

**TO:** Mayor Grant & Members of Council

**FROM:** Lindsay Earl, Manager of Community & Development Services

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 14, 2026

**SUBJECT:** **Public Meeting Section 26(3) of the *Planning Act*, Township of Wainfleet Official Plan Update**

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**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**THAT** Council receive Report CDS-002/2026, Statutory Public Meeting Section 26(3) of the *Planning Act*, Township of Wainfleet Official Plan Update, for information.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Township of Wainfleet is undertaking a comprehensive review and update of its Official Plan, as required under the *Planning Act*. The current Official Plan, approved in 2016, no longer reflects recent changes to Provincial legislation, the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), the Niagara Official Plan (2022), and the evolving planning authority framework.

On November 18, 2025, the Township retained GSP Group to lead the Official Plan Update. The attached Gap Analysis Report represents the first phase of this process and identifies key areas where the existing Official Plan is outdated, misaligned with current policy, or requires new or enhanced direction.

This report serves as the formal initiation of the Township's Official Plan Review and marks the beginning of a comprehensive, multi-phase planning process. The Official Plan is the Township's primary land use planning document and plays a critical role in guiding future growth, protecting agricultural and environmental resources, supporting economic development, and shaping complete, sustainable communities. As such, this work is foundational to the Township's long-term vision and decision-making.

The purpose of this public meeting represents the first statutory consultation step in the Official Plan Review process. It will provide information to Council and the opportunity for public input regarding the Township's 10-year Official Plan Update, specifically the Gap Analysis Report prepared by GSP Group. This meeting will present the findings of the Gap Analysis, identify key policy gaps and areas requiring updates, and obtain public and stakeholder input to inform the next phase of the review. No recommendations or decisions will be made at this meeting. A future recommendation report and draft Official Plan will be brought forward following further analysis and consultation. Any person may make written or verbal representation, and all submissions, including personal information, will form part of the public record.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Township of Wainfleet is undertaking a comprehensive review and update of its Official Plan in accordance with Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, which requires municipalities to review their Official Plans at regular intervals.

The Township's current Official Plan was approved in 2016 and is based on a planning horizon to 2031.

Since that time, there have been significant changes to:

- Provincial legislation (e.g., *Planning Act* amendments, Bill 23, Bill 185);
- The Provincial Planning Statement (2024);
- The Niagara Official Plan (2022);
- Planning authority structure (removal of Regional planning authority in 2025).

On November 18, 2025, the Township awarded the contract to planning consultant GSP Group to complete the Official Plan Update, and since that time, the consultant has been working diligently to prepare the draft Gap Analysis Report (Appendix I).

The Gap Analysis Report represents the first phase of the Official Plan Review and is intended to identify where the current Official Plan:

- Is outdated,
- Does not align with current policy,
- Requires enhancement or new policy direction.

**Overview of the Current Official Plan**

The existing Official Plan is organized into eight thematic sections, including:

- Introduction
- Municipal Structure
- Land Use Policies
- Environmental Management
- Infrastructure and Roads
- Noise, Air Quality and Vibration Control
- Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- Implementation

While the structure remains generally sound, the Gap Analysis identifies that many policies require updates to reflect current provincial direction and local priorities.

**Key Findings of the Gap Analysis****1. Legislative & Policy Alignment**

Significant updates are required to align the Official Plan with:

- The Provincial Planning Statement (2024);
- Recent *Planning Act* amendments;
- The Niagara Official Plan (2022).

This includes changes related to:

- Housing supply requirements;
- Parkland dedication;
- Site plan control;
- Appeals and planning authority.

## **2. Growth Management & Housing**

The Gap Analysis identifies a need to:

- Plan for a longer growth horizon (20–30 years);
- Ensure a minimum 15-year land supply for residential growth;
- Provide a broader range and mix of housing options, including intensification and additional residential units.

## **3. Rural & Agricultural Policy Framework**

Key considerations include:

- Continued protection of prime agricultural areas using a systems-based approach;
- Updated permissions for:
  - Additional residential units on farms,
  - On-farm diversified uses;
- Balancing rural character preservation with modest growth opportunities.

## **4. Settlement Areas & Complete Communities**

The Gap Analysis highlights:

- Limited ability to achieve compact, mixed-use development due to servicing constraints;
- Need to explore:
  - Alternative servicing solutions,
  - Increased densities within hamlets and lakeshore areas.

## **5. Employment & Economic Development**

The current Official Plan:

- Does not identify formal employment areas;
- Focuses primarily on existing uses rather than future planning.

Updates are needed to:

- Identify and protect employment lands;
- Support economic diversification;
- Align with updated provincial definitions and requirements.

## 6. Environmental & Cultural Heritage Policies

Updates are required to:

- Reflect stronger provincial direction on:
  - Cultural heritage protection, including provincially defined criteria;
  - Indigenous engagement requirements;
- Integrate updated natural heritage and archaeological mapping from the Niagara Official Plan.

## 7. Infrastructure & Servicing

The Gap Analysis identifies the need to:

- Better align growth with infrastructure capacity;
- Explore alternative servicing approaches to support growth.

## 8. Mapping & Technical Updates

Recommendations include:

- Updating Official Plan schedules (e.g., natural heritage, mineral aggregates);
- Consolidating Township and Regional mapping;
- Ensuring consistency with current datasets.

## Consultation

In accordance with the *Planning Act*, notice of this public meeting was posted in the Niagara Region Dailies Newspapers on March 5, 2026 and March 13, 2026. The notice was also posted on the Township's website and shared on Township social media platforms.

No written public comments have been received.

The application was circulated to external agencies and internal departments for review and comments on March 3, 2026. The following comments have been received by the Planning Department as of April 8, 2026:

- Enbridge Gas does not object to the proposed application(s) however, we reserve the right to amend or remove development conditions.
- The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) noted that are the Treaty Holders of the land on which the Township of Wainfleet is located. Their consultation team provided standard information regarding "Municipal Official Plan Input" and requested an introductory meeting with Township staff.

This public meeting represents the first statutory public consultation step in the Official Plan Review process.

Public input received will:

- Help refine the Gap Analysis;
- Identify additional policy gaps; and
- Inform preparation of the Draft Official Plan.

### **OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

There are no other options as there is a provincially legislated requirement to review and update the Township's Official Plan every 10 years.

### **Next Steps**

Following the public meeting, the next phases of the Official Plan Review will include:

- Additional public consultation to identify the community's vision;
- Refinement of the Gap Analysis based on feedback;
- Preparation of policy directions and options;
- Draft Official Plan preparation;
- Statutory adoption process.

A future staff report with recommendations and a draft Official Plan will be presented to Council at a later date.

A specific webpage has been created to keep the public informed on this ongoing project: [www.wainfleet.ca/officialplanupdate](http://www.wainfleet.ca/officialplanupdate) The Township will continue to provide notice to residents and stakeholders of this important ongoing planning work.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

N/A

### **OTHERS CONSULTED:**

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|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chief Administrative Officer     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finance    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clerks                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community & Development Services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Operations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                |

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- 1) Appendix A - Gap Analysis Report prepared by GSP Group (dated March 2026)

Respectfully submitted by,

Approved by,

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Lindsay Earl, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Manager of Community/Dev. Services

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Mallory Luey  
Chief Administrative Officer/Treasurer