



# Sustainability Committee Report

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Planning and Development Services Planning Division

**Report to:** Sustainability Committee

**Re:** Green Energy Act through Bill 34 (PDS.19.08 Green Energy Act Repeal)

**For:** Nathan Westendorp, Denise Whaley

**Prepared by:** Julie Scarcella & Rosemary Mesley/follow up to our on-site meeting

**Date:** November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019

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## A. Overview

Sustainability Committee received Staff Report PDS.19.100 Renewable Energy Regulations; for Information September 11th 2019 from the Planning department. The changes under Bill 34 amended several provisions of the Planning Act that will now empower the province and municipalities to allow or restrict these applications through the Planning Act application tools. The lack of Official Plan Policies and Zoning restrictions has left a vacuum after the repeal of the Green Energy Act, where municipalities do not have any legislative authority to restrict locations and/or parameters for development of renewable energy projects.

Members of the Ad Hoc working group, Julie Scarcella and Rosemary Mesley met with staff Denise Whaley, Planner on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 and discussed potential program of policies, municipal Renewable Energy Projects Best Practices and by-laws to regulate alternative energy projects.

## B. Planning Meeting Discussion Points

Key takeaways from this discussion include:

- Recognizing issues can be as complex or simple as the Town is interested in creating.

### **Direction could be for large scale renewable energy projects:**

1. For example - Prohibition on all wind turbines projects over x megawatts. All above x megawatts require a zoning by-law amendment. (More could be added down the road)  
AND
2. Comprehensive program using a framework to support the Town's vision and goals and alignment to future policies and bylaws. Alternative energy could be one aspect, as well as energy conservation and efficiency measures, incentives to support renewable energy initiatives that may include:
  - Built Environment (Commercial/Residential), Agriculture (Biogas, Small Solar Energy, Small Scale Wind Energy, Biodiesel, Biomass), Green Infrastructure and the Industrial sector.

### **Further to this our research included:**

- Conversations with municipal planning departments, review of reports, google searches to understanding the current landscape and implications of Bill 34 and the role of Ontario Municipalities over the span of 1 month.
- A number of case studies were collected from Ontario (Chatham Kent, Oxford County and North Bay) as well as The Town of Cochrane Alberta that are conducting or initiating a study or implementing local renewable energy systems.
- In Ontario we contacted two municipalities that were more advanced in policy pertaining to renewable energy strategies to include: (Kingston/SWIT program and Waterloo/ Sustainable Waterloo Region) to inquire about the status of their work and general thoughts on BILL 34. Further dialogue is pending from their sustainability coordinators and senior planners.

- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) was contacted to understand the role of Bill 34 policy, engagement to other municipalities, current status and timelines. Additionally, AMO provided Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018 PDF highlights the submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy October 30, 2018 which is pending final outcomes.

Research by the Ad Hoc members uncovered a number of examples of alternative energy frameworks from other municipalities. Good examples are can be found for “further reading” to include:

- <https://www.cochrane.ca/635/Renewable-Energy-Framework>

One option for a program for the Town of The Blue Mountains would be to create a framework that would set the stage for action toward incorporating renewable energy projects within the Town’s corporate operations as well as within the wider community. This would require further review and may need additional resources. Outreach to The Municipality of Cochrane planning department (October 28<sup>th</sup> 2019) was undertaken to investigate further information to include (costing of the Framework, budgets, staff resources, did they hire a consultant, timelines, overruns, and policy and bylaws on large scale wind farms).

#### **What is a Renewable Energy Framework?**

A framework provides guidance around the management of renewable energy as well as to proactively understand how to encourage the uptake of renewable energy in the community and in operations. In order to understand which renewable energy options are best suited for the town the framework from The Town of Cochrane Alberta as it is the most up to date and includes project implementation and reporting.

#### **Types of Renewable Energy Technologies could include:**

- Solar
- District Energy/Heating
- Geo Exchange
- Small Wind
- Building-scale heating
- Waste Heat Recovery
- Solar Hot Water
- Local Biomass

### **C. Recommendations**

We recommend that the SC support the development of a Renewable Energy Framework and to explore next steps with the planning department, and in the interim prohibit all large scale projects as noted above.

Our analysis also revealed that Renewable Energy projects will lead the way to future initiatives to include Community Renewable Energy Planning and Climate Change undertakings that support emissions inventory for transportation, agriculture, industrial and commercial/residential buildings to provide a gross estimate of renewable energy carbon emissions reduction potential. These findings suggest that if the town proceeds to the development of a Renewable Energy Framework it will create a “push” to developing an Energy Plan and Climate Action Plan.

Support for this project is to help drive forward energy conservation and efficiency!