

Town of Huntsville Official Plan Review - POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

A Growing Community – Rural Designation

BACKGROUND:

- The rural designation encompasses the largest part of the Town's landmass. It is the hinterland outside of the Urban Settlement Area, the Rural Settlement Areas and Waterfront designation and includes the vast forested countryside characterized by a varied terrain, watercourses, ponds and wetlands. Many of the Town's important natural and environmentally sensitive areas are located within this designation.
- This land presented native peoples and the first settlers with hunting and fishing opportunities, but for the most part did not support the farming activities that occurred with settlement elsewhere. Lumbering and tourism provided more viable economic activities and are still important to the Town.
- The rural area supports resource management activities, such as forestry, aggregate extraction and land extensive businesses, which are important to the economy of the Town. The rural area also provides outdoor recreation opportunities for activities such as snowmobiling, skiing, hiking, nature interpretation and education, as well as more remote activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping.
- Settlement in the rural area offers residents a private and tranquil lifestyle, but fewer services than are available in the settlement areas. This requires frequent automobile trips into settlement areas for goods and services which requires the Town to be responsive to road issues and concerns.

POLICY CONTEXT:

Provincial Policy Statement (2014):

- 1.1.4 Rural areas are important to the economic success of the Province and our quality of life. Rural areas are a system of lands that may include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and other resource areas. Rural areas and urban areas are interdependent in terms of markets, resources and amenities. It is important to leverage rural assets and amenities and protect the environment as a foundation for a sustainable economy.

Ontario's rural areas have diverse population levels, natural resources, geographies and physical characteristics, and economies. Across rural Ontario, local circumstances vary by region. For example, northern Ontario's natural environment and vast geography offer different opportunities than the predominately agricultural areas of southern regions of the Province.

- 1.1.4.1 Healthy, integrated and viable rural areas should be supported by:
- a) building upon rural character, and leveraging rural amenities and assets;
 - b) promoting regeneration, including the redevelopment of brownfield sites;
 - c) accommodating an appropriate range and mix of housing in rural settlement areas;
 - d) encouraging the conservation and redevelopment of existing rural housing stock on rural lands;
 - e) using rural infrastructure and public service facilities efficiently;

- f) promoting diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities through goods and services, including value-added products and the sustainable management or use of resources;
- g) providing opportunities for sustainable and diversified tourism, including leveraging historical, cultural, and natural assets;
- h) conserving biodiversity and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature; and
- i) providing opportunities for economic activities in prime agricultural areas, in accordance with policy 2.3.

1.1.4.2 In rural areas, rural settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted.

1.1.4.4 Growth and development may be directed to rural lands in accordance with policy 1.1.5, including where a municipality does not have a settlement area.

1.1.5.1 When directing development on rural lands, a planning authority shall apply the relevant policies of Section 1: Building Strong Healthy Communities, as well as the policies of Section 2: Wise Use and Management of Resources and Section 3: Protecting Public Health and Safety.

1.1.5.2 On rural lands located in municipalities, permitted uses are:

- a) the management or use of resources;
- b) resource-based recreational uses (including recreational dwellings);
- c) limited residential development;
- d) home occupations and home industries;
- e) cemeteries; and
- f) other rural land uses.

1.1.5.3 Recreational, tourism and other economic opportunities should be promoted.

1.1.5.4 Development that is compatible with the rural landscape and can be sustained by rural service levels should be promoted.

1.1.5.5 Development shall be appropriate to the infrastructure which is planned or available, and avoid the need for the unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion of this infrastructure.

1.1.5.6 Opportunities should be retained to locate new or expanding land uses that require separation from other uses.

1.1.5.7 Opportunities to support a diversified rural economy should be promoted by protecting agricultural and other resource-related uses and directing non-related development to areas where it will minimize constraints on these uses

1.1.5.8 Agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices should be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards.

- 1.1.5.9 New land uses, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding livestock facilities, shall comply with the minimum distance separation formulae.

