

Ministers Announce Consultations on the Scope and Processes of the Ontario Municipal Board

Recently the Attorney General, the Honourable Yasir Naqvi, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable Bill Mauro, announced a plan to consult on possible changes to Ontario Municipal Board to improve efficiency and accessibility.

The role and functioning of the OMB has been subject to a number of reviews in past years. Yet concerns about its role in relation to the municipal governments' responsibilities in land use planning decisions continue. As part of the review, the Province is consulting on possible changes to the OMB that, if adopted, would:

- Give more weight to local and provincial decisions.
- Support alternative ways to settle disputes.
- Allow for more meaningful and affordable public participation at the Board.
- Bring fewer municipal and provincial decisions to the OMB.
- Support clearer and more predictable decision making.

Further information about consultation dates and how the public (and municipalities) can provide their feedback on the proposed changes can be found on the Municipal Affairs website (link below).

In anticipation of this review, in June 2016, AMO adopted a report entitled, "OMB Reform: Maturing Roles Discussion Paper". In addition, AMO has prepared a Quick Guide to the consultation to assist you and your council should you wish to participate in this review (links below).

AMO'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IT'S REVIEW WORK

1. Municipalities are a mature order of government. They have taken on a more rigorous role in land use planning over the years. This requires a transformation of the OMB's roles and procedures.
2. The planning process in Ontario has been and should continue to be public and democratic. However, the Board has not kept up with the intent of legislation to

recognize and respect the municipal decision making role and this needs to be reinforced.

3. Should there be a situation where the OMB believes it needs to supersede municipal decisions, then it must ensure fair and equitable participation by local community members, and that decision-making processes include the public.

REVIEW OBJECTIVES

There is an undeniable need to address why the existing authorities and powers of the OMB have not been fully implemented. We have moved the yardsticks in the past but the outcomes remain almost the same. This review has to be more substantive with demonstrable outcomes.

Stability in the land use planning environment is essential for local viability. The planning process must make space for local goals expressed in planning documents. Scoping the authority of the OMB so official plans or secondary plans are indeed considered 'official' needs to be firmly established.

Given the substantial amounts of time and money that are spent by all parties in appeals a move toward efficiency is vital. Administrative practices, transparency and accountability can be vastly improved.

ACTION

AMO supports this discussion and encourages municipal participation. Reforms to the OMB scope and process can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal planning in Ontario.

Links:

[The MMA How to Participate](#)

[AMO's OMB Reform Paper](#)

[AMO Quick Guide to the OMB Consultation](#)