



Executive Summary: The Case for the Province of Ontario to Regulate the Planning Profession

The Provincial Government is committed to ensuring that the planning of our communities, resources and environment protects the public interest. To that end it has put in place a framework for guiding the planning process and managing future growth. Today the challenge is to ensure its implementation reflects the economic and health interests of Ontario communities. Professional planners are integral to that outcome.

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI)—with over 4,000 members—is committed to achieving healthy, sustainable communities. Given the changing political, professional and societal context within which decisions are made today and the challenges on the horizon, OPPI is seeking legislative change in how the planning profession is regulated. Its intent is to enhance the public’s confidence in professional planners and their commitment to protecting and furthering the public interest.

Currently OPPI members are regulated by the Institute, which requires members to pursue continuous professional learning and adhere to a code of ethics and practice standards. Under the proposed public legislation, OPPI members would still be regulated by OPPI but, as with other professions, the Institute would ultimately be accountable to the government and the people of Ontario. This change is anticipated to raise the level of planning practice across the province—supporting better community outcomes, a more engaged public and a streamlined provincial system of delegated planning authority.

Planners have a proven track record in serving the public interest. Ontario’s professional planners successfully helped guide and frame the Province’s healthy communities agenda. They are trusted to offer objective expert testimony at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Land resources are limited and need to be carefully conserved and leveraged to ensure future generations continue to have choices and opportunities. Yet when the public is consulted, issues are increasingly complex and it is difficult to sort through stakeholder voices unaided in order to learn the facts. Planners, skilled at balancing diverse perspectives in complex environments, have the skills and knowledge to offer informed advice on behalf of the public interest.

An informed public is better able to make decisions that are good for the economy and the health of their communities. While the *Planning Act* seeks to aid the process of information dissemination and public participation through procedural tools, these tools alone cannot ensure an objective process, or an informed public. They alone cannot advance the public interest. It is professional planners who are most adept at using the *Planning Act* tools and ensuring the public interest is met.

Just like other professionals the public relies on for advice, it expects professional planners to have the requisite education, training and professional ethics to engender trust. And it expects the Province to oversee those credentials.

The timing is opportune to introduce legislation to regulate professional planners given the upcoming review of critical provincial plans—*Greenbelt Plan*, *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* and the *Metrolinx Act*. The spotlight will not only be on these plans but on the land use planning process more broadly.

Ontario needs to grow in ways that protect our economic well-being and vital resources and sustain healthy lifestyles and a healthy environment. Dedicated community builders, professional planners can be instrumental in making that future a reality. Enacting contemporary legislation to reinforce the public's confidence in professional planners and their commitment to protecting and furthering the public interest is good for the Government of Ontario and it is good for Ontarians.