Current Muskoka Official Plan

Section D – Rural (Pre-ambler) The Rural designation is identified as those lands in the District not directly identified as being subject to any other strategic land use designation specified in this Plan. The rural area is a community generally comprised of a mix of resource related activities, single unit residential and other small scale or space extensive developments. The character of the community is for the most part an expansive, aesthetically pleasing, and predominantly open landscape with large tracts of land remaining in a natural state. Uncontrolled development and lot creation in the rural area can result in fragmentation of significant natural habitat, sterilization of resources and strip or ribbon development, which can detract from the rural character of the area. Policies in this section of the Plan are designed to ensure that rural development does not undermine the rural function and character of Muskoka.

A key consideration for development in the rural area will be the ability of the site to sustain private services. Muskoka comprises a unique setting for the provision of servicing due to the major constraints posed by the topography of the Canadian Shield. Much of Muskoka is comprised of either shallow till over bedrock or exposed bedrock. The relief is extremely undulating with numerous local bedrock depressions, knobs and ridges.

- D.31 Permitted uses in the Rural designation include resource management, wildlife management, recreation and low density development areas within Muskoka.
- D.32 Rural lots should be of sufficient size to accommodate the use proposed, related structural requirements and private individual services. In addition, rural lots should be sized and designed where appropriate to facilitate resource management practices or environmental, manmade or other influences, including soil, terrain and water quality constraints, among others.
- D.33 The Area Municipalities will establish a variety of lot sizes and frontages reflective of the rural environment. Rural residential lots will be encouraged to be one hectare (2.5 acres) in area. Larger lot sizes should be developed for hinterland or resource areas and where five (5) or more lots are proposed that are smaller than one hectare (2.5 acres) a study that has demonstrated that the hydrogeology of the area is suitable to sustain the proposed private systems will be required. The minimum lot size will be no less than .4 hectares (1 acre).
- D.34 Rural residential development will consist of single unit dwellings and accessory buildings and structures located on individual lots and be encouraged to locate:
- a) in proximity to existing rural residential uses in order to create a sense of community;
 - b) in areas that do not preclude the use or exploitation of resource values;
 - c) in areas that do not have a significant detrimental effect on the natural or cultural systems of Muskoka;

- d) in areas that optimize the demand on public services such as fire, police and home care;
- e) in areas that have reasonable access to community facilities such as schools, and recreation centres;
- f) in areas accessible by year round roads; and
- g) in areas that do not consist of hazard lands.

D.35 Industrial, commercial and institutional uses that require urban services will be directed to Urban Centres. Some large-scale industrial, commercial and institutional uses may be permitted in the Rural designation subject to the following:

- a) the proposed use is resource based or cannot be accommodated in an Urban Centre or Community and does not require urban services;
- b) the proposed use is non-toxic, low effluent producing and can be serviced with individual water and sewage services and the use conforms to the other servicing policies of this plan;
- c) the proposed use does not negatively impact the natural and cultural heritage of the area; and
- d) the proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses.

D.36 Small-scale industrial, commercial and institutional uses will be regulated by the Area Municipality subject to the general servicing and environmental policies of this plan.

D.38 Tourist commercial uses will be permitted in appropriate locations in the Rural designation.

D.39 Certain forms of development in the Rural Designation immediately surrounding Urban Centres should be severely restricted. This will help create a sense of community for the Urban Centre, reduce potential land use conflicts between rural and urban type uses, and facilitate the orderly and proper extension of the urban community in the future

D.54 An Estate Residential Development will only be permitted if it retains the rural or waterfront character of the landscape and minimizes the disturbance to the natural environment.

D.55 The overall structure and form of an Estate Residential Development will be sympathetic to the site's natural features to ensure that the natural rather than the man-made character of the site is retained.

D.57 The following areas are considered unsuitable for Estate Residential Development: a) Areas within, or adjacent to one concession block of an existing Urban Centre or Community; b) Areas that are not accessible by public road or are remote from community facilities and services; c) Areas adjacent to or nearby an existing Estate Residential Development where the proposed development would change the character of the area or it would require upgrading existing services; d) Areas adjacent to or within close proximity to existing or future landfill sites, quarries, or aggregate extraction areas

D.58 Estate Residential Development will be serviced with private individual water and sewage

disposal systems.

