

Introduction

The Regional Municipality of Niagara is one of several Regional governments which has been established by the Province of Ontario since 1969. Regional government in Ontario is designed to:

- a. Provide a high level of services to the residents of the Region and to provide these services in as efficient a manner as possible.
- b. Reorganize and streamline the operation and administration of local government.
- c. Establish administrative procedures and mechanisms to deal with problems and issues whose effects extend beyond the limits of any one local municipality's political boundaries.

The challenge posed by Regional government is to accomplish the above broad purposes and yet to remain responsive and responsible to the needs and desires of the residents of the Region.

The Regional Municipality of Niagara Act reduced the number of local municipalities from 26 to 12 and established the Region with full or shared responsibilities for:

- i The collection and treatment of sewage (shared),
- ii The treatment and distribution of water (shared),
- iii Regional roads,
- iv Health and welfare services,
- v Police,
- vi Capital budgeting and borrowing, and
- vii Planning (shared).

Planning was established as a joint responsibility to be shared by the local municipalities and the Region. However, the Regional Act and now the **Planning Act**, 1990 designates the Regional Plan as the paramount document. Section 27(1) of the **Planning Act** states:

"The Council of a local municipality shall amend every official plan and every by-law passed under Section 34 or a predecessor of it to conform with a plan that comes into effect as the official plan of a county, regional, metropolitan, or district municipality."

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The Regional Municipality of Niagara Act specified that a Regional Plan be prepared and submitted to the Province for approval by the end of 1973. Section 92(2) of the Act stated:

"The Regional Council, before the 31st day of December, 1973, shall prepare, adopt and forward to the Minister for approval an Official Plan for the Regional Area."