contract awarded for the design and build in early 2026.

The Machinery and Equipment capital budget is projecting a surplus of \$365,700. A Gradall was sold in early 2025 that was budgeted to offset the purchase in 2024 of a new rubber tire excavator. This timing difference created a deficit in 2024 and a surplus in 2025. Five budgeted tandems (two ordered in 2023, one ordered in 2024 and two ordered in 2025) were not delivered in 2025 and have been re-budgeted in 2026. A payloader was ordered in late 2025 and will not be received until 2026; this was not re-budgeted as delivery was expected in 2025 and will create a deficit in 2026. Two electric half tons were ordered in 2025, one was received, the second unit was re-budgeted and received in early 2026.

Donation Transfers to Reserve

The following table lists the unbudgeted transfers to reserve for 2025 donations to be used for a specific purpose.

Department/Function	Reserve / Notes	Estimated Amount
Grey Gables	Grey Gables Donations Reserve*	\$25,247.41
Lee Manor	Lee Manor Donations Reserve	\$2,250.00
Rockwood Terrace	Rockwood Terrace Donations Reserve	\$17,103.67

*Includes investment income of \$747.41 (condition of a bequest that investment income be transferred to the Donation Reserve)

Financial and Resource Implications

The information contained in this report provides Council with information on the financial affairs of the municipality. The motion gives staff the authority to transfer surplus funds and donations received for specific purposes to reserve, or fund shortfalls out of reserve in order to balance year-end against the 2025 amount raised from taxation.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Department Managers, Senior Management Team, and Finance Staff
- External: None

Appendices and Attachments

None.

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-18-26
Title:	County Comments on Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act
Prepared by:	Grey County Staff
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer and Niall Lobley
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All member municipalities in Grey
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-18-26 be received, regarding Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026, and the related Environmental Registry and Regulatory Registry postings; and
2. That report PDR-CW-18-26 be forwarded on to the province as the County of Grey's comments on the proposed legislative and policy updates as posted on the Environmental Registry through postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009; and
3. That this report be shared with; Members of Provincial Parliament Vickers and Saunderson, the County's Planning and Economic Development Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee, and member municipalities in Grey County; and
4. That the County of Grey support the correspondence received from the Municipal Engineers Association regarding its comments on the Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003 and that County staff submit such support and comments to the Province; and
5. That staff be authorized to proceed prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6(b) of Procedural By-law 5134-22.

Executive Summary

On March 30, 2026, the province introduced Bill 98, the *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act*. At the same time, the province provided decisions on past Environmental Registry postings and introduced several new Environmental Regulatory Registry postings. Bill 98 proposes updates to the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act*,

the *Municipal Act*, the *Building Code Act*, the *Metrolinx Act*, the *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act*, the *Safe Water Drinking Act*, and the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act*, in addition to other pieces of provincial legislation.

This report provides County Council with a summary of the newly proposed changes, as well as some questions and concerns flagged by staff. Based on the timelines associated with Bill 98 and related postings, it was not feasible to first bring reports to the County's Planning and Economic Development Committee, as well as the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Staff have consolidated comments on the legislative and regulatory changes in this report and recommend that it be shared with the province as the County's comments on Environmental Registry postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009.

Background and Discussion

On March 30, 2026, the province introduced Bill 98, the *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act*. Bill 98 proposes updates to the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act*, the *Municipal Act*, the *Building Code Act*, the *Metrolinx Act*, the *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act*, the *Safe Water Drinking Act*, and the *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act*, as well as other pieces of provincial legislation. That same day, the province also provided decisions on past Environmental Registry postings and introduced several new Environmental and Regulatory Registry postings. Staff note that some of the decisions and new postings pick up topics introduced in past legislative cycles, including but not limited to Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022, Bill 17, the *Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act*, 2025, and Bill 60, the *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act*, 2025.

Through this report, County staff offer a summary of the proposed legislative and regulatory changes along with some commentary on how the proposed changes could impact the County in a positive, negative, or unknown manner.

Links to the proposed legislative and policy changes, through Environmental Registry postings #026-300, #026-301, #026-302, #026-304, #026-305, #026-309, #026-310, #026-311, #026-312, #026-313, #026-314, #026-315, #019-8316, #019-8020, and Regulatory Registry posting #26-MMAH009 are also included in the Attachments and Appendices section of this report.

County staff also met with local municipal planners on April 10, 2026, to get municipal feedback on the proposed changes. There was alignment between County and municipal planners on many of the topics covered in this report, but in some instances, there were some divergent or nuanced differences of opinion.

Staff recommend that this report be shared with the province as the County's comments on the above-mentioned Environmental and Regulatory Registry postings.

Summary of Comments on Bill 98 and Associated Consultations

A detailed summary of, and staff commentary on, the proposed legislative and regulatory changes has been provided in the sections that follow.

1. Proposed Planning Act, Municipal Act, and Building Code Changes Act, Posting #026-300

Streamlining and Standardizing Official Plans – The province has introduced a draft table of contents and standard structure for lower-tier and single tier official plans. In addition, the province has shared a standardized set of official plan designations. The province has noted that the proposed changes would come “into force January 1, 2028, for the 29 large and fast-growing municipalities, and January 1, 2029, for all other municipalities. The government intends to bring these changes into force once additional consultation on secondary plans and upper-tier official plan content is complete, and any final refinements are made to the framework.”

Staff Comment – it’s difficult to comment on this approach for the two reasons as follows:

- 1) There is a related posting on upper-tier official plans and secondary plans. In a Grey County context, to understand what’s needed in a lower-tier, one also has to understand what the province wishes to see in an upper-tier plan. See additional comments in section 12 of this report.
- 2) It remains to be seen what level of autonomy municipalities will have to ‘fill in the details’ on the various sections of an official plan, and the specific land use designation policies.

Staff support some degree of standardization of official plans, but note that there needs to be:

- a) some flexibility on the timing when official plans get updated, particularly for recently updated or newly passed official plans, and
- b) some degree of community specific differentiation and autonomy, particularly in settlement areas (i.e., a neighbourhood in Hanover or Meaford may be very different to a neighbourhood in Mississauga or Ottawa). In a province as diverse as Ontario, a ‘one size fits all’ approach will simply not work, without allowing some level of community specific policies.

As staff have noted in previous reports, staff welcome additional ‘standardized’ provincial direction on topics which impact the province, where currently there may be policy gaps at the municipal level. A key example of such desirable provincial direction would be energy policies, following the repeal of the former *Green Energy Act*.

Staff would also recommend that the standardized contents, including the designations and list of schedules be considered an ‘upset limit’ on the contents of a plan but note that municipalities may choose to include less than the upset limit. For example, in smaller municipalities they may not have a need for all the schedules listed in the posting and may instead choose just a subset of those listed schedules. The draft legislative changes appear to support this approach, wherein a municipality could deem a chapter or schedule to be ‘not applicable’ and indicate that in their plan.

Other topics in the draft table of contents may be divided between upper and lower-tier official plans (where applicable) as per the comments in section 12 of this report.

In the list of detailed designations, it appears a ‘hazard lands’ designation has been omitted, unless this is meant to be addressed by the ‘Natural Environment and Water Resources Area’ designation. Hazard lands designations are standard and a necessary tool for municipalities,

which are often separate from natural environment designations or overlays. As a result, a hazard lands designation should be added to this list. In the Employment Areas designation, it may also be worth distinguishing between an urban employment area (on municipal services) and a rural employment area (on private individual services).

As it pertains to the implementation, it's not clear whether the January 1, 2028, and 2029 timelines apply in the following manners:

- a) Any new plan or updated plan passed after those timelines needs to follow the province's new structure, but are not required to be updated until their next regular review/update period, or
- b) Plans need to be updated in advance of those timelines to meet the new structure.

Staff have assumed that option (a) is intended, but it would be useful for the province to clarify as soon as possible. In Grey County, several of Grey's member municipalities have recently updated their official plans or are in the process of a new official plan or plan update. Grey County is set to begin its official plan review in 2027 but based on when details are known on this new approach, the County may need to delay this start date. Where a plan has recently been updated, it otherwise wouldn't be due for an update for five years. Where there's a newly passed official plan, an update would not be needed for ten years. Having to update an official plan outside of a normal review period would be a significant staffing and financial burden to municipalities.

County staff recommend the province consider providing implementation funding for municipalities to implement this new provincial direction and updating their plans. It is anticipated that bringing the County official plan and each member municipal official plan into conformity with an updated standardized structure will require considerable staff resourcing at both upper and lower-tier levels, particularly if this is required to occur outside of the existing routine review/update cycle.

Staff further recommend that the province consider adding a 'no appeal clause' to these official plan updates where a municipality is simply amending their plan to come into conformity with the new standardized structure.

Complementary Changes to Support Implementation of Streamlining and Standardizing Official Plans – The province plans to:

- 1) remove the requirement for municipalities to include climate change policies in their official plans, and
- 2) allow the Minister the ability to exempt lower-tier official plans from the need to conform to upper-tier official plans to facilitate implementation of testing for the proposed official plan framework.