- D.59 The maximum number of lots in an Estate Residential Development is 30 with a minimum of 33% of the property left in private or public open space
- D.60 Uses permitted in Estate Residential Development will be limited to single unit detached dwellings, accessory and open space uses.
- E.8 Pits and quarries are permitted uses throughout the Rural designation, but generally will not be permitted in the Waterfront, Urban Centre or Community designations. Where such uses now exist in these designations, they will cease to exist in the long run, and in the interim will be regulated to minimize any impact.
- E.9 In the Rural designation, aggregate resources, which are of primary and secondary significance, should be protected from incompatible uses to allow for future extraction of the resource. In these areas, the primary use of the land shall generally be industrial extractive or a land use that will not preclude or impact significantly upon future extraction. All other uses of the land shall be considered secondary and generally discouraged until such time as the resource is substantially depleted.
- E.30 Agricultural uses are permitted uses throughout the Rural designation but generally will not be permitted in the Waterfront or community type designations.
- E.33 Agricultural uses, in the Rural designation, will be encouraged to grow and expand as appropriate for the operation.
- E.34 All farm and non-farm uses will comply with the Provincial Minimum Distance Separation Formula One or Two as amended from time to time.
- E.35 New intensive animal operations, such as those using bulk liquid waste storage facilities, shall not be established adjacent to existing unrelated uses or residential areas
- F9 The general maintenance of ground or vegetative cover and the natural landscape of Muskoka shall be encouraged where possible in an effort to maintain the natural appearance and aesthetics of the District and provide a natural buffer particularly in the Rural and Waterfront designations

Muskoka Official Plan Policy Directions Report:

- #10 The MOP should include policies that indicate that permanent residential development on rural lands should be limited in relation to the amount of permanent residential development occurring within settlement areas.
- #18 The MOP should define agriculture in the Muskoka context and include policies that permit a wide range of agricultural uses in the Rural Area and direct the local municipalities to

identify the conditions under which these uses are to be permitted.

#19 The MOP should include policies that specifically permit the following additional uses in the rural areas (including Waterfront Areas) subject to area municipal policies that control their scale and location to ensure compatibility with surrounding character and the protection of sensitive environmental features:

- Bed and breakfast establishments (or rural inns) that accommodate up to 10 rooms;
- Home industries (which is a new permission in the PPS 2014), which could be developed within a single detached dwelling or an accessory building, subject to reasonable controls;
- Small-scale conference facilities and learning centres;
- Small-scale art galleries and exhibition space; and
- Small-scale restaurant and entertainment venues

First Draft – Muskoka Official Plan:

- A2 d) The small-town, waterfront and rural character of the area will be maintained and Muskoka's culture will be valued and preserved.
- B1 m) Protect and support the District's rural areas, so that they are sustained for future generations, preserve large tracts of undeveloped lands and serve as a legacy to all residents of the District and remain a benefit to the overall natural environment of the area;
- D8 a) It is the objective of this Plan to:
- i) Promote the diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities on lands that are not within an Urban Centre or Community Area through the provision of goods and services, including the creative economy, arts and culture, value-added products and the sustainable management or use of resources;
 - ii) Encourage the establishment of sustainable and diversified tourism opportunities;
 - iii) Promote the development of commercial, recreational and industrial uses that are appropriate for the rural and recreational areas of the District; and,
 - iv) Promote a diverse, innovative and economically strong agricultural, creative economy, arts and culture, and other industries that contribute to the local economy and associated activities by enhancing their capacity to contribute to the economy of the District.
- D8 b) To support the above goals, the following uses shall also be permitted subject to Area Municipal policies that control their scale and location:
- i) Boat construction, salvage and repair establishments;
 - ii) Home industries and home businesses that could be developed within a single detached dwelling or an accessory building;
 - iii) Small-scale conference facilities and learning centres;
 - iv) Small-scale art galleries and exhibition space; and
 - v) Small-scale restaurant and entertainment venues.

