

I have been watching and been a part of the Town's planning for over forty years and I want to tell you all just what I have seen in the past two years. It seems like both public confusion and the "planning wild west"

Here in Cobourg in the last month and within the next two, we as a Community, and you as a Council are facing three high-rise developments, all of which are in violation of the specifics of the Official Plan.

This OP was adopted in 2017 as a consolidation of the 2013 plan and a number of Secondary Plans. In this plan we have ideals and metrics which are supposed to reflect the aspirations of the Citizens of Cobourg.

The Provincial Government, in the past six years has published and enacted various Planning Statements and Legislation enshrining the policies of; The Growth Statement, PPS 2022 and PPS 2024. The underlying principle was - "Build More and Faster". Whether we in Cobourg agree with that we are being impacted by its implementation.

The Citizens of Cobourg in the past three and three-quarter years have seen major disruptions in the Planning Department due to retirements and high turnover in Staff. Last year the Mayor initiated a new approach to planning. The result was the establishment of a new department called the "Development Division. The major result has been the adoption of a new Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) and the discussion of large and unheard of before high-rise developments.

Two comments about the ZBL.

1. Why was this ZBL amended before the completion of the OP, which was set to be reviewed this budget year, It has been normal practice to amend a ZBL after the establishment of a revised OP?
2. Also the major amendment contained in the new ZBL was the elimination of the height restriction in the Main Central Commercial Area. Was this pointed out during the adoption process to Council and what was the public education

process before passing the bylaw on December 17th in an 1800 page Agenda?
Did members of Council really know what was inside the bowels of the ZBL
before they voted on it?

But back to the push from the Province for more intensification and density in the building of more housing. We in Cobourg have been caught in this rush and I wonder which way Council is going to lead us.

During the last Public Planning Meeting for 202 Second St where the application to build an eight storey block right next to the largest piece of Heritage we have in Cobourg - Victoria Hall, it was justified by the "Development Division" not the Planning Department as "Good Planning". When questioned by a few speakers both the Mayor and the report from the DD justified the increase in height as "Provincial Rules"

Now the reason I am here

I, and many others want to know just what are these Provincial rules that are over-riding our Official Plan and allowing the development of high-rises that violate the specifics of the OP?

In my reading of the PPS 2024 I made the following observations and conclude that the DD in its review of the PPS and its implementation to the Cobourg direction in planning is focused on "intensification at any cost"

The PPS expressly directs that the Statement be read in its entirety and that all relevant policies be applied to the situation. That means that the approach to be whole should be

1. Housing + Intensification + Settlement Area Growth + Built Form + Compatibility + Infrastructure + Transportation + Heritage + Healthy Communities + Local Planning Framework

rather than:

2. Housing + Intensification = PPS Consistency

For instance in the OP there is a maximum height limit of six storeys, any where in the Town. In the Zoning bylaw there are floor space mass metrics. It is recommended by the DD and the Town's planning consultant that it is good planning to do this without any specific justification except that it is "Good Planning". I would ask for whom and by whose definition?

In this period of Cobourg's transition to the implementation of the Provincial Government's ambition, the PPS 2024 says that the basis of this should be the Official Plan. Which brings me to the observation that we are in the process of reviewing the OP. We have selected a Consultant and they must be reviewing the terms of reference and starting the two year process at a cost of \$780K.

Now the crux of this presentation. I think that we, the Cobourg Citizens and Council, should be sorting this planning confusion out, slow down until we have decided the rules for Cobourg.

That, in my mind, only leads to one conclusion Council needs to pass a motion implementing an Interim Control Bylaw for the whole of the Town of Cobourg. This is not a by-law against 202 Second Street, 349 King St. Or 549 King St. It is not a moratorium against housing. It is a temporary, town-wide planning safeguard while Cobourg updates the planning rules that will govern the next generation of development.

There are three particularly important facts supporting it:

1. Cobourg's Official Plan is the 2010 Five Year Review Consolidation, approved in 2017.
2. Cobourg itself has already identified a Town Official Plan Update as a 2026–27 multi-year project.
3. Section 38 expressly permits a municipality-wide ICBL after Council directs a municipality-wide planning-policy review.

So in conclusion I would echo all of the people that I speak and many more, some of whom usually disagree with me, and that echo is simple:

“Slow down this onslaught of planning applications by passing and ICB as soon as possible”