Staff Comment – Staff generally do not support the removal of the need for official plans to have climate change policies. Grey County has recognized the need for municipal climate action through our Going Green in Grey Climate Action Plan and see land use planning as a key tool to realizing a climate-safe future. That said, although the requirement under section 16(14) of the Act is proposed to be removed, the province does not appear to be removing the climate policies of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) or section 2(s) of the Act which provides for *“the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to a changing climate”* as a matter

of provincial interest. As such, even if section 16(14) of the Act is removed, official plans will still be required to implement matters of provincial interest and be consistent with the PPS, and thus still need climate change policies in their local documents.

With respect to removing the need for conformity of a lower-tier plan to an upper-tier to implement the new approach, staff see some merit in this approach provided it's done on a limited basis. This exemption should only apply to those instances where it's necessary based on timing for implementation of the new framework (e.g., municipality 'x' needs to update their plan in 2030, but upper-tier 'y' is not due for an upper-tier official plan update to 2033). The stated exemption should not provide for broader general exemptions to upper-tier plans.

Site Plan: Prohibit Mandatory Municipal Enhanced Development Standards and Green Building Standards – The province is proposing to remove municipal authority on enhanced development standards, remove references to “sustainable design” from site plan control, clarify that zoning cannot be used to require sustainable elements, and prohibit green building or construction standards.

Staff Comment – These changes carry forward the provincial direction that municipalities cannot implement mandatory green development standards. Grey County has already pivoted its green development program to become a completely voluntary recognition program.

With respect to the changes to both zoning and site plan, staff would note that it is not clear on what the province considers these sustainability tools to be. For example, many approvals (e.g., site plans or plans of subdivision) would come with a condition for a tree-retention or planting plan. Within these plans, a common requirement would be planting native species or preventing the removal of some trees. These are useful tools to have available for the long-term sustainability and environmental health of our communities. Staff would not want to lose the ability to use such tools. Furthermore, some of these tools commonly implement a proponent's own Environmental Impact Study (EIS). If these tools are stripped from municipalities, then it's questionable as to how the recommendations of an EIS could be implemented, unless done in a purely voluntary manner.

As staff have learned through the work on Grey's green development program, it is far more affordable to 'build right' the first time, than it is to have to retrofit after the fact. This applies not only to new building construction, but also to site design and infrastructure construction. The ability to require a percentage of parking spaces to have electric vehicle charging facilities, or even conduit to support future charging, is yet another example of an instance where it may be more affordable at the time of initial construction versus a retrofit after the fact. While staff have accepted the fact that municipalities cannot have mandatory 'green development standards', staff have concerns with the provincial direction here if it further erodes municipal abilities to require tree preservation or plantings.

More comments have been provided in sections 6 and 7 below on postings #026-0309 and #026-0310 respectively.

Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) – The changes would remove the legislative requirement for the Minister to provide notice on proposed amendments to or revocations of MZOs.

Staff Comment – these changes follow other updates to the MZO process through Bill 60. Staff recommend that any changes or revocation to an existing MZO only comes after consultation with, and consent from, the host municipality.

Encumbered Parkland and Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) – These regulatory changes follow legislative changes under Bill 23 which allow for both encumbered lands and POPS to count towards municipal parkland dedication requirements. Developers could also appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal if a municipality rejects the developer’s proposed parkland dedication.

Staff Comment – although the County does not directly accept parkland dedication, in speaking with municipal planners these changes have generated mixed opinions. Some felt that the changes help provide additional direction and streamlining, while others worried that it may limit municipal abilities to build livable communities with quality outdoor spaces. By further ‘forcing’ municipalities to take lands of a developer’s choosing, under ‘threat of appeal’, it could lessen a municipality’s ability to provide such quality parks for long-term livability or could conflict with existing parks and recreation masterplans. The need for additional agreements for encumbered lands and potential legal costs adds further process and expenses to municipalities. In some cases, a municipality may prefer cash-in-lieu, rather than accept certain pieces of parkland dedication. Additional comments on this topic follow in section 9 of this report in response to posting 026-0312.

2. Proposed Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act and Safe Drinking Water Act Changes, Posting #026-301

In the posting the province has summarized the changes to the two pieces of legislation as follows:

- *“Explicitly prohibiting private ownership in any new water and wastewater public corporation to maintain 100% public sector ownership.*
- *Supporting the continuation of existing contracts so that existing contracts are not affected by a transfer to a new water and wastewater public corporation. This includes contracts such as employment or insurance, or a collective agreement.*
- *Clarifying that certain rights (such as successor, employment, and pay equity rights) are carried forward to a new water and wastewater public corporation. This would include regulation-making authority to help ensure continuity of services related to contracts and employees that are transferred to a new water and wastewater public corporation.*
- *Prohibiting the transfer of water and wastewater debt from Peel Region to the water and wastewater public corporation, while creating new regulation-making authority to enable future regulations to address all matters related to municipal debt.*
- *Legislative amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 (SDWA) to clarify that drinking water systems owned by WWPCs constitute municipal drinking water systems and such that applicable SDWA provisions would apply to them.*

Through a separate posting, the Ministry will be inviting municipalities interested in adopting the water and wastewater public corporation model to submit a comment outlining their detailed interest. This input will help the Ministry determine next steps and support future expansion.”

Staff Comment – the County does not own or operate any water or wastewater treatment facilities. All nine of Grey’s member municipalities own and operate either a water or wastewater treatment facility or both. The costs to operate such facilities, including expansion costs in support of growth continues to rise. Additional funding mechanisms in support of this infrastructure would be appreciated.

The initial iteration of *Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act* received significant pushback on the potential for ‘privatization’ of water services, because the Ministry could designate corporations incorporated under the *Business Corporations Act* (i.e. for profit, private corporations could be designated) as providers. Municipalities would be required to use them if designated by the Ministry. There would be asset transfers, etc. and then the corporations would then set the fees for water services and municipalities would have to add debts to the tax roll, etc. There were concerns with transparency and oversight of the corporations.

Bill 98 appears to be trying to address the ‘privatization’ concerns by limiting shareholders of water corporations to municipalities, the province, the federal government, or an agent of any these government entities. There may still be a concern regarding who can be appointed as an agent. If municipalities are the sole shareholder, while there may be some operational benefits, it will not result in less work for municipalities per se. Resources will need to be spent by municipalities to determine how to set up the corporation etc. If regionalization (in that two or more municipalities form one water corporation) were to be contemplated, then there will significant aspects that the municipalities will need to consider, as it will likely be complex and will take significant resources to establish. Bill 98 also adds some clauses regarding transfers of assets, liabilities, and employees, etc.

In speaking with municipal staff, there were also concerns at a municipal level that these changes could result in municipalities being ‘required’ to provide services to neighbouring communities.

Staff would request more information on these proposed legislative changes, so that municipalities can better consider the practical impacts.

3. Proposed Communal Drinking Water and Wastewater System Municipal Consent Requirements, Posting #026-302

The proposed changes to the *Municipal Act* would require a new non-municipal communal water or wastewater system to first apply for municipal consent. Municipalities would then be able to attach conditions and limitations to that consent. The changes also allow the minister to pass regulations setting out criteria, which if met, would require municipalities to grant consent to such systems. These regulations could provide financial or technical standards, but could also prescribe zoning by-law requirements in respect of the lands, or the lands being serviced.

Staff Comment – staff are aware that the province has been looking at ways to better utilize communal water and wastewater systems, particularly in smaller communities or remote parts of the province. One of the current obstacles to seeing such systems built is the need for a private utility to enter into a responsibility agreement with the municipality. Broadly speaking this provides for municipal assumption of the treatment facility if the private utility is unable to maintain the facility. Based on this requirement, municipalities are reluctant to sign such

agreements, for fear of having to ‘take on’ a new treatment facility that may (a) not be built to a municipal standards, and (b) be costly to operate for a small number of users.

Staff are supportive in principle of the province’s direction of better using communal systems as a treatment option. However, staff cannot support such actions where it poses financial risk to the municipality, or where it results in decentralized development patterns which conflict with the PPS or official plan policies. Rather than setting criteria for municipalities to give to consent to such treatment facilities, perhaps the province could simply ‘shift the burden’ such that any new private communal facility can only be approved where it has a provincial responsibility agreement in place, such that any default on the system by the operator then becomes the responsibility of the province.

4. Draft Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG) to support the Implementation of the PPS 2024, Posting #026-304

The province is looking to update the PMG to assist municipalities with forecasting growth and determining land needs. This follows an Environmental Registry posting from 2025 where the province shared a new draft PMG (updating the 1995 PMG). An updated PMG would also further reinforce direction in the PPS 2024, which requires municipalities to use Ministry of Finance projections as the basis for their population forecasts. The province has noted the further changes from the 2025 draft are as follows:

- 1) *“Providing increased clarity on when to consider undertaking population and employment forecast updates, which Ontario Population Projection data to use and how to set the planning horizon.*
- 2) *Providing more details on assessing housing needs by considering housing tenure, housing type and propensities for households to occupy certain types of housing, and making adjustments such as to reflect market demand, housing affordability and suppressed household formation.*
- 3) *Providing clarity on estimating feasible intensification rates when determining the amount and type of housing units that can be accommodated through intensification in the built-up area.*
- 4) *Streamlining the land needs assessment methods for greater consistency among most municipalities, while continuing to allow a simplified method that is less data-intensive with clearer recommendations on which municipalities may use it.”*

Staff Comment – Grey County just completed an update to its Growth Management Strategy (GMS). As part of the GMS update, staff worked with Hemson Consulting to ensure the work met the needs of the PPS 2024, as well as the draft 2025 PMG. In principle staff are supportive of the above-described changes, but County staff are not experts on using the current PMG, or the draft version from 2025. As such, staff have reached out to Hemson consulting who prepared the County’s last few GMS updates. After receiving Hemson’s response, County staff will update Council and Municipal staff accordingly, if there are any substantive impacts on the County’s recently completed GMS. Should Hemson’s response be received ahead of the comment deadline, staff can update the County’s comments accordingly, if the response warrants additional considerations on the draft PMG

5. *Proposed Changes to Facilitate the Electronic Submission of Information to Approval Authorities and Allow Notices to be given electronically to the Province, Posting #026-305*

The concept of these changes was introduced as part of the Bill 60 consultations. These proposed changes would facilitate the electronic submission of information and material to approval authorities and would:

- remove the requirement for information and material to include an original or certified copy, and
- allow required notices to be given electronically to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Staff Comment – staff support these changes and would note that many municipalities have enacted similar digital submission and notice processes. Municipal staff noted that if there was a way to provide for electronic commissioning of an application, this would further assist with intaking digital application submissions.

6. *Proposed Regulation to Prohibit Mandatory Enhanced Development Standards as a Condition of land Division Approvals, Posting #026-309*

These changes are similar to those above in item # 1 of this report (posting #026-300). Posting #026-309 is specific to requiring enhanced development standards as a condition of land division (i.e., via plan of subdivision or the consent processes). The proposal would look to remove *“enhanced development standards at the lot level (outside of buildings), that are not specifically required for health, safety, accessibility or protection of adjoining lands (e.g., stormwater management)... To address the above, a regulation would be created under the Planning Act to prohibit “sustainability” conditions as part of land division approvals.”*

Finally, the ERO posting also notes the following as it relates to costs: *“There could also be additional costs to municipalities related to the proposal as a result of limits being placed on what municipalities can compel of developers as a condition land division, thus shifting burden from the development sector to municipalities for sustainability measures and/or for addressing unintended environmental impacts.”*

Staff Comment – Further to the comments in section 1 above, staff would note the following. In order to properly comment on this item, definitions of ‘sustainability’ and ‘enhanced development standards’ are needed. The [media briefing document](#) released by the province notes examples of *“landscaping and foliage requirements, soil composition and ornamental and design considerations”* as items which would be prohibited. If the prohibitions limit municipal requirements to those *“required for health, safety, accessibility or protection of adjoining lands (e.g., stormwater management)”* then this would appear to limit many environmental protections, including those that implement Environmental Impact Studies (e.g., tree preservation, planting, and native species requirements). If that’s the case, then (a) an EIS becomes very difficult to implement, beyond ‘the developer voluntarily following through with the mitigation measures’, and (b) it could have serious impacts on a municipality’s ability to retain tree canopy, protect

species habitat, and prevent the spread of invasive species (which may be used in landscaping new developments). Staff would request additional clarification here, and note the need for ‘carve-outs’ as it applies to not only health, safety, and accessibility, but also to the natural environment.

Finally, staff note that placing additional financial burden on municipalities for “*addressing unintended environmental impacts*” is unnecessary where there are methods to mitigate against such impacts at the approvals stage. Staff would reiterate the need to ‘build it right the first time’ versus paying for the costly impacts or retrofits after the fact.

7. Proposal to Reform Site Plan Control, Posting #026-310

Over previous legislative efforts the province has reformed site plan control, including both limiting what can be required via this tool, applying complete application requirements, and requiring that site plan approvals be staff delegated. The province has noted that in many cases site plan processes are still too onerous and take too long to approve. As a result, the province is considering the following potential changes.

1. Remove site plan control as a tool.
2. Require municipalities to have a maximum of three circulations before a mandatory meeting is required to work through the issues.
3. Further scope site plan approval to a checklist of health and safety items, with the use of certified professionals for the acceptance of such studies. Municipalities would not be permitted to request additional items, and if the checklist is met, then site plan approval is granted.
4. Establish or require a municipal arbitration process / site plan review panel for site plan applications that have exceeded the government’s 60-day timeline and a specified number of circulations. This would be a process outside of the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT).
5. Establish or require municipalities to establish different site plan approval streams for different kinds of proposed development, with corresponding scope of matters that may be controlled. For example, there may be a complex and simplified stream whereby the simplified streams may be expedited.

Staff Comment – Of the five options above, staff do not support option 1. Site plan is a critical tool for municipalities and needs to be retained. The ability to register an agreement on title is also crucial to municipalities, and not readily available in some other development approvals. This opinion was echoed by the municipal planners consulted in preparing this report.

With respect to options 2 – 5, there were more divergent and nuanced opinions from some municipal and County planners.

Staff could support elements of options 3 and 5. Some level of checklist may be supported to scope requirements, particularly for less complex site plan applications. Municipalities may also choose to amend their site plan by-laws to critically look at some routine applications which may form the basis for exemptions that may not require site plan control. Given the complexity of some site plans, and the detailed review needed, it cannot be entirely reduced to a ‘yes/no checklist’. Staff would note that most municipalities in Grey have already implemented option 5.

With the arbitration or site plan review panel (option 4), staff have concerns that this could add another layer of bureaucracy and costs to the process and create additional delays unless strictly defined and managed. If the province were to implement option 4, perhaps it would only be at the request of the proponent, and not 'an automatic' when review exceeds 60 days. Automatic arbitration could delay proceedings, which may've otherwise been nearing an approval. Staff would prefer elements of option 2 to having a separate arbitration panel, but note that if the goal is to process site plans in 60 days, that it's unlikely that a municipality will have completed three circulations within 60 days.

Some staff also flagged the need for the province to better define the objectives of site plan control directly within the Act, to ensure there is less confusion amongst municipalities, developers, and planners.

It was also noted that some provincial ministries are required to comment on site plans where they are adjacent to provincial infrastructure. In some cases, those ministries have a current comment response time of ten weeks (to receive initial comments on an application). The impact not receiving comments for ten weeks is that the 60-day timeline for processing site plans is already exceeded while waiting for the first round of provincial comments. For municipalities to speed up their processes, this provincial service delivery standard needs to be improved.

Finally, municipal staff also flagged the fact that delays in site plan approvals often come from servicing or infrastructure deficits. Having additional dependable infrastructure funding would 'go a long way' towards eliminating delays in the planning approvals process.

8. Establish a Minimum Lot Size in Urban Areas, Posting #026-311

Following up on a Bill 60 consultation, the province is proposing to establish a minimum residential lot size of 175 m² (1,884 ft²) on urban residential lands (i.e., those lands in a settlement area served via municipal water and sewer services). In this proposal the province further notes the following: *"any municipal zoning requirement for minimum frontage and/or minimum depth that would not allow for the minimum lot size standard to be met would be inapplicable. Land owners would retain the ability to apply for the creation of larger or smaller lots through the land division process."*

Staff Comment – The above-noted minimum lot size is not clear if it's meant to apply to any housing type, or a specific housing type. For example, in most municipal zoning by-laws the standard for an interior town or rowhouse unit lot size would be different than a lot for a single detached dwelling. Staff have looked at zoning by-laws across the County and could not find any that had a minimum residential lot size of 175 m². The smallest town or rowhouse lots permitted in Grey were ~200 m². Many minimum lot sizes, particularly for other types of residential dwelling types, were significantly larger than 200 m². Staff would note that the combination of not having higher-order transit (or any transit in some communities) and high amounts of snowfall necessitating a degree of onsite winter snow storage would make a minimum residential lot size of 175 m² very difficult to support. The front yard area and need for snow storage becomes further compounded when space for sidewalks are also factored in.

Staff also note that lots of this size may not be suitable to accommodate Additional Residential Units (ARUs) as are broadly permitted per the *Planning Act* on urban residential lands.

Staff would generally support the province's intent here, and suggest the province may wish to consider the following:

- a) Clarify if the 175 m² is meant to apply to any housing type, or if that minimum lot size could only be used for town or rowhouses, and
- b) Consider a range of minimum lot sizes depending on the characteristics of the urban residential land i.e., is there transit, what are the annual snowfall levels, etc.

Should such minimum lot sizes be implemented, municipalities may also need to adjust other lot standards such as setbacks or maximum lot coverage percentages.

Staff would further flag there are implementation costs to municipalities for such changes. The Environmental Registry posting flags the following as it applies to costs. *"The direct compliance cost for all 444 municipalities is estimated at approximately \$472,856 and an average annual direct compliance cost of approximately \$46,600. These one-time administrative impacts reflect staff familiarization and minor updates to internal planning guidance and workflows to apply the provincial minimum lot size."* As such, staff would request that the province provide funding to municipalities to cover these implementation costs.