11.1 a) It is the objective of this Plan to:
Strengthen the settlement structure of Muskoka as a composite of urban, rural and waterfront areas by focusing growth to Urban Centres and supporting appropriate development in the Community Area, Rural Area and Waterfront Area designations, which maintains the character and integrity of each of these areas;

13.1 Objectives for Rural Areas

It is the objective of this Plan to:

- a) Recognize the Rural Area as generally comprised of a mix of resource-related activities, limited low density residential uses, and other small scale or space extensive developments;
- b) Preserve the character of the Rural Area and large tracts of undeveloped lands for environmental protection and aesthetic purposes;
- c) Limit development which could result in fragmentation of significant natural habitat, sterilization of resources, or strip development that detracts from the rural function and character;
- d) To encourage the establishment of sustainable and diversified tourism opportunities;
- e) To promote the development of commercial, recreational and industrial uses that are appropriate for the rural and recreational areas of the District and sustainable on private individual on-site water and sewage services;
- f) To promote a diverse, innovative and strong rural economy by enhancing the area's capacity to contribute to the economy of the District through the provision of goods and services, including value-added products, the sustainable management or use of resources, and tourism;
- g) To provide for limited residential uses on lands that are not constrained or protected for their resource or natural heritage value in relation to the amount of permanent residential growth to occur within settlement areas; and,
- h) To ensure that servicing and groundwater issues are considered through the application review process.

13.2 Location

All lands designated Rural Area as shown on Schedule ____ to this Plan apply to lands that are not otherwise designated as Urban Centre, Community Area, or Waterfront Area.

13.3 a) Permitted Uses

- i) Agricultural uses;
- ii) Home industries and home businesses;
- iii) Limited small-scale or space extensive commercial, industrial, and institutional, particularly those related to arts, culture, and tourism
- iv) Resource-based recreational uses including recreational dwellings;
- v) Limited residential development

13.3 b) Area Municipal Official Plans are required to determine which of the above uses are to be

permitted and under which conditions as appropriate and may provide additional detail regarding permitted uses, provided they meet the objectives of this Plan.

- 13.3 c) All new development shall be appropriate to the infrastructure which is planned or available, to avoid the need for unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion of this infrastructure.
- 13.3 d) Development and land use patterns that would prevent the efficient expansion of Urban Centres and Community Areas shall be avoided, particularly within one concession block of the settlement area boundaries.
- 13.4 a) The District does not contain prime agricultural areas. However, this Plan supports the use of land for agricultural purposes as a goal to provide for locally grown food and the emerging culinary/tourism industries.
- 13.4 b) Given the above goal, the broadest range of agricultural uses are permitted and includes the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; the raising of livestock; the raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities.
- 13.4 c) Permitted agricultural commercial, agricultural supportive and agri-tourism uses will be defined in the Area Municipal Official Plans and/or zoning by-laws.
- 13.4 d) Appropriate land use compatibility and minimum separation formulae for agricultural uses shall be addressed by the Area Municipal Official Plans.
- 13.5.1 a) Lot Creation (Growth Management Considerations)

Limited lot creation and small scale development in the Rural Area designation shall be governed by the policies of the Area Municipal Official Plan in addition to the relevant policies of this Plan recognizing that Urban Centres and Community Areas shall be the focus of growth.
- 13.5.1 b) In order to implement these policies, Area Municipal Official Plans shall contain policies that identify what proportion of the projected permanent un-serviced residential development is to occur within the Rural Area in comparison to the amount of development to be directed to Community Areas. The decision made by the Area Municipalities in this regard shall take into account the limited amount of permanent residential development that is to occur outside of Urban Centres as per Section B5 of this Plan.
- 13.5.1 c) Potential strategies with respect to limiting rural development in Area Municipal Official Plans include establishing allocation targets, caps on the amount of rural lot creation by year, minimum required lot size and frontages to ensure low density development, and/or limiting the number of consents permitted from an existing lot.

