

Community Meetings and
Workshops: Summary Report

TOWNSHIP OF
SOUTH ALGONQUIN

ONTARIO, CANADA



Background

In July 2007 the Township of South Algonquin formally commenced the process of creating its first-ever official plan. Once adopted, this plan will outline land use policies for all areas of South Algonquin over which the Township has planning authority. An official plan usually spans a time horizon of 20 years or more and deals mainly with issues such as where new housing, industry, and shops will go and what services like roads, parks and schools will be needed in the future.

At the invitation of the South Algonquin Township council, Professor Christopher Fullerton, who is employed as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at Brock University, has taken the lead role for this project. Since the project began, Professor Fullerton has been working with several Brock University Geography students to compile as much community input as possible in order to ensure that South Algonquin's official plan reflects to the greatest extent possible the values, goals and objectives of the Township's residents. Accordingly, several public meetings and workshops were held between January and October 2008. A survey questionnaire was also made available for completion by the Township's year-round and seasonal residents between February and September 2008.

The results of this extensive effort to collect public input and other forms of data regarding matters of relevance to the future planning and development of South Algonquin are documented in a series of reports, including:

- the *Township of South Algonquin Community Profile* (January 2008);
- a *Preliminary Issues Report* (January 2008);
- a *Community Meetings and Workshops Summary Report* (December 2008);
- a *Community Questionnaire Results and Analysis Report* (January 2009); and,
- a *Youth Integrated Planning Assessment Report* (January 2009).

These reports have been prepared as a collaborative effort by Christopher Fullerton and the following project team members:

- Tyler Collins (December 2007-March 2008)
- Amanda D'Agostino (October 2008-Present)
- Alicia Davidson (October 2007-August 2008)
- Dan Della Mora (October 2008-Present)
- Sara Epp (October 2007-April 2008)
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- Erin Heibein (October 2007-April 2008)
- Courtney Heron-Monk (October 2008-Present)
- Tiffany Onesi (October 2007-August 2008)
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The official plan is slated for presentation to the Township of South Algonquin Council for approval by mid-2010. Questions, comments or any other input concerning the formulation of the official plan may be directed to: **Professor Christopher Fullerton, Department of Geography, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, L2S 3A1. (Email: chris.fullerton@brocku.ca; Telephone: (905) 688-5550, ext. 3487)**

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Introduction / Methodology

Throughout the process of creating an official plan for the Township of South Algonquin, it is of critical importance that the input of South Algonquin's residents is gathered and given the utmost consideration in the drafting of land use policies for the Township. As a first step in the collection of community input, two community planning workshops were held in early 2008: one in Whitney, during the evening of January 31, and one in Madawaska, on the morning of February 1. The workshops were advertised through the distribution of leaflets into all Canada Post mailboxes located within the Township, the placement of advertisements in *Barry's Bay This Week* and *Bancroft This Week*, and the posting of a notice on the Township's website. The Whitney session was held at the Lester Smith Community Centre, while the Madawaska gathering took place at the Lyell & Murchison Recreation Hall.

Each workshop followed the same format. To open, a brief presentation regarding the Township's demographic, economic, social, and physical characteristics was provided, as was a brief overview explaining why an official plan is being created for South Algonquin and where the community workshops fit within the overall planning process. Participants were subsequently asked to circulate throughout the room in order to view six thematic posters that encouraged them to consider various planning issues affecting the Township. The themes were: property development; residential development; transportation; community services; economic development; and the environment. Participants were also asked to write comments about the issues on post-it notes and to affix these to the posters, both for other participants to read and for the meeting organizers to use in their subsequent analysis of the workshop results. The next part of the meeting involved the division of participants into small discussion groups, after which they were provided with the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas about planning issues affecting South Algonquin.

As a second step in the collection of community input, two further public meetings were held in the month of August 2008. Again, one was held in Madawaska and another in Whitney. The primary purpose of the meetings was to provide residents with an update regarding the status of the official plan project; however, these were also used as an opportunity to gain more community input. In this case, the attainment of public input came through a repeat of the "post-it notes" exercise, as well as a question and answer period.

This report documents and summarizes the input that was compiled during the two community planning workshops and the two subsequent public meetings. It is divided into six main sections, each of which corresponds to one of the themes identified above and provides the individual post-it note comments, a summary of these notes, a synopsis of the group discussions and question and answer periods, as well as some concluding remarks.

Positives and Negatives of Living in South Algonquin

After the opening presentations of each meeting, participants were encouraged to write notes on a poster indicating what they believed were the positive and negative aspects of living in South Algonquin. Listed below are all of the comments provided throughout the series of workshops and meetings.