9. Standardizing of Parkland Requirements, Posting #026-312

As per the comments in section 1 above, these changes are intended to implement Bill 23 changes around parkland dedication and encumbered lands and POPS (privately owned public spaces). Through this regulatory change, the province is setting out criteria for which lands are ineligible for parkland, which include the following:

- contaminated lands,
- natural and human-made hazards,
- Lands within and adjacent to natural heritage features and areas are eligible on the condition that a park would not interfere with or compromise the natural heritage features and areas.

Parkland must also be accessible, visible, and comfortable to facilitate public use, including being accessible by all users and of a size/shape which can serve park and recreational purposes.

Developers would need to provide municipalities with details to show that the lands meet the above eligibility and accessibility criteria. Municipalities must then make a decision and give notice and rationale to the developer within 20 days of the decision, whereafter the developer would have appeal rights to the OLT.

Staff Comment – These changes, when combined with the Bill 23 changes, will mean that municipalities will be required to take a broader variety of lands as acceptable parkland dedication than previously was the case. The need to take encumbered land will also add additional costs to municipalities and result in the need for additional agreements or could result in additional requests for cash-in-lieu of parkland. Staff recommend that the province consider

providing template agreements to municipalities to offset the costs and workload associated with the encumbered lands agreements.

Staff are supportive of not including hazard lands or contaminated lands in the list of eligible parkland dedication. With respect to the natural heritage area eligibility, staff note that this could result in the following impacts:

- a) differences of interpretation as to the impact on a natural feature,
- b) conflict between human use and habitat use and/or restrictions on use which the municipality would need to manage (e.g., the conflict between the public's use of a beach and the endangered piping plovers which nest on those same beaches),
- c) additional costs and/or liability to a municipality to maintain such an area, and
- d) added challenges around accessibility both for access and use of those lands.

As a result, staff would recommend that the province allow for greater municipal discretion with respect to parkland dedication of natural heritage areas and their adjacent lands, without the threat of appeal.

10. Streamlining the Information that Planning Authorities can require as part of a Complete Application, Posting #026-313

The province has released a list of core versus contingent studies which municipalities can require as part of a complete planning application.

Core Studies	Contingent Studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Impact Study • Environmental Site Assessment • Functional Servicing Report • Geotechnical Report • Hydrogeological Report • Planning Justification Report • Transportation Impact Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aeronautical Report • Aggregate / Minerals / Petroleum Resource Impact Assessment • Agricultural Impact Assessment • Air Quality / Odour Study • Arborist Report • Archaeological Assessment • Contaminant Management Plan • Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment • Economic Viability Assessment • Electromagnetic Field Management Plan • Financial Impact Analysis • Human-made Hazard Impact Study / Assessment • Lakeshore Capacity Assessment / Water Quality Impact Assessment • Minimum Distance Separation Formulae Assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Hazard Impact Study / Assessment • Noise / Vibration Study • Rail Safety and Risk Mitigation Report • Servicing Options Report • Wildland Fire Assessment • Wind Study
--	---

Table 1: List of Core versus Contingent Studies

Staff Comment – the province has asked for answers to the following questions as part of this posting. Staff have included the questions (in italics) and answers below.

1. *Is the list of the types of information and material identified in this proposal comprehensive enough for planning authorities to effectively evaluate all planning applications they may receive?*

1. *If not, why? What information or material is missing from the proposed list?*

Staff recommend also including the following studies to the above contingent list: affordable/attainable housing assessment report, parkland assessment/suitability report (or perhaps this is a component of the planning justification report), lighting / photometrics plan, and a record of Indigenous engagement. Staff would further flag that a visual impact assessment (VIA) is not included on either list. VIAs are commonly required by the Niagara Escarpment Commission for applications within the Niagara Escarpment Plan. To align with provincial electrical grid management objectives, some development review may also benefit from requiring an energy strategy study, which could be included on the contingent list.

2. *Should any of the types of studies identified in this proposal be removed from the proposed list?*

Staff recommend that the archeological assessment be moved from the contingent studies list to the core studies list. Staff note that archeological assessments are becoming increasingly ubiquitous, and are particularly important to Indigenous engagement.

2. *Do you have any feedback on the objectives identified for each of the types of studies listed in this proposal? Are they broad enough to support planning authorities in obtaining sufficient information to evaluate applications, comply with applicable legislation, and determine consistency with provincial policies or conformity with provincial and municipal plans? Is there anything missing?*

Staff are generally satisfied with the objectives, but would note the following potential adjustments.

- In the geotechnical, hydrogeological, or hazard assessments, it may worth mentioning karst topography.
- In the arborists report it would be useful to also have tree planting plans included.
- In the land use compatibility study, it should not be limited to only a proposed major facility and should also reference the Ministry's D-series guidelines (D-6 and D-2).

- In the transportation impact study or the geotechnical report, a road assessment should also be considered for inclusion (i.e., can the existing road base support the level of heavy trucks being proposed).
 - In the economic viability assessment, it should also cover a broader range of circumstances and not be limited to only the economic viability of employment uses adjacent to employment areas. For example, Grey County currently requires a 'Farm Business Plan' to be submitted where a farmer proposes to sever a prime agricultural lot that is less than the minimum size required by the County official plan. This study would ensure that the resultant farm parcel is economically viable to be used for agricultural purposes. The viability of extending servicing and mainlining appropriate minimum supportive densities could also be a consideration for other types of development applications.
3. *Should the list identify the types of applications that the information and material could be required for (i.e., official plan amendment, zoning by-law amendment, site plan control, plans of subdivision/condominium, consents)? If so, why?*

This assessment should generally be left to municipal discretion.

4. *Are there studies listed that should only be required for certain types of applications? If so, which ones and why?*

This assessment should generally be left to municipal discretion.

5. *Should planning authorities maintain the ability to develop terms of reference to specify the breadth of information required for each of the types of studies included in the provincial list? Please elaborate on your response.*

In absence of a standard provincial terms of reference for each study, municipalities will need to maintain the ability to draft their own terms of reference for these studies. Staff would be supportive of additional provincial guidance or sample terms of reference for these studies.

6. *Do you have any other input or suggestions of relevance to this proposal?*

Nothing further at this time.

11. Changes to the 'Prescribed Professions' as part of a Complete Application, Posting #026-314

As part of Bill 17 the province introduced regulation-making authority to require that municipalities accept studies from 'certified professionals' for the purposes of determining a complete application. To date the province has added professional engineers to this list and is seeking input on any other professions that could be added to this list.

Staff Comment – Staff would support adding professional geoscientists to the list of prescribed professions (or certified professionals).

Municipal staff also requested that it be made clear that prescribed professionals can only submit reports under their prescribed area of expertise. For example, the regulation should be clear that an engineer couldn't also submit a planning report on behalf of a planner, with the aim of 'sheltering' under their prescribed profession status.

12. Consultation on Upper-Tier Official Plans, Secondary Plans, and Site-specific Policies, Posting #026-315

Further to the information shared in section 1 of this report, and the Bill 60 consultations, the province is seeking additional input on upper-tier official plans (for upper-tiers with planning responsibilities), secondary plans, and site-specific policies. As part of this posting the province has released a summary of the feedback they heard on this topic. Some of the changes being considered are as follows:

1. For upper-tier official plans, limiting duplication by creating specific land use designations that only apply at the upper-tier level.
2. For secondary plans or site-specific policies:
 - a. identifying the types of areas where secondary plans could be used,
 - b. separating secondary plans from the primary official plan, so they would exist as a standalone document while being subject to the same process requirements, and
 - c. exempting secondary plans from Minister's approval (lower-tier municipalities in upper-tier municipalities with planning responsibilities would not be exempt from approval by the relevant upper-tier municipality).

Staff Comment – the province has asked for answers to the following questions as part of this posting. Staff have included the questions (in italics) and answers below. Staff have not included the questions for secondary plans or site-specific policies, but generally support municipalities being able to use secondary plans and site-specific policies as important local tools. Secondary plans are not widely used in Grey County, but site-specific policies are more broadly used and continue to be a desirable tool. Municipal staff noted examples of secondary plans being effective where they didn't 'repeat' policies in the official plan; but rather had policies unique to their geography and deferred to the official plan for more generic policies not specific to that geography.

Upper-tier Official Plans

- *In addition to considering a combined "Community Areas" use designation described above, are there other designations that would be useful for upper-tier official plans that would help avoid duplication with lower-tier official plans?*

The policies of the PPS are generally fairly prescriptive for agricultural (and to a lesser extent rural areas/lands), mineral resources, and the natural environment. Growth management and the protection of the environment as well as broad resources such as agricultural or aggregate resources likely makes more sense at a regional scale versus a community specific scale. As such, in a two-tier planning environment maybe the breakdown of responsibility is generally as follows.

1. Upper-tier plans should include policies, mapping, and land use designations for the lands outside of settlement areas including agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resources e.g., aggregates and bedrock resources. The upper-tier plan would also include growth management elements (e.g., growth projections / allocations) and settlement area boundaries, but not have prescriptive designations or policies within settlement areas.

