

## An Update about Land Use Planning & COVID-19

from FOCA's partners at [EcoVue Consulting](#), April 2020

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Ontario passed the *COVID-19 Support & Protection Act* (the Act). The Act included amendments to the *Education Act*, *Planning Act*, *Development Charges Act*, *Police Services Act* and the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act*. The amendments to the **Planning Act** are meant to allow municipal governments to focus their time on public health priorities by suspending some planning decision timelines during the declared state of emergency. The changes will allow municipalities and planning boards to delay planning decisions without the risk of appeal during the state of emergency. However, if municipalities choose to process planning applications, they now have more flexibility in terms of holding virtual/electronic public meetings and making decisions on planning matters during the outbreak.

As we are all adjusting to these challenging times, municipal planning departments are no different. Our experience at EcoVue is that many municipal planning departments are carrying on, and adjusting to the challenges of working remotely. Most municipal planning departments have been very responsive.

Our advice during this challenging time would be:

- **Don't forget that your municipality may still be making land use planning decisions during this period.** If you have been following a particular application or land use planning decision, make sure to be in touch with your municipality to ensure they know you are interested and want to be informed of any decisions regarding those applications. Requirements for notification of meetings under the *Planning Act* have not changed, but it doesn't hurt to check in with the municipal Planner to see if the municipality will be proceeding with public meetings or Council meetings. It makes sense to be proactive now to ensure you don't miss a meeting or any new information on a development or land use planning decision.
- **If you have plans that require approvals under the *Planning Act* for your cottage property, this may be a good time to start the process.** EcoVue has found that most municipal planning departments have been very responsive and are able to provide guidance on any changes to timelines for reviewing applications. Most applications are now being submitted and reviewed electronically.

If you want more information about the specific changes to the *Planning Act* the *COVID-19 Support & Protection Act* is available here (<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-189>). For more information on how your municipality is adjusting during the emergency take a look at their website and get in touch with the municipal Planner.

Frances Wilbur RPP, MCIP



Planner with EcoVue Consulting in Peterborough  
and longtime Ston(e)y Laker