



QUEEN'S PARK UPDATE

What's New at Queen's Park (January 2011)

Welcome to Queen's Park Update. This is an occasional piece that reports on what's new at Queen's Park in the land use planning arena.

With a provincial election happening in October 2011 there is a sense that things are being viewed and created increasingly from a political and less from a policy perspective. This is to be expected but it makes it less likely that there will be substantial legislation carried forward in the next few months.

Two matters where there was substantial public involvement in 2010 and on which consequently there is interest and expectancy that the government will deliver new policy in 2011 are the anti-SLAPP Advisory Committee (chaired by Dean Mayo Moran from University of Toronto Law School), and the Five Year Review of the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement.

Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP)

SLAPP is a lawsuit initiated against one or more individuals or groups that speak out or take a position on an issue of public interest. SLAPPs use the court system to limit the effectiveness of the opposing party; speech or conduct. SLAPPs can intimidate opponents, deplete their resources, reduce their ability to participate in public affairs and deter others from participating in discussion on matters of public interest. The Advisory Panel reported in October 2010 and their report can be viewed at http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/anti_slapp/default.asp

FUN has reviewed the report and is generally pleased with it. Given the upcoming Fall election FUN would urge the government to table the necessary legislation at the earliest opportunity. Public comments on the report can be provided to the ministry by email at: SLAPPsuggestions@ontario.ca or regular post:

SLAPP Suggestions
720 Bay Street, 7th floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 2S9

Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 – Five Year Review

The public input phase of the Province's Review of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 (PPS) was completed in October 29, 2010. No timeline has yet been announced for the publication of any revisions to the Provincial Policy Statement.

The PPS sets out the Ontario government's policy direction for land use planning and development. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing sought input on how the PPS is working and whether any changes were needed to protect provincial interests and to make sure that the PPS is adequately addressing emerging land use issues.

The Provincial Planning and Application Resource Centre.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has established a web site for the One Window Provincial Planning Service with information and tools on land use planning in Ontario. This resource centre includes information from the 8 partner ministries and can be found at <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page7153.aspx>

Provincial Election Financing Reform

Reform of campaign finance regulations would help provide a level playing field for candidates. The City of Toronto instituted a ban on corporate and union campaign contributions in municipal elections in 2009, putting it in line with a similar ban in federal elections, provincial elections in Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, and all municipal elections in Quebec; but not provincial elections in Ontario, nor other Ontario municipalities (except the Town of Ajax). It is felt that provincial election financing reform will be necessary before a provincial move to implement province wide election financing reform for Ontario municipalities.

In 2005 in its submission to the Select Committee on Electoral Reform the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods recommended that the Ontario Elections Act be amended:

“to prohibit contributions by corporations and trade unions and permit taxpayers to designate a portion of their provincial income tax to a political party of their choice”

Fair Vote Canada (FVC) has a active campaign pressing for the implementation of these types of policies. Further information is available on the FVC web site at www.fairvote.ca.

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