

May 6, 2023

The Honourable Steve Clark  
Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing  
17<sup>th</sup> Floor – 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

***Re: ERO Posting 019-6821, Proposed Amendments to the Planning Act per Schedule 6 of Bill 97  
Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act***

Dear Minister Clark,

On behalf of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), we are writing to provide feedback on one of the proposed changes to the *Planning Act* per Schedule 6 of Bill 97. OPPI is the recognized voice of Ontario's planning profession. With over 4,700 members, it serves as both the Professional Institute and regulator of Registered Professional Planners (RPP) in the province. Our members work across the planning spectrum, for consulting firms, provincial and municipal approval bodies, private developers, community agencies and academic institutions.

The recommendation below is contingent on our review of the new draft Provincial Planning Statement which changes the overall approach to employment areas. However, we felt it was important to mention it here as there is an intent to change the current definition in the *Planning Act*. Schedule 6 of Bill 97 proposes the following change to the *Planning Act*:

#### **Changes to Employment Area Protections**

*Modify the definition of area of employment to only include heavy industry and other employment uses that cannot be located near sensitive uses, (i.e., not suitable for mixed use) to scope the applicability of existing provisions which limit appeals of municipal refusals and non-decisions.*

OPPI appreciates the desire to protect areas of employment and provide a consistent more detailed definition across the province to reduce ambiguity and improve consistency. However, the potential unintended consequences of the proposed definition are notable, including:

- Impact of not being able to locate ancillary retail/commercial uses within an area of employment on our ability to support economic vitality and attract and retain talent in our employment areas, when employees are not able to access amenities such as coffee shops, food services, gyms, or other personal services.

- Impact of not being able to locate places of worship in areas of employment on ability to support communities' need for religious and cultural facilities of existing and future population.
- Impact of not being able to provide stand-alone office on ability to attract and retain employment uses that do not require prestige core/downtown locations.

OPPI acknowledges that clause 1.v. within the definition permits “*facilities that are ancillary to the uses.*” However, it is unclear how the term “*facility*” is to be interpreted. In our opinion, it does not appear to provide sufficient flexibility to permit all the uses listed above.

Accordingly, the above-noted implications may undermine the Province’s broader economic development objectives, as the proposed revisions appear to limit the ability to create diverse employment areas with employment supportive uses that cater to the daily needs of the people working in employment areas. The revisions may also limit support services to industry such as engineering services, consulting services, machinery repair and printing services from locating within these areas.

We will provide further comments on the changes in approach to employment areas in our submission on the draft Provincial Planning Statement, but we want to reiterate the need for employment areas to meet a broad range of employment functions including ancillary functions that serve the employees of the businesses in the employment area. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this matter through the ERO posting.

If you have any questions or would like to set up a meeting to further discuss this recommendation, please contact OPPI’s Executive Director Susan Wiggins at (647) 326-2328 or by email at [s.wiggins@ontarioplanners.ca](mailto:s.wiggins@ontarioplanners.ca).

Sincerely,



Paul Lowes, M.E.S., MCIP, RPP  
President



Susan Wiggins, CAE, Hon IDC  
Executive Director



Informing Choices. Inspiring Communities.