2. Lower-tier plans would then focus on the settlement areas and include the detailed policies and designations within settlement areas. Lower-tier plans do not need to duplicate policies and mapping for agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resource lands, and would instead defer to the upper-tier plan for those areas.
 3. Where an upper-tier or lower-tier overlaps with a provincial plan, such as the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the upper-tier plan could defer to the mapping and detailed policies within the provincial plan and lower-tier plan.
- *Are there any parts of the standardized table of contents, schedules, and land use designations outlined in ERO 025-1099 that would need to be modified or would not apply to official plans for upper-tier municipalities?*

Where there are both upper-tier and lower-tier plans, there are a number of areas which could be exclusive to either the upper-tier or lower-tier official plans, as per the comments above regarding policies and mapping for agricultural, specialty crop, rural, natural environment, and natural resource lands only in the upper-tier plan, and detailed policies and mapping for settlement areas only in lower-tier plans. If the province were to take this approach, it would mean that upper-tier plans could eliminate some of what's in ERO posting 025-1099, but so too could lower-tier municipalities eliminate some of the converse.

- *Are there other considerations we need to take into account regarding the proposed framework for upper-tier official plans?*

Another approach to the above, would be to consider a single official plan at the upper-tier level with policies for the entire jurisdiction, but include separate municipal-specific policies for each lower-tier as chapters within the plan.

13. Development Charges Act Changes to Exempt Non-Profit Retirement Homes, Posting #MMAH009

The proposed change would have the effect of exempting non-profit retirement homes from paying development charges. The province is also proposing to correct two cross references to front-ending agreements relative to previous changes to the Act on the deferral of development charges.

Staff Comment – Staff generally have no concerns with the proposed changes and would note that the County's current development charges by-laws currently exempt not-for-profit housing development.

Although not directly being consulted on as part of this posting, the provincial [media briefing document](#) also speaks to a provincial consultation on breaking out the municipal development charges in agreements of purchase and sale, to show what such charges go towards. County staff are supportive of this initiative and would note the County's development charges brochure already does so for the County's charges.

14. Consultation on the 2025 National Construction Codes, Posting #019-8316

The Environmental Registry posting is a 'repost' of a consultation originally conducted in 2024. The posting goes on to note that the *“next and future editions of Ontario's Building Code are an important step in the process to support increased harmonization with National Construction Codes. Approximately 60% of Ontario's Code is currently consistent with the National Construction Codes.”*

The provincial [media briefing document](#) further notes *“For the first time in 40 years, the government is proceeding with a section-by-section review of the Building Code so it better meets modern challenges, while maintaining Ontario's high health and safety standards.”*

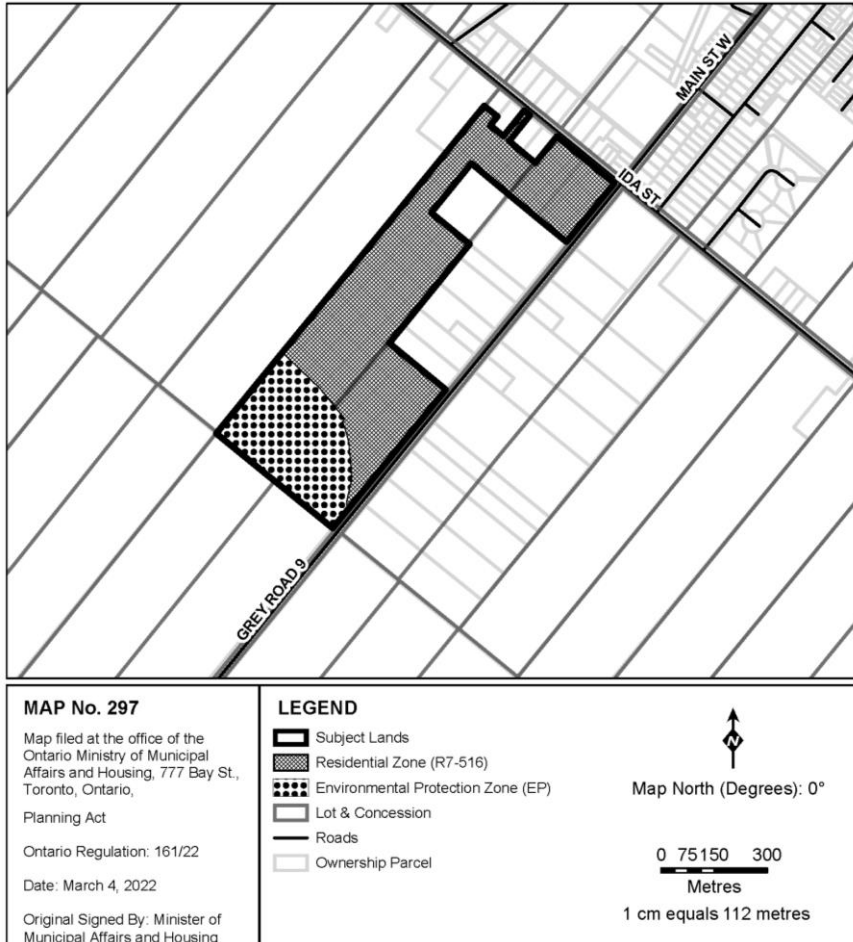
Staff Comment – Staff would note that there were major changes made to the Ontario Building Code in 2024, which took effect in 2025. At that time the changes were billed as the “largest ever provincial building code revision”. County staff generally support any initiatives on consistency between the National and Ontario Codes and support the opportunity for Ontario to adopt the National Building Code (NBC 2020) tiered model to allow greater harmonization of energy efficiency elements. Staff are also cognizant however that the impacts of major building code reviews have impacts on developers and municipalities, as they both learn the new code, and adapt their projects or approvals accordingly. In speaking with one local building official, they noted that there could be benefits to condensing some areas of the current Ontario Building Code. Similar to the comments later in the report on the pace of change, the Ontario Building Code is one more example of cumulative change, which may have the unintended consequence of slowing down processes and approvals, at least in the short term.

15. Enhanced Monitoring of some Residential MZOs, Posting #019-8020

The province has listed a series of previously approved MZOs which they note they will be closely monitoring the progress over *“the next 18 months and consider them for potential revocation or amendment in the future if there is a lack of significant progress.”* Two of the MZOs on the list are in Dundalk (see Maps 1 and 2 below) and had previously been placed on the enhanced monitoring list by the province.

Staff Comment – County staff will generally defer to the comments from the Township of Southgate on these two MZOs.

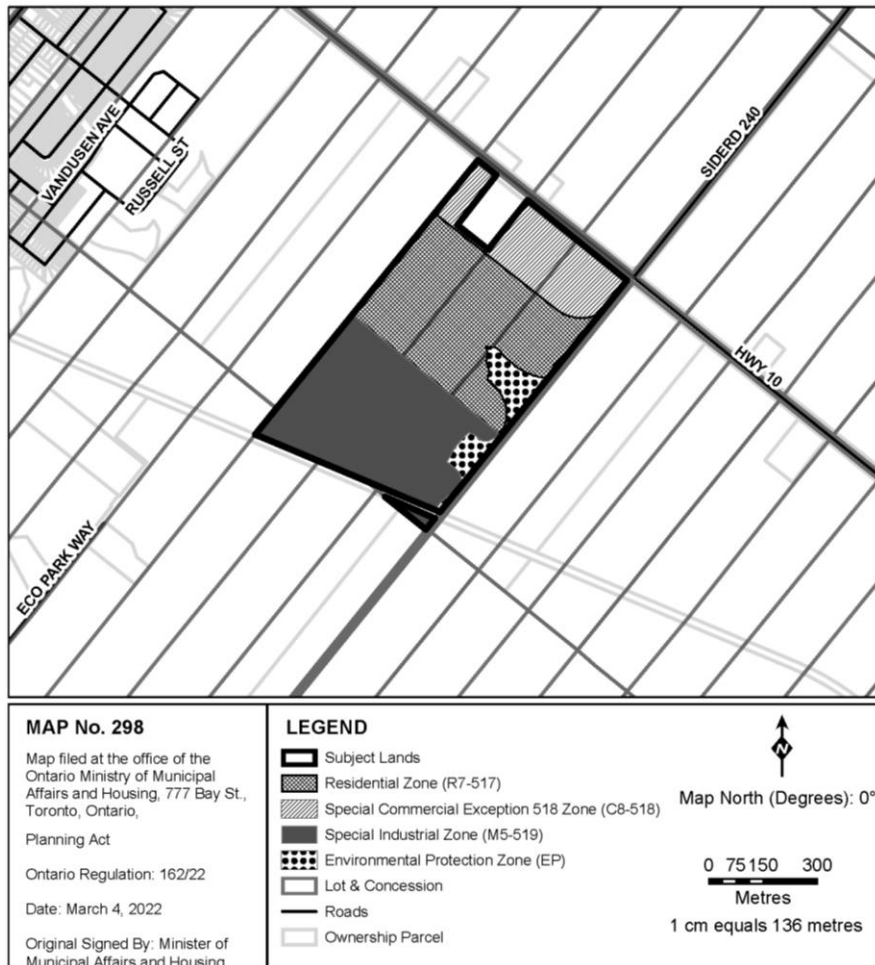
Staff would however note that for the lands covered by Ontario Regulation 161/22, there is a plan of subdivision application currently in process. More information can be found on the County's website [here](#).



Map 1: Township of Southgate MZO Lands under Ontario Regulation 161/22

For the lands covered by Ontario Regulation 162/22, a plan of subdivision application has been submitted, which was deemed incomplete. These MZO lands are also linked to the Township's new Eco Parkway extension project. The Township is eager to move forward with this extension project, and revoking the MZO could have a negative impact of the Township and proponent's abilities to move forward.

Should the province amend or revoke these two MZOs, it may mean that this proponent needs to apply for zoning by-law amendments alongside these two plans of subdivision.



Map 2: Township of Southgate MZO Lands under Ontario Regulation 162/22

Finally, staff would request that where an MZO is revoked or amended, it only be done after consultation with the host municipality. In the case of a revocation, the province should specify what the resulting zoning provisions will revert to e.g., if a MZO for Residential-3 (R3) with exceptions land is revoked, what is it reverting to i.e., Residential-1 (R1).

16. Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards, Posting #26-MTO003

Staff would note that the comment deadline for this posting expired on March 30, 2026. However, staff wanted to bring this to County Council's attention, based on Council's past discussion on this topic as part of Bill 60. Under Bill 60, the *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act* was amended to provide the Minister regulation making authority on the following items:

- "Govern contracts pertaining to road and bridge construction (including contracts between municipalities and third-party contractors);
- Establish reporting requirements; and

- *Establish a process for requesting an exemption from the application of a standard.”*

Under the above-noted registry posting, the province is now proposing a regulation that would cover the following items:

- *“Make Ontario Provincial Standards for Municipal Road Construction (OPSS.MUNI) mandatory with respect to hot mix asphalt, aggregates, and drainage for municipalities throughout the province,*
- *Mandate the use of standard contractual terms and conditions,*
- *Establish a transition provision,*
- *Establish an exemption request process, and*
- *Establish reporting requirements.”*

This regulation is proposing a transition provision *“whereby all municipalities would be required to comply with standards listed in the proposed regulation effective July 1, 2027.”*

Staff Comment – Staff note that the County previously provided comments on this topic as part of the Bill 60 consultations. The County currently operates using existing engineering standards, the Ontario Provincial Standard Specification (OPSS) and the Ontario Provincial Standard Drawings (OPSD) for its road contracts. These existing standards and specifications help to ensure consistency across projects, yet they allow for professional engineers to be able to ensure that roads are designed for the environment that they are in, respecting the local topography, traffic volumes, underlying soils and bedrock and drainage patterns and needs. As part of the County comments, the County flagged concerns with the following:

- potential for the standard to require ‘over-building’ roads if a ‘one size fits all’ standard was implemented,
- liability and the application of minimum maintenance standards, and
- future regulations with respect to contract language, exemptions, and reporting requirements which appear to add more bureaucracy to the process.

The County stands behind these comments. In addition, staff note that the implementation date of July 1, 2027, will have serious impacts on both the County and member municipal capital budget and construction programs. Road projects are planned years in advance, including the designs being completed ahead of the proposed construction year. The County already has designs underway or completed for 2027. As such, if the new standard takes effect in 2027, it will mean (a) reassessing these designs, and (b) rebudgeting for these projects. This is in addition to the work needed to align contract language for road tenders.

It is further noted that the Municipal Engineers Association has circulated correspondence to municipalities to make them aware of the Association’s comments and significant concerns regarding this matter. Staff generally concur with the concerns put forward by the Association as they relate to governance, limitations in a one size fits all approach, mandatory reporting and risks to project delivery.

If the province is proposing road standard harmonization, municipalities need a much greater ‘lead time’ to prepare and adjust their budgets and construction programs accordingly. If the standards are finalized in 2026, compliance with said standards for new road projects should not be compulsory until at least 2028. The province should also consider providing training, as well as implementation funding for municipalities to become familiar with the new standards.

17. Bill 98 Proposed Changes to the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act and the Metrolinx Act

Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026

The *Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act* provides the Ontario Minister of Transportation with new authority to:

- Set or regulate transit fares, including prices, discounts, and transfer policies, for transit systems prescribed by regulation,
- Require participation in a provincially approved, unified fare payment system,
- Establish geographic fare zones across participating transit systems,
- Apply fare policies across municipal boundaries, rather than limiting them to individual municipalities, and
- Lay out a framework that supports provincially led fare and service integration of priority routes.

Staff comment – While the Act does not appear to apply automatically to all transit systems, it allows the province to prescribe specific systems through regulation. This authority could extend to rural or regional systems, including those currently in Grey County and being considered through the Bruce-Dufferin-Grey-Wellington regional transit study.

The intent of the Act is generally aligned with the direction currently being explored through the Bruce-Dufferin-Grey-Wellington Regional Transit Study, particularly with respect to:

- Creating a more seamless passenger experience,
- Moving toward common or harmonized fare structures, and
- Integrating payment systems across jurisdictions.

While the legislation supports these policy objectives, it also represents a shift toward increased provincial oversight without clarity around governance decisions or financial risks to the municipality.

Staff are eager to understand the scope to which these policies may apply, and if there are means to support service sustainability if applied. Staff would raise concern if municipalities are expected to remain financially responsible for service operations, but the province is prescribing the terms of the services including fares, especially in the rural context where systems are characterized by lower ridership and higher per-trip costs, thus presenting a tangible financial risk.

Metrolinx Act, 2006 (as amended to 2025)

Purpose and scope of the Act

The *Metrolinx Act* establishes Metrolinx as a provincial Crown agency and assigns it responsibility to:

- Provide leadership on regional transit, planning, coordination and integration,
- Support unified fare systems and service coordination, and
- Enter into agreements with municipalities and other partners.

The Act assigns Metrolinx a role in facilitating unified fare systems and coordinating with municipal transit providers in support of regional connectivity, although Metrolinx's primary mandate remains focused on the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This legislative framework underpins:

- PRESTO expansion and other unified fare technologies,
- One Fare and One Fare 2.0 initiatives, and
- The potential and by agreement, to extend integrated fare concepts into rural or regional corridors over time.

The *Metrolinx Act* does not appear to transfer responsibility for local or rural transit operations or funding to Metrolinx. Rural transit systems remain municipally owned, operated and funded.

Staff Comment – With the *Metrolinx Act*, staff would seek clarity to understand if policies, expectations, and standards are to be more broadly applied, will an equitable funding formula, similar to that received by GTHA, be available to rural services. Staff are also curious to understand if a governance shift towards a provincial entity is also anticipated and the speed at which these changes may be proposed.

Previous Environmental Registry Postings

Along with the announcement of Bill 98 and the various new Environmental Registry postings, the province also updated some previous postings with decisions, or transitions to new postings. County staff have included links to these past postings in the Appendices and Attachments section of this report, but for the sake of brevity have not summarized the outcome of each individual posting.

Comments on the Overall Pace of Change

The County supports the province in making changes for the benefit of all Ontarians and the provincial economy. Grey County will continue to be a partner in implementing these changes and providing input on new provincial initiatives.

However, the County remains concerned about the pace and scope of changes, as well as the ability to monitor the efficacy of such changes. Particularly as it applies to the land use planning process, development charges, and conservation authorities, the speed and scale of change have been both rapid and impactful. While the changes may appear to have been incremental, they've also been fairly consistent, occurring a few times each year with little opportunity to reflect on how each individual change has impacted the system as a whole. In some cases, the legislative and regulatory changes have provided great benefits. In other instances, the outcomes are yet to be determined or have had negative impacts on achieving the collective goals of the provincial government. Increasingly both municipal staff and councils find themselves 'playing catch-up' or trying to learn and relearn legislative and regulatory frameworks. County staff have heard similar comments from some developers. At times the constantly shifting legislative framework has resulted in delays to municipal projects and development approvals.

As a result, the County would respectfully request a 'pause' on future changes to the planning and development charges frameworks for the next few years, while municipalities adapt their plans and processes to address the changes made to date. During this pause period, the

province could also work with municipalities and development industry stakeholders to assess the impacts of changes, and to determine if any additional tweaks are needed following the pause period. Again, the County reiterates its desire to be partner alongside the province on enacting change, but requests both time, and in some cases implementation funding, to enable this partnership.

Legislated Requirements

Should new legislation or regulations pass, the County and member municipalities will be required to comply with any legislative changes or associated regulations, subject to any transition provisions included.

Financial and Resource Implications

At this stage, the financial impact of the proposed legislative and regulatory changes is not known. Staff have flagged some potential financial impacts and resource implications in certain sections of this report. Staff will continue to monitor Bill 98 and the related postings will keep County Council up to date on the status and impacts.