Positive Aspects of Life in South Algonquin

- Beauty
- Beauty of nature
- Nature at its finest
- Close to nature
- Clean air
- Fresh air as a result of tree abundance
- Beautiful region
- Abundant clean lakes and rivers
- Peace
- Privacy
- Away from the hustle and bustle of more populated areas
- Quiet
- The peace and quiet
- Lots of space
- Wide open spaces
- Slow pace of life
- Low stress

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Trails
- Great opportunities for hunting and fishing
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Great opportunities for outdoor activities
- Lots of outdoor activities available in the area

- Newly renovated schools with day care facility
- Excellent teachers
- Schools are great
- Having a doctor
- Services – community

- Strong local community support
- Friendly people
- Knowing everyone

- Tightly knit community
- Community caring relationships
- Great place to live
- To accomplish things we have to co-operate

- Room to expand/develop
- Positive growth in tourism
- Great opportunities for tourism-based businesses
- Historic heritage

- Citizen safety
- Safety

- Cheap place to live
- Low taxes
- Affordable housing

Negative Aspects of Life in South Algonquin

- Limited opportunities
- Politics of the schools
- Too many grades for one teacher - combine schools
- Too much political power for too few
- Dwindling population

- Not very many kids
- Not enough focus on children and future
- Lack of programs for youth
- Limited opportunities for local youth
- Town is quiet at night
- Need to keep young people here
- Need for career opportunities for the young people
- Need more young families
- Young people want to retire here
- Need more jobs
- Difficult to find employees

- Distance from major metro centre
- Distance to travel to major urban areas
- Small population base, so many services are not available
- Shopping and medical facilities
- Lack of recreation facilities
- More service accommodations
- Distance to go for services (e.g. distance and optometrist)
- Difficulty in having children travel far for high school
- Cost of travel for medical services, etc.
- Cost

- High taxes
- There is no public transportation
- Lack of public transportation
- No sidewalks for business areas
- Poor roads
- Not enough community involvement
- Lack of community participation
- No development
- No growth, no desire to grow
- No room for expansion (most land is Crown land, tied up in land claims)
- Town is run-down, needs a facelift
- No current town plan to develop area
- Lack of land to buy

Summary

Residents appreciate the natural beauty of the landscape, which for the most part remains unspoiled by development. Another thing about the outdoors people like is the ease of access to certain activities like fishing and hunting, as well as the peace and serenity that come with living in a relatively isolated place. In addition to the general benefits of rural life, many South Algonquin residents also feel that local services – such as schools, daycares and health care – are of a high quality.

However, there were almost as many negative comments written down as there were positives. Participants lamented the long distances they must travel to acquire some goods and services in larger centres, with no public transportation to assist them in getting there, as well as what was often perceived to be a lack of activities for children and opportunities for youth, particularly after they complete high school. Aside from these issues, participants' concerns included the shrinking population, the lack of sidewalks along the main thoroughfares in Whitney and Madawaska, the shortage of available land for purchase and development (due to much of it being Crown land), as well as concerns that Township councillors hold too much power in managing municipal affairs.

This exercise also revealed that many issues are viewed quite differently among South Algonquin residents, with some seeing a

particular characteristic of the Township as a positive one and others seeing that very same characteristic as a problem. These included, for example: South Algonquin's small population; the quietness of the area; and the lack of growth occurring within the Township. Other differences of opinion are also observable in the comments listed above: for instance, some felt that taxes were too high in South Algonquin, while others thought they were relatively low. Some thought the schools were good, while others felt they were poor. Some felt there was a lack of community involvement, while others felt there was good community support. As a final example, some felt the cost of living in South Algonquin was high, while others felt it was very affordable.

Economic Development

Overview

Of the several reasons a community has for pursuing economic prosperity, the most obvious would have to be the resulting employment. As in any municipality, the maintenance of a healthy economy in South Algonquin is vital to the survival of the community. Within the Township, two extensively developed employment sectors dominate: forestry and tourism. With the local economy focused on just a few areas, extra care needs to be taken that local industries can be supported and given the opportunity to grow.

Participants' Responses (Individual)

Retail and Commercial Development: What changes would you like to see over time?

- Cluster commercial growth off Highway 60
- Preservation of trees is needed, Hydro should bury wires
- The bridge needs repair
- Jobs for young people
- Better overall planning of landscaping trees, etc.
- Large industry to move into the area
- More local attention to tourist activities needed
- The main highway needs a major face-lift – the town is very unattractive
- There is a need for more permanent job opportunities
- Increase in manufacturing plants, food industry and accommodation services
- Expanded economic opportunity
- Keep it small, but good
- We badly need full-time, year-round employment opportunities
- Encourage people to retire here
- Another type of manufacturing should be encouraged to provide some choice in jobs for younger people
- Whitney and Madawaska should become greener by investing in alternative power sources. Whitney has a dam...why not a generator?
- Wind power and community housing projects could be established, Hydro will soon be gouging us even more
- Manufacturing should be encouraged to take root with year-round employment
- A need for a tree-cutting by-law for private lands
- Grocery stores offering fresher healthy choices that will come with higher demands
- Promote area as a wonderful life to encourage new industry
- Opportunity for furniture building and innovative wood products
- Whitney could still expand and improve tourism as a nice resort village

- We could also put electric wires (eventually) underground for a nice look and to be economical
- We could produce our own wind and water electric power; very economical in the long run

Forestry: How important is the forestry sector in South Algonquin?

- Forestry is very important at the present but tourism can become important or more important
- Without the forest industries within the Township, Whitney and Madawaska would become a senior area only
- Forestry is very important to the area. It is the main employment in this township.
- Forestry sector is critical...maintain at all cost
- Alternative forestry or niche market forestry should be developed to keep industry vital, i.e. Using poplar and birch to create medicines
- Forestry very important as the main employment in the area
- Create more jobs for the future
- Forestry is very important – it is what this settlement was based on, it also represents and demonstrates the responsible way forestry is achieved
- Most of the family depend on this work to make things work
- