

Changes to the Ontario Municipal Board

By Sylvia Jones, MPP

Dufferin Caledon

The Ontario Municipal Board is an independent tribunal that is charged with hearing appeals and ruling on disputes regarding zoning issues.

The Ontario Municipal Board is comprised of individuals appointed by the government, and includes individuals with a wide array of professions, such as lawyers, architects, planners, and accountants.

When individuals in a community disagree on a local land use planning issue and are unable to resolve their disagreement they can take their case to the Ontario Municipal Board for a final decision to be made. For example, if a local Council allows for restaurant to be built in a specific area, but will not allow for a drive-through window, the restaurant owner has the right to appeal this decision at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Part of the Ministry's review of the Ontario Municipal Board will look at the following areas: the tribunal's jurisdiction and powers, citizen participation and local perspective, clear and predictable decision-making, modern procedures and faster decisions, and alternative dispute resolution and fewer hearings. In addition the Ministry has released a public consultation document that outlines the key areas of focus of the review as well as questions for individuals to provide feedback.

Over the course of the review, individuals can attend town hall meetings across the province that will allow individuals to learn about the proposed changes and ask questions and provide commentary.

The central issue that the government needs to consider is the balancing of local decision making from councils and the provincially mandated land use targets of intensification and density.

The government also needs to balance the autonomy of local governments and their expertise in what their community needs, with the right to appeal of all individuals across the province.

I encourage individuals to participate in the consultation and provide feedback. If you are interested in learning more about the review of the Ontario Municipal Board, including reviewing the public consultation document, or attending a town hall session and providing feedback, please visit: www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page14965.aspx. The deadline to submit your comments is December 19, 2016.

If you need assistance finding information on the review, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 1-800-265-1603 or sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org.

It is important your voice is heard to ensure our province's adjudicative system is working best for our local communities.