

April 9, 2025

Rick Tipping



Thornbury, Ontario

Re: 2025 Official Plan Review - **For Council's Consideration**

Attn: Mayor Matrosovs, Deputy Bordignon and Respected Councillors

Like me, I suspect many residents do not understand the significance of this document or how it has the potential to facilitate irreversible changes to our town. Many residents find the complexity of these many issues quite challenging and possibly intimidating. For these reasons, residents place their trust in both Council and staff to ensure the community's shared values are embodied and protected. To this point, I reference the following policies, legislation and question as to whether the OP adheres or reflects these principles.

Current development pressures, tourism and possibly forces yet to be determined are threatening to tear our town apart. Throw into this mix, economic turmoil with tariffs, possible recession and radically changing weather, Council must exercise extreme caution and deliberation. Efforts and decisions must be focused on how the residents want to move forward. As elected officials your first and only responsibility is to ensure the protection of resident's.

The Official Plan is a vital part in defining our future. We must choose wisely in developing the standards and regulations based on established community values. Council must connect to the silent majority, the residents. We are the only ones deeply committed to protecting our community's values. To those rural residents, who think this is simply an urban issue, think again, development respects no boundaries.

From the Town's **2020 Strategic Plan**¹, "*Council provided direction to revise the Town's Mission, Vision and Values to be in alignment with the **three Pillars of Sustainability – Environment, Social and the Economy***". This prioritization makes the most sense. Without a healthy environment and a vibrant community, there is no sustainable economy. It also acknowledges the community's long-standing resentment towards development and tourism rooted in years of interference and manipulation of Town Councils to promote their self-interests. I.e. The Resort Condominium Tax Class.

O.P.'s Matrix confirms the basis of this resentment. It is obvious when we realize there is fundamental differences and opposing values between our community and the development/tourism sectors. Residents are committed to the preservation of the environment, our community's character and our liveability. The development and tourism sectors reject the three

¹ <https://www.thebluemountains.ca/media/47>

Pillars and are committed solely to exploiting the natural environment for profit. They dismiss the importance of environmental protection unless it is legislated and our community's values. It's alarming when much of the O.P. appears to support development and tourism ignoring the community's values. Land is not infinite. Development is not infinite. Tourism is not infinite.

The promotion of our area as a four season playground has attracted primarily affluent buyers seeking recreational properties, retirees and investors but it is not producing our much needed affordable housing. Most residents associate current development with clear cutting, natural habitat destruction, shrinking wet-lands, drainage or flooding problems and increased financial demands to expand infrastructure. What residents don't see are the benefits, new parks, inter-connected trails, school sites, libraries, rec. centres, shopping areas and new start-up businesses.

The 2024 tax bylaw indicates residential property owners represent approximately 94% of total revenues with commercial/industrial at a meagre 6%. This percentage is substantially lower than required for sustainability. We must also add into the equation the fact that tourism is extremely vulnerable to economic down-turns and the uncertainties with climate change. Now consider the cost incurred by the Town for beach, roads, parks and trails maintenance resulting from the tourism. Unlike, other more desirable industries, for example an ice cream producer, the growth of tourism demands an ever expanding foot-print negatively affecting our environment and our liveability. The numbers don't lie. If tourism continues to expand, it will prove itself to be more of a financial burden. Town's support of tourism is extremely problematic and it will not provide the necessary economic prosperity and stability needed to ensure sustainability. It is economically irresponsible for the Town to promote further expansion of this sector.

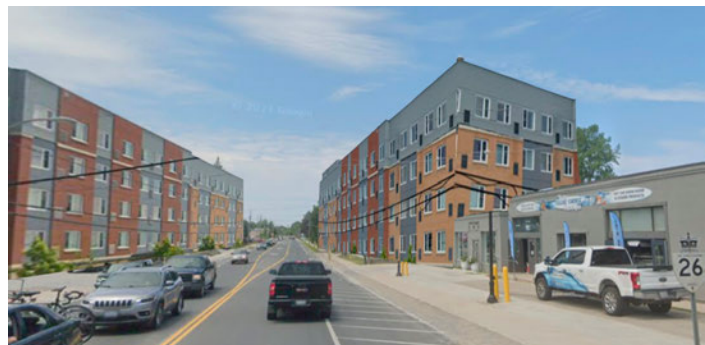
Only through effective management of these forces will sustainability be achieved. In closing, I make the following suggestions for Council's consideration.

1. The O.P. must establish controls that effectively manage development and tourism to ensure community values are respected and prioritize to align with the *there Pillars*.
2. Considering we are the second fastest growing municipality and we have surpassed housing objectives, a pause is justified. It's time to reassess the Town's priorities and how we approach both development and tourism.
3. A comprehensive town planning initiative that clearly defines and protects our community's vision for the future must be adopted. Planning will identify specific land use areas, densities and height limits, school sites, parks, trails, rec. centre, libraries, commercial/industrial.
4. The total costs for the C of C and 171 King have yet to be revealed and it appears fully disclosure may prove extremely embarrassing for those directly involved. It now seems prudent to fully examine our current accounting and cost tracking practices to ensure timely and accurate reporting and accountability.
5. Adopt procedures and engineering standards to effectively manage infrastructure projects to ensure timely and financially responsible delivery from conception to fruition.

6. We are not Whistler nor do we choose to be. The Town's demographics are dramatically changing. New residents are attracted for a variety of reasons but I question how many will support tourism when they begin to experience how their liveability is being impacted..
7. It is fiscally and socially irresponsible for this Council or any Council to support or encourage the growth of tourism. The business model favours the owner's only with little or no financial benefits to the Town.
8. The Resort Condos and STA's must be taxed as commercial. This is no longer a political decision but a financial one.
9. Economic development remains illusive. Other municipalities have had significant success with attracting new business by providing pre-zoned, pre-serviced, shovel ready land. Build it and they will come.

Unfortunately, it appears Council has prioritized uncontrolled development and mindless tourism expansion to the detriment of our environment and the community. This exemplifies the short-term political thinking and acknowledges the private sector's influences that threatens the natural environment and our community.

Lastly "A picture is worth a thousand words" and "You never know what you have until you have lost it, and once lost you can never get it back." Is this what we really want for our Town? I'm sure the city folk will drive two hours to experience the same congestions as they have at home.



Respectfully

Rick Tipping

Cc: Clerk Corrina Giles and members of council