

**Ministry of
Municipal Affairs
and Housing**

Office of the Minister

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Dear Heads of Council / Clerks and CAOs:

Nothing is more important than protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Since first learning of COVID-19, Ontario has taken decisive action to stop the spread of the virus.

Our government knows that an increasing number of municipalities are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak by diverting resources to essential services, instructing non-essential staff to work from home and suspending in-person meetings. We appreciate that the current situation is not “business as usual,” and that meeting statutory timelines associated with decisions on planning applications can be difficult, if not impossible.

In response to requests from municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, our government intends to introduce legislation in the coming weeks to allow for the suspension of specified timelines associated with land use planning matters that could be applied retroactively to the date that an emergency was declared. If passed, these changes would provide authority for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to give municipalities time to focus on the COVID-19 outbreak.

If approved, municipalities and planning boards would still be able to make decisions on land use planning matters during this time if they so desired and can consider using electronic and virtual channels as appropriate to engage and solicit feedback from the public on land use planning matters. It is vital for the economy that we move the administrative process along to the best of our collective ability in order to continue the important job of creating housing and keeping infrastructure projects moving.

Municipalities that instead wish to pause their consideration of planning applications and direct their resources and attention to more immediate priorities would be permitted to do so without the threat of appeal.

We know that such a change could have a significant effect on your municipality’s land use planning matters, but it is necessary to ensure we can all offer our full support to help our health care sector to stop the spread of COVID-19.

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Our government also supports growth paying for growth and ensuring municipalities have the tools to ensure complete communities are built. Therefore, we will also be proposing amendments to the *Development Charges Act* to ensure these important principles would continue during the COVID-19 outbreak.

If passed, our proposed changes would allow municipalities to continue to use their existing development charge bylaw during the COVID-19 outbreak and for a short period thereafter. We know that if a municipality's development charge bylaw is scheduled to expire in the coming months it would be difficult to replace given the current situation. We are taking this measure to ensure municipalities can continue to count on this vital source of revenue for local infrastructure and services.

We have also extended the current Environmental Registry of Ontario posting related to community benefits charges until April 20, 2020. The extension of the Environmental Registry of Ontario posting along with the proposed development charge changes will allow municipalities more time to consider the alignment of future development charge bylaws with the new community benefits tool to support local growth.

Let me assure you that our government is working to support you, our municipal partners, and will continue to work collaboratively to keep all Ontarians safe.

Further details and information will be provided once the legislation is introduced.

Sincerely,



Steve Clark
Minister

c. Association of Municipalities of Ontario