- 13.5.1 d) Estate residential development in the Rural Area designation is not permitted.
- 13.5.1 e) The creation of strip development is discouraged by this Plan.
- 13.5.2 a) Each Area Municipality shall establish minimum and maximum lot sizes for new lots in the Rural Area designation. In this regard, the minimum lot size should be no smaller than 0.4 hectares and encouraged to be at least 1.0 hectare. Larger lots shall be required in order to protect environmental and/or topographic features.
- 13.5.2 b) In all cases, rural lots should be of sufficient size to accommodate the use proposed, related structural requirements and private individual on-site services. In addition, rural lots should be sized and designed where appropriate to facilitate resource management practices or environmental, man-made or other influences, including soil, terrain and water quality constraints, among others.
- 13.5.2 c) New lots shall generally front on a publicly owned and year-round maintained road. Consideration may be given to lot creation on private condominium roads that are maintained on a year round basis and which gain access from a publicly owned and year-round maintained road.

Town Strategic Documents:

Strategic Plan 2017 Vision	A vibrant, inclusive, healthy community which inspires innovation and growth, celebrates the arts, culture, and heritage, promotes recreation while developing a resilient economy founded on social caring and environmental stewardship.
Unity Plan Vision	Huntsville is a vibrant, welcoming and healthy place in which to live and play as we foster innovation, celebrate arts, culture heritage, and recreation, develop a strong and resilient economy and follow an ethic of social caring and environmental stewardship.
Unity Plan Goal 5	Land Use Planning: Huntsville will become a model of sustainable community development, by incorporating the principles of smart growth, sustainable design and green buildings into all land use planning decisions. This will include a commitment to the protection and maintenance of Huntsville’s rural small town character and vibrant downtown, both of which are valued by the community.

Huntsville Official Plan:

- 2.5.4 c) Commercial and industrial growth, geared primarily to the resource sector of the economy, will continue to be located in the Rural area where site specific characteristics are justified and where the uses are or can be made compatible with existing development in the area;
- 9.1.1 The Rural Area includes those lands located outside any other land use designation

identified in this Plan.

- 9.1.2 The Rural Area provides a location for a variety of resource related uses, conservation activities, environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife habitat areas, and residential, commercial and industrial uses at a scale sustainable on private services.
- 9.2.3 Forestry, agriculture and mineral aggregate lands and uses in the Rural Area should be promoted, protected, enhanced and developed in appropriate locations. Incompatible uses shall be prevented from encroaching or intruding upon lands exhibiting demonstrated potential for such uses. Non-resource related development is encouraged to locate in areas which would not interfere with existing or potential resource development areas or environmentally sensitive areas.
- 9.2.4 The intent of these Rural policies is to balance resource related development with man-made forms of development while maintaining the character of the Rural Area and adjoining designations (e.g. Waterfront, Urban).
- 9.2.5 Development in the Rural Area is generally characterized by extremely low density. Lots are generally large with development occupying a very small portion of the lot. Small lot frontages, areas, setbacks and large/extensive coverage are not typical in the Rural Area and are not encouraged. Development is generally serviced by private individual water and sewage systems and is located in close proximity to existing transportation routes.
- 9.3.1 The natural environment is intended to be the dominant landscape feature in the Rural Area.
- 9.4.1 Development will have frontage on and access from a year round maintained public road which is in a condition appropriate for the use proposed, and can accommodate the additional traffic.
- 9.6.1 The following uses are permitted in the Rural Area:
- resource-based development such as forestry, agriculture and mineral aggregate extraction;
 - low density rural residential development;
 - industrial, commercial and institutional uses normally associated with the rural area including home based commercial and industrial uses provided such uses are secondary to a permitted residential use; and,
 - wildlife management, open space and accessory uses.
- 9.6.2 In appropriate locations, a private hunt camp/private retreat on privately owned lands may be permitted, with such uses subject to specific standards established through the Zoning By-law. Such uses shall not be used as residential or commercial accommodation.
- 9.6.3 The establishment of new mobile home parks and individual mobile homes are not

permitted in the Rural Area.