Relevant Consultation

- ☒ Internal: Legal Services, CAO/Deputy CAO, Clerks, Climate Change, Finance, Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Transportation Services, and Planning
 - ☒ Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets – See commentary throughout the report
- ☒ External: Member municipalities in Grey

Appendices and Attachments

Correspondence from the Municipal Engineers Association – OPSS Modernization and Harmonization Concerns

New or Amended Environmental and Regulatory Registry Postings

1. [Proposed Planning Act, City of Toronto Act, 2006, Building Code Act, 1992 and Municipal Act, 2001 Changes \(Schedules 1, 2 and 7 of Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026\)](#)
2. [Proposed amendments to the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025 and consequential amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002](#)
3. [Communal drinking water and wastewater system municipal consent requirements](#)
4. [Draft Projection Methodology Guideline \(PMG\) to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(PPS, 2024\)](#)
5. [Proposed Changes to Various Regulations Under the Planning Act to Facilitate the Electronic Submission of Information and Materials to Approval Authorities and Allow Notices to be Given Electronically to the Province](#)

6. [Proposed Regulation to Prohibit Mandatory Enhanced Development Standards as a Condition of Land Division Approvals](#)
7. [Proposal to reform site plan control under the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act, 2006](#)
8. [Proposed Regulatory Approach to Establish a Minimum Residential Lot Size in Urban Areas](#)
9. [Proposed Changes to Support Standardizing of Parkland Requirements Under the Planning Act](#)
10. [Streamlining the information and material that planning authorities can require as part of a complete application](#)
11. [Proposed Changes to Various Regulations Under the Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to Specify Additional “Prescribed Professions” for the Purposes of a Complete Application](#)
12. [Consultation on upper-tier official plans, secondary plans, and site and area-specific policies](#)
13. [Changes to the Development Charges Act, 1997 \(DCA\) to Exempt Non-profit Retirement Homes from Development Charges \(DCs\)](#)
14. [Consultation on the 2025 National Construction Codes](#)
15. [Enhanced monitoring of certain housing development Minister's Zoning Orders that have made limited progress](#)
16. [Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards*](#) (closed for commenting)

Decisions on Past Registry Postings

- a. [Consultation on Minimum Lot Sizes](#)
- b. [Consultation on Enhanced Development Standards – Lot Level \(outside of buildings\)](#)
- c. [Consultation on simplifying and standardizing official plans](#)
- d. [Proposed Updates to the Projection Methodology Guideline to support the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(PPS, 2024\)](#)
- e. [Developing guidance on section 16 activities under the Species Conservation Act, 2025](#)
- f. [Proposed legislative and regulatory amendments to enable the Species Conservation Act, 2025](#)

March 29, 2026

Municipal Standards Harmonization Office (MSHO)

Subject: MEA Comments to Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003

We are writing to respond to Ontario Regulatory Registry 26-MTO003 - Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards.

Municipal engineers play a vital role in planning, maintaining, renewing, and constructing municipal infrastructure. Their expertise spans all aspects of municipal infrastructure services - from design and construction to project management and leadership – ensuring the successful delivery of both small and large-scale capital infrastructure projects.

Through its membership, MEA provides specialized knowledge in all areas of municipal engineering in Ontario. In partnership with the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), MEA co-manages the Ontario Provincial Standards & Specifications (Municipal) and delivers training on Ontario Provincial Standards.

While we support the intent of the regulation to promote consistency, quality, and efficiency across municipal road construction projects, we recommend that additional consideration be given to the time and administrative burden associated with preparing, reviewing, and obtaining exemptions, as well as the cumulative impacts on project delivery arising from project-by-project assessments.

Exemption requests that require detailed technical justification across multiple evaluation criteria can take a considerable amount of time to prepare, particularly for complex or large-scale projects. This work frequently requires the involvement of senior engineering, technical, legal, and procurement resources, diverting limited capacity away from active project delivery. The time required to assemble a complete exemption request should therefore be recognized as a potential schedule, cost, and resourcing risk in its own right.

Equally important is the duration and predictability of the Minister's review and response timelines. When exemptions are assessed on a project-by-project basis without defined service standards or response timelines, projects may experience material delays while awaiting decisions. These delays can produce cascading impacts, including missed construction windows, contractor demobilization and remobilization costs, loss of price certainty, and increased exposure to supply-chain volatility. For time-sensitive or critical

infrastructure projects, even relatively short delays in regulatory decision-making can result in disproportionate impacts to project schedules and budgets.

To better reflect these realities, we recommend that the exemption framework explicitly consider additional criteria, including:

- Administrative and decision-cycle timelines, including the anticipated time required for review and approval and the impact of uncertainty on project planning and procurement;
- Cumulative impacts across multiple projects, particularly where similar exemption requests are repeatedly submitted for comparable project types or conditions;
- Schedule dependency and critical path impacts, including whether delays in exemption approval would directly affect construction sequencing, seasonal work constraints, or contractual obligations; and
- Consistency and precedent considerations, whereby prior approvals for similar circumstances could support streamlined or standardized decision-making, rather than requiring repetitive project-level analysis.

Incorporating these considerations would help ensure that the exemption process supports timely and efficient project delivery while still meeting regulatory objectives. Clear expectations regarding submission requirements and response timelines, as well as opportunities for programmatic or category-based exemptions where appropriate, would significantly reduce risk to project schedules and budgets without compromising safety, performance, or sustainability outcomes.

Looking ahead, and assuming the Ministry is able to successfully deliver the current list of harmonized standards within the proposed timeframe, we agree that the remaining OPSS.MUNI standards should be prioritized for future harmonization based on where the greatest time, cost, and administrative efficiencies can be achieved. In our view, this would include:

- Standards with the highest frequency of use across municipalities, where harmonization would reduce repetitive project-specific reviews, municipal deviations, and contract amendments;
- Standards that routinely generate exemptions, interpretations, or disputes, indicating inconsistency or misalignment that drives additional design effort, approval cycles, or delays;
- Standards that significantly affect project schedules or cost certainty, including those related to materials, construction methods, or inspection requirements that influence procurement and delivery timelines;

- Standards that overlap or interact closely with those already harmonized, where alignment would enhance system coherence and reduce unintended conflicts or inefficiencies; and
- Standards that affect regional or multi-jurisdictional projects, where inconsistent requirements currently increase coordination challenges and administrative complexity.

A transparent, phased approach, supported by demonstrated progress on the initially harmonized standards, would help ensure that future harmonization efforts are achievable and deliver tangible benefits. Clearly articulating how the Ministry will complete the current scope, and how lessons learned will inform the prioritization of remaining standards, will be essential to achieving intended efficiency gains without overextending implementation capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important initiative. We would welcome continued engagement as the regulation is refined and implemented.

Sincerely,



**Penelope Palmer, P. Eng.,
MEA President 2025 – 2026**
(Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Strategic Capital Coordination Office
City of Toronto)

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	ITR-CW-02-26
Title:	Single Sourcing IT Infrastructure as a Service
Prepared by:	J. MacEachern, Director of Information Technology
Reviewed by:	N. Lobley, Deputy CAO N. Morrow, Financial Analyst
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	None

Recommendation

1. That report ITR-CW-02-26 be received; and
2. That staff proceed with purchasing hosted infrastructure services from Stage 2 Data as a single source purchase, totaling \$175,700 (excluding HST) in 2026, plus a one-time implementation fee of \$6,000.
3. That action be taken prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6 (b) of the Procedural By-law.

Executive Summary

Grey County Staff plan to replace on-premise data center infrastructure with cloud-hosted infrastructure during 2026 and have budget approval to do so. After extensive research, staff concluded that Stage 2 Data, a Canadian - based company, was best suited to provide off premise secure data hosting.

Competitively sourced services are available through the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) and Stage 2 Data is available through the OECM platform. OECM is one of a number of platforms that provide competitively priced products to municipalities that ensure compliance with public and municipal procurement best practices. Grey County initiated a procurement of Stage 2 Data through OECM via a third party vendor, however despite extensive negotiation, the third party vendor and Grey County have been unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Further delays jeopardize both the project and risk incurring expensive re-licensing fees for the County's current hardware, which is slated to be decommissioned.

Stage 2 Data have confirmed that they can and are willing to provide the same services at the same price as they are currently providing through OECM direct to Grey County, without using the third-party vendor. As this would no longer be a procurement through OECM, County staff

are seeking single-source approval from council to work directly with Stage 2 Data to negotiate their services.

Background and Discussion

Grey County staff have traditionally managed four data centers on premise: the primary data center hosting most services and applications in the administration building, and smaller data centers hosting healthcare-specific applications, including Nurse Call and Wandering Systems, in each of the three Long-Term Care homes.

Grey County IT staff plan on replacing this equipment every five years. IT staff are generally following updates and trends in technology and make a thorough assessment when current technologies are due for replacement. Cloud-hosted infrastructure has until recently been more expensive than on-premise infrastructure, and justification for the increased investment relied on additional benefits, such as having a vendor managing the infrastructure, updates, most of the after-hours response, improving cybersecurity, and improved up-time of services.

In recent years the cost of on-premise hardware has increased to the point where it is now generally comparable to cloud-hosted hardware. In particular, renewal costs on the product that the County has been using have increased dramatically. As such, County staff have thoroughly evaluated both on-premise and cloud-hosted solutions to replace the infrastructure in its data center.

County staff opted to replace its data centers with cloud-hosted infrastructure (*hardware or infrastructure as a service*). IT staff presented the County's cloud strategy to Council in late 2025 (see ITR-CW-03-25 Cloud Strategy and Infrastructure Replacement), which outlined both the benefits to moving to cloud-hosted infrastructure and the guidelines that the County would use to choose a provider. Further, County staff included funding in the 2026 Information Services budget (see Financial Implications, below) to purchase these services on an annual basis.

