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Council lobby?s province to help fund growth

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The Town of Shelburne has approached the provincial government regarding the expansion and affordability of the Town's Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) project.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills and Town staff made a delegation to the province's minister of infrastructure, Kinga Surma, at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference in London, Ont. on Tuesday (Aug. 22).

The Town of Shelburne has planned to accommodate additional residential growth to 2051, including adding over 2,000 new homes and approximately 5,500 people, which would bring the Town's population to over 15,000.

?The Town has demonstrated a commitment to support diversified housing and is working with many developers. We believe that ?growth should pay for growth'. We also believe that small towns in Ontario, like Shelburne, can play a major role in supporting new and diversified housing,? said Mills.

A wastewater environmental assessment has been completed, and the Town is in the process of completing the detailed design work for the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) expansion, which is expected to be finalized by the end of 2023 or early 2024.

Council originally approved a $2 million cost for the design component of the project on the basis that the capital cost would be primarily funded by development charges.

?As a small town we lack the ability to fund major capital infrastructure that is required for development. Council would not support transferring the costs of new development on our existing local taxpayers,? continued Mills.

The long-term debt financing for the WPCP expansion is estimated to cost a total of $36 million, with existing reserves covering $3.4 million and available development charges covering $2.7 million of the upgrade costs.

The Town of Shelburne requested the infrastructure minister consider:

1. Reinstating provincial and federal infrastructure funds such as the Green Infrastructure Stream of Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) or the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund (CWWF) to begin accepting applications in early 2024 for water and wastewater infrastructure to support the province's housing development targets and the significant funding (estimated at 30 million) required by the Town for a WPCP expansion;

2. Establishing an interim three-to-five-year program to allocate the land transfer tax collected by the province, in whole or in part, back to municipalities to support water and wastewater infrastructure;

3. Evaluate the impact of lost DCs on small towns due to Bill 23 by expanding the audits, which are intended to inform future Provincial policies and programs and are currently limited to much larger cities or towns, to include a small town stream. Shelburne would offer to be included, and the list could be created in consultation with AMO.

The Town said without adequate development charges, which have been reduced or eliminated due to Bill 23, ?critical? capital projects will be delayed or may become cost-prohibitive based on their limited borrowing capacity and impacts on property taxation.

As of January, the construction and tendering of the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) expansion project has been postponed until a financial strategy is developed. Without funding to support the expansion, the plant would be repaired to only support existing homes and businesses.