

Statements that you may hear in your discussions on the draft Official Plan:

1. Environmental Assessments (or Environmental Impact Studies) – which cost \$10,000 to \$50,000 -- are already in the current Official Plan?

Yes, environmental Assessments are required in the current Official Plan. However, what is not said is that in the draft Official Plan **even more areas are designated as protected areas** and each will require expensive and frustrating Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) for development within a 400' (120 m) protection zone surrounding it. Also, it was not said that the distance of 400' for the protection zone is **not required for anything in our current OP other than for Provincially Significant Wetlands (Section 8.1.12)**. The list of protected areas requiring 400' protection zones has expanded in this draft OP from only Provincially Significant Wetlands) to the following areas (blue text added for clarification):

1. Group A Features
 1. provincially significant wetlands •
 2. provincially significant coastal wetlands •
 3. locally significant wetlands •
 4. locally significant coastal wetlands •
 5. habitat of threatened and endangered species •
 6. fish habitat
2. Group B Features
 1. lands adjacent to Group A features and adjacent to certain Group B features as noted in these policies (possible areas beyond these Group A & B features as well)
 2. significant woodlands (Section 8.4.2 - which could be only 1.25 acres in size if the woodlands has educational/cultural value, etc.)
 3. significant valleylands (Section 8.2.5 - 10% slope) •
 4. significant wildlife habitat (where wild animals could live but are not necessarily living currently)
 5. provincially significant areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs) •
 6. regionally significant ANSIs"

2. Environmental Impact Studies are only required for development approvals (ie. Severances, minor variances, consents, etc.)?

The Environmental Impact Studies are not limited to development approvals, according to the text, they will also be required for **site alteration** (defined as, "any physical change or alteration of the site, such as placing or dumping of fill, removing soil, or the alteration of the grade that changes the site and natural vegetative characteristics") which is typically required in any building process. Section 8.2.2., states as follows:

1. "Section 8.2.2 - a) For Group A features, **development and site alteration** will not be permitted within significant wetlands or significant coastal wetlands except in

accordance with regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act. Development in fish habitat or the habitat of threatened or endangered species will not be permitted except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements. **b) Development proposals and site alteration within the Group B features described in the introduction to Chapter 8, including adjacent lands (400' surrounding), will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated through an Environmental Impact Study that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions."**

2. The Cohen Highley legal letter asks for it to be made clear that no building or site alteration in adjacent lands (400' buffer zone) will require an Environmental Impact Study.

3. Municipal and County government will never force landowners to naturalize their property?

Some state that the County will never force landowners to naturalize their property, however, In the draft OP, the County directs municipalities **to re-establish naturalized connections**. For example, in Section 8.1.7:

0. "Section 8.1.7 – Local municipalities **will** determine the most appropriate approach to **re-establishing connections or Linkage features** ("stepping stones") within the corridors and between the natural heritage features within the corridors shown on Map 2, having regard for policy 8.1.12. This may involve, but is not limited to, the **use of buffer strips, lot line tree plantings**, conservation easements, gravel pit rehabilitation plans, **Planning Act tools**, creation of habitat/natural areas under an Endangered Species Act (2007) authorization, or **land dedications through the development approvals process."**

4. There have only been thirteen Environmental Impact Studies in the past thirteen years?

You may hear that there have been only thirteen Environmental Impact Studies required in the past thirteen years. As the former Deputy Mayor of Lambton Shores, I am personally aware of **eight environmental impact studies** (in various forms) during my 4-year term in office in Lambton Shores (2010 to 2014) ... and there are **10 other jurisdictions** in Lambton County. I am also aware that the threat of paying for an EIS has **discouraged people/businesses with plans** which would not be evident in statistics that staff provide. Also, the past has no bearing on what will happen after a **new, much stricter document with broader impact** is passed.

5. The 400' buffer zone around protected areas (that have expanded in this draft OP) is required by the Natural Heritage Reference Manual?

At the January 23rd OP Committee meeting, staff **admitted** that the Natural Heritage Reference Manual numbers (the source of 400' protection/buffer zones) are **recommendations only** and

so they are flexible. In order to protect our economy, we will need to define “adjacent” (that is, the protected zone around a natural feature which the draft OP wants to make 400’) as “those lands contiguous to a specific natural heritage feature and where it is likely that development would have a negative impact on the feature or area.”

Please also note that the OP has the clear objective of **expanding wetlands and woodlands**. Please note the following changes in the goal descriptions for wetlands and woodlands:

Core Wetlands Goal

1. Existing Plan: Section 8.1.2 - Wetlands Goal: To protect all wetlands of Provincial significance and discourage development in wetlands which are locally significant.
2. New Plan: Section 8.3 - Wetlands Goal: To maintain, restore, and improve existing wetlands and to **increase the overall wetland coverage** in the County.

Core Woodlands Goal

1. Existing Plan: Section 8.1.3 - Woodlands Goal: To protect the remaining forest cover of the County and encourage rehabilitation through management and stewardship initiatives in conjunction with the Natural Heritage Corridor System.
2. New Plan: Section 8.4 – Woodlands Goal: To protect the remaining forest cover of the County and encourage its rehabilitation and **expansion** through management and stewardship initiatives in conjunction with the Natural Heritage System, with specific focus on **strengthening Primary and Secondary Corridors and linkages**.

It is becoming more evident to me and others that it will extremely difficult to locate and remove all of the restrictive changes in this draft Official Plan. It would be better to discard this draft OP and **return to our existing OP** rather than risk the damage to our local economy.