Pricing for several competing products was readily available to County staff, including Microsoft Azure, which has pricing available publicly. The County chose to pursue services from Stage 2 Data (S2D). S2D is a Canadian company with data centers in both Toronto and Vancouver. They provide services to other Ontario municipalities for both primary data hosting and disaster recovery. Importantly, their products are available through the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM).

OECM is a collaborative procurement platform that allows municipalities and other broader public-sector organizations to purchase pre-competitively sourced goods and services through vendor agreements established by OECM. Similar to the County's use of Canoe Procurement, OECM provides access to a centralized online marketplace of approved suppliers offering products and services such as IT hardware and software, networking, and operational services, all procured through an open, fair, and transparent process compliant with Ontario's Broader Public Sector procurement rules. Municipalities can use these agreements to save time, reduce procurement effort, and leverage collective buying power, without having to run their own standalone RFPs. The County has used OECM to secure competitive pricing, enabling the County to proceed to purchase without the need for an internal RFP process, as permitted under the County's Purchasing Policy (section 4.6 – Cooperative Purchasing).

The process of procuring services through a listing that is already approved on OECM should have been simple. The agreements are essentially available as templates in the form of the Master Agreement between participating parties and OECM and a Customer Supply Agreement (CSA) between the buyer (the County), and provider. Any specific terms regarding the products from Stage 2 Data are included in appendices to the CSA. These additional terms include not only the services being purchased, and at what cost, but contract duration, service-level and up-time agreements, how to report issues and targets for having them resolved, data residency, and other details specific to Stage 2 Data.

Despite extensive and ongoing negotiations, the County and third party vendor have not been able to negotiate a contract that is acceptable to both parties. The County has reviewed the proposal and specific terms and conditions of its procurement with Stage 2 Data; there is no concern regarding those documents.

At this point due to timelines, County staff are seeking to negotiate directly with Stage 2 Data, and as such are seeking Council approve single-source procurement of Stage 2 Data hosting and disaster recovery services. Importantly, this is the same company, with the same services, and the same price that have been procured through OECM.

Delays in resolving the contract have already complicated schedules for IT capital projects. Hardware licensing in the County's data center expires in July. If staff have not migrated to a new system by then, they will need to purchase another annual license for approximately \$60,000 to further extend hardware that is ready for replacement.

Financial and Resource Implications

In 2026 county staff included funding in the Information Services budget to purchase infrastructure services from a third-party hosting company (*hardware or infrastructure as a service*).

The 2026 Information Services budget included \$175,700 for this project, and an additional one-time implementation fee of \$6,000. Annual costs for the three-year term of this contract are estimated at \$180,600 per year. The cost includes re-distribution of items that have previously been included in the IS budget, including:

- Backup Software (\$18,000)
- Backup Cloud Storage (\$23,000)
- Re-distributed Microsoft licensing (\$26,000)

The County previously contributed \$120,000 per year to the Information Technology capital budget to eventually replace on-premise infrastructure. After considering the costs of software and services that were previously in the Information Services budget, the remaining (new) cost of \$113,000 is comparable to what was being contributed to reserves to replace on-premise hardware.

If migration to a new system isn't completed before July, the County will face a renewal fee of approximately \$60,000 to continue using its on-premise data center for another year. The expected life span for this hardware was 5 years. The County has already extended replacement to 8 years.

Furthermore, on-going delays to starting this project are causing delays and scheduling constraints with other planned information technology capital projects.

Appendices and Attachments

[ITR-CW-03-25 Cloud Strategy and Infrastructure Replacement](#)

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 23, 2026
Subject / Report No:	CAOR-CW-13-26
Title:	Board of Health Appointments
Prepared by:	Randy Scherzer, CAO
Reviewed by:	
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	

Recommendation

1. That Report CAOR-CW-13-26 regarding appointments to the Board of Health be received; and
2. That the following four members be appointed to the Board of Health for the remainder of the 2022-2026 Council term:
 - (to be determined)

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to help facilitate Grey County Council's appointment of members to the Board of Health following the application process using a skills-based matrix.

Background and Discussion

On February 12, 2026, County Council received a report (CAOR-CW-04-26) outlining the background and timelines leading up to the application process for the appointment of Board of Health members.

Throughout 2025, steps were taken by the province, the Board of Health, as well as Bruce County and Grey County to establish a skills based matrix that would be used to appoint Board members. The matrix includes skills in the following areas: Ethics and Integrity, Community Engagement and Responsiveness, Strategic Thinking and Change Management, Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health, Epidemiology and Data Literacy, Risk Management, Human Resources and Labour Relations, Communications and Media, Emergency Management, Indigenous Health and Cultural Competency, Public Health Knowledge, Governance and Board Leadership, Finance and Budget Oversight, Legal and Regulatory Compliance, Partnership Development, and Political and Government Relations.

At the meeting held February 12, 2026 County Council passed the following resolutions which had the effect of rescinding the existing members in the interest of beginning the application process for appointments to be considered using the skills based matrix:

CW26-26

Moved by: Councillor Boddy
Seconded by: Councillor Mackey

That Grey County’s Board of Health members appointed through Resolution CW132-24 be rescinded and that staff be directed to commence the application process for appointment of municipal members using the skills-based matrix with application forms being sent to all of the county council members; and That action be taken prior to Council approval as per Section 26.6 (b) of the Procedural By-law.

Carried

CW27-26

Moved by: Councillor Dobreen
Seconded by: Councillor Greig

That Report CAOR-CW-04-26 regarding the application process for appointing Board of Health municipal members using the skills-based matrix, be received for information.

Carried

Following the direction from Council, the application period was opened up to Grey County council members over the last several weeks. Applicant information has been initially compiled into a closed session package for Council’s review prior to appointing members in open session.

As per a communique issued by the CMOH Office dated February 4, 2026, board members need not possess all of the skills outlined in the matrix. The intention is that the Board will collectively hold all the competencies. It is our understanding that additional training opportunities will also be provided to the board members.

Legislated Requirements

The Health Protection and Promotion Act (the “Act”) establishes boards of health for Ontario and sets out the general framework and priorities of said boards. Sections 48 and 49 establish that there shall be a board of health for each health unit and that a board is composed of the members appointed to it under the Act and regulations. Further, the Act establishes that there shall be no fewer than three and not more than thirteen municipal members on each board of health. Municipal members are defined as persons appointed to the board of health by the

council of a municipality. Ontario Regulation 559/90 establishes that the Board of Health of the Grey Bruce Health Unit shall have seven municipal members; three to be appointed by the Municipal Council of the County of Bruce and four to be appointed by the Municipal Council of the County of Grey.

Legal Considerations

Committee of the Whole is scheduled to meet in closed session April 23, 2026 to discuss legal considerations associated with this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Legal Services, Clerk's
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets (describe)
- External (list)

Appendices and Attachments

Skills Based Matrix

Skills Matrix: Board of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit

1	Ethics & Integrity	Demonstrated commitment to ethical decision-making, transparency, public accountability. conflict of interest obligations.
2	Community Engagement & Responsiveness	Ability to engage with diverse community voices, understand local health needs, and reflect community perspectives in decision-making.
3	Strategic Thinking & Change Management	Ability to assess complex issues, anticipate future challenges, and contribute to strategic planning and organizational transformation.
4	Health Equity & Social Determinants of Health	Experience applying health equity frameworks, understanding social determinants of health, and ensuring inclusive decision-making.
5	Epidemiology & Data Literacy	Ability to interpret health data, epidemiological trends, and use evidence-based decision-making.
6	Risk Management	Ability to identify, assess, and mitigate organizational, operational, and reputational risks in a health context
7	Human Resources & Labour Relations	Understanding of HR policy, recruitment, retention, and unionized workforce relations in the public sector with experience in board-level oversight.
8	Communications & Media	Comfort with public speaking, media relations, and transparent public communication on sensitive health issues to build public trust on health issues.

Skills Matrix: Board of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit

9	Emergency Management	Familiarity with public health emergency preparedness, response protocols, and incident command systems and local emergency management coordination.
10	Indigenous Health & Cultural Competency	Knowledge of Indigenous health issues, reconciliation principles, and culturally safe approaches. with experience engaging and consulting with Indigenous communities.
11	Public Health knowledge	Understanding of core public health principles, Ontario Public Health Standards, and key population health indicators.
12	Governance & Board Leadership	Knowledge of governance roles, fiduciary duties, strategic planning, and experience serving on councils/boards of public sector or health-related organizations, with understanding of board dynamics and governance responsibility.
13	Finance & Budget Oversight	Understanding of financial statements, budget processes, and public sector funding mechanisms.
14	Legal & Regulatory Compliance	Knowledge of Ontario Health Protection & Promotion Act, other relevant legislation, and public health regulations.
15	Partnership Development	Ability to build and maintain partnerships with municipalities, healthcare providers, schools, communities and other sectors.
16	Political & Government Relations	Understanding of municipal, provincial, and federal political processes affecting public health and ability to navigate intergovernmental relationships.