

FACT SHEET

MOVING TOWARDS PLAN REVIEW COST RECOVERY AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

TRCA has conducted an assessment of the current level of service for plan review within its jurisdiction and is establishing a new funding model for their planning and permitting review responsibilities, based on full cost recovery of the private development review process through fee-for-service charges .

Background

TRCA protects people, the watersheds we live in, and property within our regulated areas by taking an active role in the planning and development of our region. Throughout the City of Toronto, and parts of the Region of Peel, York and Durham, the TRCA reviews development proposals that affect our watersheds and regulates development in valley and stream corridors, wetlands, and along the Lake Ontario shoreline. The fundamental role for TRCA focuses on water management and natural hazard prevention, inclusive of flood and erosion control. To manage water, Conservation Authorities need to be engaged in land use planning, storm water management, infrastructure and land management activities.

TRCA undertakes responsibilities, under provincial legislation, as a public commenting agency and a regulatory authority, as well as, represents the provincial interest for Natural Hazards. Our research and outreach programs support our responsibilities as a resource management agency and as a technical service provider to the industry and our municipal partners.

Trends in Service Delivery Demand

The changing nature of development in the GTA adds new challenges to the plan review process for TRCA, our municipal partners, and the building industry. With a new sustainable growth focus on intensification and redevelopment, service trends for complex development applications require technical review and negotiations for an expanded professional team inclusive of planning (project management), water resources, ecology (terrestrial, aquatic), geotechnical, hydrogeology, geo-fluvial, and, with permits, compliance monitoring.

For several years, TRCA has had a general service delivery model of maximum 30 day turnaround for standard applications, and up to 45 days for complex modeling or hydrogeology reviews. Resubmissions are targeted for 15 to 30 day response, depending on complexity. To maintain this service delivery response, fee coverage needs to support the full scope of the technical review and project management. A change in our funding model is required to continue a high quality service for a range of submissions going into 2012.

Value Added Services and Quality Development

Obtaining approvals through legislative requirements is often layered and complex. These requirements often tie back to provincial policy and municipal official plan requirements that are mandated to safeguard public investment and ensure that provincial interests are addressed at the site level. Significant public savings are afforded due to the Conservation Authority approach to water management and flood and erosion risk. Negotiations with development landowners not only require extensive technical input and creative solutions to meet a variety of legislative requirements, but these efforts set an essential open space system in place as a long term legacy for new and redeveloping communities. Appropriate attention paid to ecologically-based site design today will assist to create essential green infrastructure and amenities for the future, alleviating expensive remediation costs for taxpayers in the years to come. Approval requirements are never intended to be a "barrier" to development or good site design proposals.

Current Funding and Changes

TRCA has been working for over 8 years to build a technical staffing capacity to address the service demands of a growing development industry. Although we have made huge strides in building technical advisory services and improved timeline approvals, the recent shifts of workload towards growth related communities and intensification

have stretched TRCA's ability to respond in an expedited manner. The estimated budget requirement for 2012 -2013 for the plan and permitting review function at TRCA totals \$7.8 million, of which \$5.1 million is dedicated to the private development industry approvals. Current plan review fee collection recovers between 55-60% of the cost of the private development portion of the function – leaving a total of \$4.75 million supported by municipal levy. The Authority Board has directed staff to implement a fee schedule model that will move TRCA's planning and review function towards full cost recovery for the private development component for 2012-13. After conducting a thorough review of the types of applications, file time-cost analysis and the trends in the technical services that are needed for the future to provide effective review with the building industry and their consultants, TRCA has formulated a new fee administration schedule. It captures a more comprehensive approach to file review and a full suite of fees, with associated criteria, that can be applied to the wide diversity of applications and technical reviews across our urban and redeveloping jurisdiction.

Highlights for Better Plan Review Service

Refinements to the current fee schedule have focused on capturing 3 key strategies:

- Broadening the spectrum of fee categories based on file size, complexity and/or series of required technical /policy assessments; the principle being that we maintain reasonable costs for less complex files, and build cost capacity around more complex applications, saving money for many applicants.
- Adding new categories of fees for areas of review that have been undercharged or absent in the past fee model.
- Adding or adjusting fees that will assist applicants with streamlining approvals and file processing efforts.

New streamlining proposals include phased approvals, expedited review charges, red line revision processing (where possible), and a new project management type of review. A new delegated authority to staff for approval of straight-forward permits will eliminate time delays associated with the constraint of Executive Committee schedules. New funding will assist in providing regular working sessions with approval agencies to move files through the process faster, and senior staff input to project management of environmental issues and technical negotiations. Refined one-window approval approach for fisheries review and in-stream construction works provides effective service and cost savings. Long needed improvements to TRCA's information technology systems and database will evolve, as revenue allows, to achieve more efficient management of digital file circulations, and will improve time tracking and archival systems. New digital web-based assistance will be assessed as well to aid consultants and applicants.

A critical focus on pre-consultation with applicants will be essential to establish approval requirements, establish a file management approach, and set technical requirements with municipalities as part of Bill 51. Effective pre-consultations can avoid delays in processing inadequate proposals and extensions of re-submissions that are costly to all parties.

The goals for streamlining are to plan for continuous improvement in communications related to file management, improved timelines, and increased performance standards. Training for internal and municipal staff, as well as the development consulting industry will be implemented.

Where Do We Go From Here?

TRCA maintains an ongoing working relationship with BILD, the Province and our municipal partners to monitor service delivery requirements and update fee schedule models as workload and service demands change. TRCA has not had a major change in the comprehensive fee schedule for 4 years and it is time to adjust our revenue targets to improve our ability to provide effective review and assistance to reach approvals in reasonable timeframes and with a quality outcome.

Further details of our fee administration review can be found at the following links to the TRCA's Authority Board Resolution #A228/11 of October 28, 2011 (<http://www.trca.on.ca/dotAsset/121007.pdf>) and Resolution #A243/11 of November 25, 2011 (<http://www.trca.on.ca/dotAsset/124387.pdf>). Please contact our TRCA Planning and Development Division Area Managers to obtain assistance about the processing guidelines around your file and the fee requirements for 2012.