

Editorial ? Don't hope for the earth from plan reviews

It was heartening to see so many people out last Thursday for the public session on the reviews of the various Provincial land use plans.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Escarpment Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan are all up for review, and we think there can be general agreement that there is some room for improvement.

The need to harmonize these plans so they don't conflict with each other was heard a lot at last week's session, as was the call for simplification and clarification of the language they contained.

As for where the plans go beyond that will remain to be seen.

There were some 400 people offering their input last week. Divided into tables for smaller discussion, we're sure there were many other points of input that were not announced at the general open portion that concluded the evening.

With so many points there to be made, we can't help but wonder how many of them got lost in the shuffle.

It shouldn't be surprising that some adjustment to these plans should be in order. For one thing, both the Greenbelt and Moraine plans are relatively new, meaning it's very realistic to assume there were some mistakes and oversights that occurred when they were established and put in place. It was impossible to please everyone from the start, and not everyone is going to be happy with the result of these reviews.

When the Moraine plan was unveiled more than 10 years ago, there were some who lobbied strongly for its creation, complaining it didn't go far enough. There were also complaints that the plan was flawed because it would be subject to review after a certain number of years, meaning it wasn't permanent.

What has to be appreciated is the number of varying and conflicting interests that come into play with these reviews. There are many who are mainly concerned with the well-being of the environment, but even among those people, there can be conflict. And all of that has to be balanced with the realization that several million people live in the area covered by these plans, and they all have to be housed, fed, employed, entertained and have to have the ability to move around.

While some will like the results of these reviews, others will be displeased.

And all of this has to be judged according to the conditions that exist today, not the thinking that was in place when these plans were formed, and not necessarily what the case will be years from now. None of us have the gift of prophecy (although some of us like to think we do), and if the results of these reviews are wanting, we at least have the comfort of knowing there will be other reviews in the years to come.