- 9.6.4 Resource-based development will be encouraged in the Rural Area where:
- they are on a parcel of land which is of sufficient size to accommodate the use;
 - they will be compatible with existing uses in the area;
 - environmentally sensitive areas and heritage areas are protected.
- 9.7.2 In general, lot sizes in the Rural Area will be greater than those in the other designations. A variety of lot sizes will be required and encouraged to address rural character, the principles for rural growth and development, and the rural design principles. These matters will be addressed prior to the creation of a lot in the Rural Area.
- 9.8.1 Rural residential development that requires the construction of new public roads is not permitted except by amendment to this Plan, with the exception of minor extensions of an existing public road, generally less than 100 metres (330 feet) in length.
- 9.8.2 Rural residential development is comprised of single detached dwellings located on large lots which front on year round maintained public roads.
- 9.8.3 Rural residential development is directed to areas where residential development exists or would be compatible with adjacent uses, and should not be located in remote, undeveloped areas, or in close proximity to:
- primary or secondary aggregate deposits;
 - aggregate operations or other resource related industries or activities;
 - incompatible rural industries or businesses;
 - farm operations where a land use conflict would result;
 - incompatible public uses or facilities;
 - hazards or development constraints; or
 - significant heritage, wetlands, natural or habitat areas.
- 9.8.4 The minimum requirements for a new rural residential lot will be:
- 4 hectares (10 acres) in lot area and 150 metres (500 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Arterial road;
 - 2 hectares (5 acres) in lot area and 135 metres (440 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Collector road; and,
 - 1 hectare (2.5 acres) in lot area and 60 metres (200 feet) in frontage on a Local road.
- 9.8.5 Existing draft approved plans of subdivision may be final approved and registered, notwithstanding any provisions of this Plan to the contrary. Revisions to existing plans may be considered if the intent of the Official Plan is maintained.
- 9.9.1 Commercial development in the Rural Area is defined as low density development related to the buying or selling of commodities or the supplying of services. Permitted Commercial uses include resource related commercial uses, tourist commercial uses, farm machinery

and recreational vehicle sales or service establishments, building supply establishments and other similar uses. Commercial development may include residential, home based commercial, or industrial uses, provided such uses are secondary to or in conjunction with a permitted commercial use.

- 9.9.2 Industrial development in the Rural Area is defined as low density development and related uses which are normally associated with the rural area or that require a location in the rural area due to specific requirements. Industrial development may include residential, home based industrial, or commercial uses, provided such uses are secondary to or in conjunction with a permitted industrial use.
- 9.9.3 Commercial uses will generally be of a type and at a scale which serve the needs of the surrounding community or commercial service area, or highway commercial uses located at Highway 11 interchanges.
- 9.9.4 In general, commercial or industrial uses shall not be permitted on local roads, except where access from a local road is required based on the nature of the use, the impact of the use on surrounding non-commercial or non-industrial uses is minimized, or access to arterial or collector roads is not practical or desirable.
- 9.9.5 The minimum requirements for a new commercial or industrial lot will be:
- 4 hectares (10 acres) in lot area and 150 metres (500 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on an Arterial road; and
 - 2 hectares (5 acres) in lot area and 135 metres (440 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Collector or local road.
- 9.9.6 Commercial and industrial uses which consume or generate large quantities of water or waste, or otherwise contribute noxious effluent, emissions, noise or vibrations to the natural environment in any quantity shall not be permitted unless mitigating measures are provided to the satisfaction of the authorized approval authorities.
- 9.9.7 Large-scale non-resource related industrial or commercial uses are not permitted in the Rural Area. Such uses are considered large scale where the form of development proposed constitutes a plaza or like form; piped municipal services are required or desired; or the development requires a new or significantly modified transportation network to provide adequate access.
- 9.10.2 Mineral Aggregate Resources shall be permitted in areas possessing primary or secondary aggregate significance and where land use compatibility and the environmental policies of this Plan have been addressed.
- 11.1.3 Hunt camps, which are used only as a temporary base for hunting or trapping activities, may be permitted within the Rural designation. A hunt camp shall not be required to front on a public road and may be serviced by any type of sewage disposal system approvable under the Building Code Act. The Town will encourage all levels of government to have regard to

