



REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW

Update on Regional Plan – Decision from Minister

August 19, 2025

HALIFAX

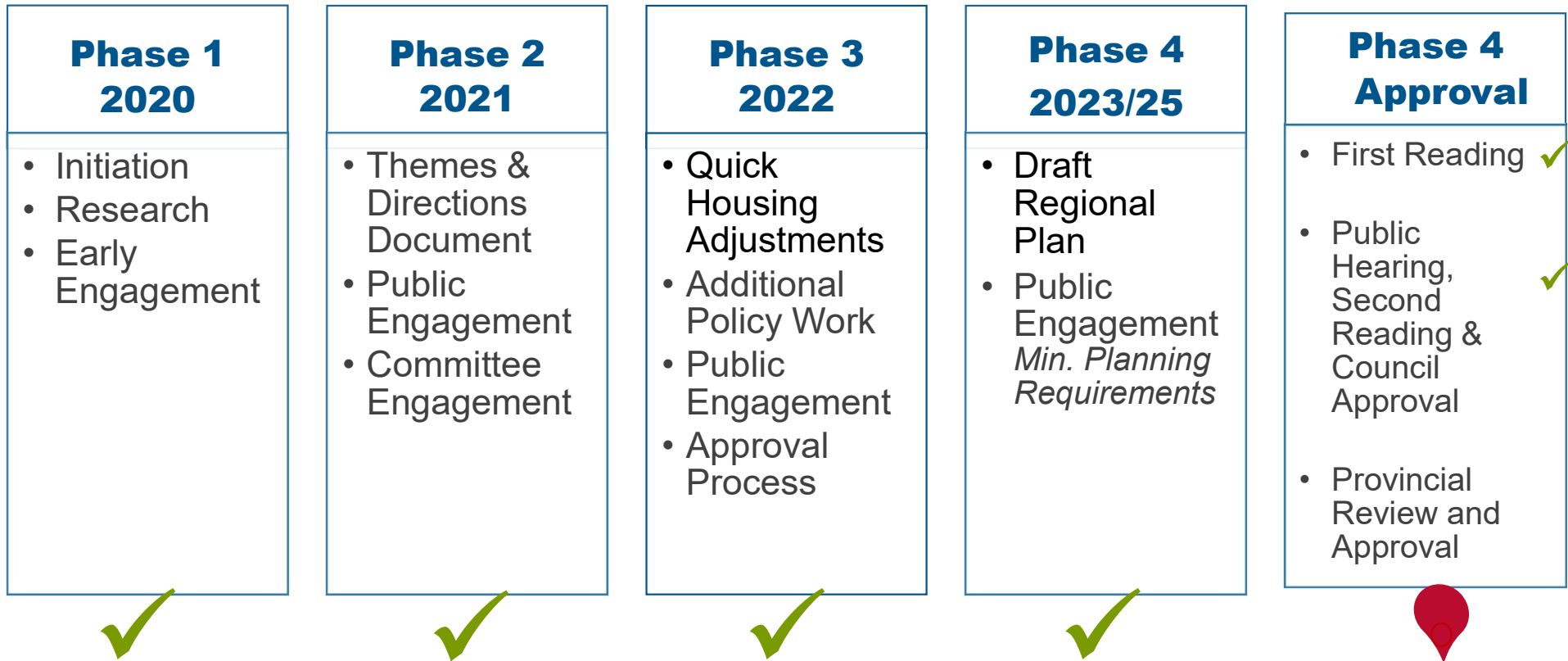
Purpose Today

Provide an update on the status of the Regional Plan:

1. Provincial review and decision-making process
2. Effect of Decision from Minister
3. Next Steps



Regional Plan Review Phasing



Approval Path



Date	Event
August 21, 2024	Province announces Minimum Planning Requirements (MPRs) (Deadline to implement June 30, 2025)
October 1, 2024	Council initiation to integrate MPRs into planning framework via Regional Plan package
Jan. 24 – Feb. 24, 2025	Public engagement on the MPRs
June 3, 2025	Regional Council Special Meeting – Council discusses Regional Plan package. First Reading is deferred to June 10.
June 10, 2025	Regional Council – Council gives First Reading to Regional Plan package.
June 19, 2025	Regional Council Special Meeting - Public Hearing, Second Reading, and Approval of package from Council
June 28, 2025	Printed copies of Regional Plan package submitted to Province. (15 days for Planning Director to respond as per s.223 of Halifax Charter)
July 10, 2025	Acting Provincial Planning Director issues letter that there are concerns regarding the “ <i>policies being inconsistent with a provincial interest...</i> ” and therefore are subject to the approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. (30 additional days for Minister to respond as per s. 223 of Halifax Charter)
August 8, 2025	Mayor and Council receive letter of refusal to accept the Regional Plan package from Minister Lohr.

Proposed 2025 Regional Plan

- The Minimum Planning Requirements were addressed through the overall Regional Plan review because the 2014 Regional Plan is out of date.
 - It does not anticipate a high rate of population growth (just 1% year-over-year) and does not have a strong focus on growth or housing.
 - The horizon year is 2031.
- The Proposed 2025 Regional Plan has a strong focus on growth-readiness and housing supply.
 - It is a plan for a population of 1 million people.
 - It provides strategic direction for growth and housing over the next 30 years, with a focus on housing and activating supply across the region.
 - Three new chapters are dedicated to growth and housing.



Approval Path: Halifax Charter

Section 223 – “Requirement for review by Director”

(6) Within thirty days after the date of a written notice that planning documents are subject to the approval of the Minister, the Minister shall

(a) approve all or part of the documents;

(b) approve the documents with amendments; or

(c) refuse to approve the documents,

and return to the Clerk two copies of the planning documents as approved, amended or refused with written reasons for the decision.