the policies of the Plan wherever possible, and will recognize existing hunt camps on former lots that do not meet the size requirements of these policies.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- The rural area of the Town of Huntsville is an important asset, providing scenic natural areas and accommodating important rural employment activities, such as resource-based uses and agricultural activities.
- Historic growth in the rural area has been high. According to the Muskoka Growth Management Strategy (2013, Phase II), about 65% of new permanent dwelling units in Huntsville were located in the rural area between 2001 and 2011.
- Provincial policy directs growth to the settlement areas (including the Urban Areas and the Community Areas) while permitting limited growth in Rural Areas. In this regard, the Muskoka Growth Management Strategy (2013, Phase II) recommends that municipalities develop stronger policies to encourage development in the designated Urban Settlement Areas and more aggressively restrict rural development activity (including rural lot creation).
- The approach to growth in the Rural area will need to be balanced given the direction of the PPS and the Draft Muskoka Official Plan, which is to restrict development in this area.
- The Rural area is suitable to accommodate a variety of economic activities, including resource-based industries, agricultural uses and appropriate commercial and employment areas. The Draft Muskoka Official Plan emphasizes that resource-based uses are vital to the Rural area in Huntsville and, as such, policies will need to be developed that provide appropriate separation between conflicting uses as well as for the establishment of new resource-based uses.
- The Town's Official Plan will also need to determine the range of uses to be permitted and to what extent they are permitted in the Rural Area given the restrictions around Natural Heritage Features, bolstering the existing local agriculture and other resources-based uses, and preserving large tracts of land.
- The Urban Settlement Policy Background Paper identifies the need to redesignate Future Urban lands to specific designations (commercial, industrial, etc.)

SUMMARY:

- The rural areas are appropriate for certain economic activities, including a wide range of resource-based industries, agricultural uses, as well as and other limited industrial and commercial uses which are not appropriately located within the settlement areas.
- The PPS and the Draft Muskoka OP intend for permanent housing and growth to be principally directed to the settlement areas. Further, as noted in the Natural Heritage System Policy Background Paper, the first step in identifying a Natural Heritage System in a forested landscape is to direct the majority of growth to

urban centres and communities in order to help maintain more undisturbed areas. There is a need for a policy framework and strategy to support these growth management and natural heritage system principles and more aggressively limit permanent housing growth in the rural areas. In this regard, to ensure that the rural hinterland continues to provide habitat, low density development on larger lot sizes can avoid habitat fragmentation.

- The permitted lot sizes and frontages should be reviewed, with consideration being given to raising the minimum lot area and frontage provisions.
- The draft MOP does not permit estate residential development within the rural areas of the District, and is more restrictive on strip development and lot creation. In this regard, the policies which do not permit estate residential development by way of plan of subdivision should continue to be included. This policy should be applied, irrespective of the lot creation method.
- To protect resource based industries, policies should address situations when sensitive land uses are proposed on primary or secondary aggregate deposits.
- The aggregate policies should be updated to reflect the application of the Aggregate Resources Act in Muskoka.
- The existing commercial/industrial policy set needs to be expanded and more details provided, policies conflict in regards to permitted uses.
- With the identification of the need to re-designate Future Urban lands to specific designations (commercial, industrial etc.) in the Urban Settlement Policy Background Paper, the Rural Special Policy Area (Industrial) designation should be removed from the official plan.

Additional Considerations:

Upon review by the Official Plan Working Group and Planning Committee, further exploration of the considerations of permitting rural subdivisions should be undertaken, along with specific criteria/policies as to when and how such development may be permitted.