Letter from Minister

- On Friday, Aug. 8, HRM received a letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs in response to the Regional Plan submission, refusing the approval of the documents.
- The letter stated, in part:

While we were encouraged to see some proposals that would work towards improving the housing situation in the region, left as-is, they didn't go far enough. Beyond that, the document included many proposals that appear intentionally designed to impede housing. For example:

- *Clauses EN-34, 40, 47: Changing [watercourse, wetland and coastal] setbacks from 20 to 30 metres.*
- *Clause EN-70: Requiring EV-ready parking spaces.*
- *Minimal changes in zoning to allow more people to build as-of-right.*



Letter from Minister

- Refusal of the Regional Plan was not anticipated.
- Staff had been actively working with Provincial staff leading up to and following submission for approval to address these areas of concern.
- Staff understand the development industry had concerns that they had not been adequately engaged and did not have sufficient time for review.



Engagement with Development Industry

- Significant public engagement throughout 4 phases of the Regional Plan Review since 2020.
- 8 focused meetings were held with development industry groups (Development Liaison Group and Urban Development Institute) between 2021 and 2025 as part of the review process, in addition to many meetings, phone calls, and emails with individual developers, property owners and consultants.
- Detailed advanced public review of the amendment package is normal practice but was not possible due to the need to meet the June 30, 2025 Provincial deadline to meet the Minimum Planning Requirements.



Effect of Decision from Minister

- The current 2014 Regional Plan, last amended in May 2025, remains in effect, as the new proposed amendments have not been approved by the province.
- The level of impact to **internal programs** is still being determined and is expected to result in delays.
 - Suburban Plan,
 - Phase 5 of Regional Plan,
 - Rural Plan,
 - Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priority Plan,
 - Priority Plans (IMP, HalifACT, HGNP, CHPP, Economic Prosperity)



Effect of Decision from Minister

As a result of the Plan not being approved, the Regional Plan does not comply with the Provincial **Minimum Planning Requirements** (MPRs).

Section 3 of the MPRs require the Municipality to review its municipal planning strategy and land use by-law every 10 years.

Section 4 of the MPRs state that our planning framework must do all of the following to address the issue of **housing supply**:

- Recognize housing is an urgent priority;
- Give priority to increasing the supply of safe, sustainable and affordable housing;
- Permit residential uses in all zones, except areas zoned for industrial, military, park, transportation reserve and utility uses, and zones intended to protect the environment, water supply, floodplains or another similar interest;



Minimum Planning Regulations (cont'd)

- Information sharing to support housing development;
- Permit manufactured housing in all residential zones;
- Relaxing certain development standards on the following:
 - Maximum building heights that impact density potential based on construction method;
 - Remove on-site parking requirement (residential uses, within urban service area);
 - Permit temporary housing in non-permanent structures for a period of reasonable time;
- For developments that begin construction before April 1, 2027:
 - Set the density for Conservation Design developments using gross hectare as opposed to net hectare;
 - Remove the unit mix requirements for residential buildings;
 - Require no more than 20% ground floor commercial space in multi-unit residential buildings.

Section 14 of the MPRS establishes requirements for Wind Turbines



Effect of Decision from Minister

Area	Amendment(s) not carried through <i>(in addition to Minimum Planning Requirements)</i>
Rural Housing and Tourism: providing flexibility for residential uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive Reuse for internal residential conversions • Short Term Rentals in Rural Areas • Conservation Design Development – enabling backyard and secondary suites
Environmental: better protection for critical environmental features and transitioning to a low carbon future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watercourse, Wetlands, and Coastal buffers – increasing 20m to 30m • Commercial Solar Energy Facilities – removed barriers for large scale solar projects. • Electric Vehicles – added requirements to enable install of charging stations
Industrial: protection for long term industrial land supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Land Policy Changes - support requirements of HRM Auditor General
Food Systems: removing barriers and creating opportunities for food production and sale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Gardens • Rooftop Landscaping • Indoor Farming
Implementation: Standardizing processes, providing clarity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary Approvals – standardized set of criteria for development agreements and rezonings • Legacy Subdivision Files – sunset clause for tentative or final legacy subdivisions. • Land Titles Clarification - Support for subdivision in provincial land titles clarification areas • Parkland Dedication – provided consistency

Effect of Decision from Minister

Area	Policy/ Amendment(s) not carried through (<i>in addition to Minimum Planning Requirements</i>)
Strategic Growth and Urban Reserves: direction to study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to undertake the Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Plan • Policy to study Urban Reserves for future development
Community Planning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established the Regional Centre, Suburban and Rural Areas as sub-geographies • Policy to establish the Suburban and Rural Planning programs
Suburban Interim Development Agreement Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling development for qualifying properties within 800m walkshed of planned Rapid Transit corridors to proceed via Development Agreement process
Site Specific: policy and zoning changes, changes to mapping including USB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 projects received amendments by Council or are active planning applications that are impacted representing 2000 units • 24 projects received as planning inquiries
Housekeeping: text edits, clarity on regs., addressing errors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed various items to provide clarity and enable projects to move forward • Improvements to the Housing Accelerator Fund package

Next Steps

- The Municipality remains legislatively obligated to meet the Minimum Planning Requirements.
- Over the coming weeks, the Municipality will work with the Province to determine an approach and timeline for next steps.
- This will inform how best to address the project & regulatory impacts.
- Further direction will be provided to Council on the recommended path forward.



»» **THANK YOU**

HALIFAX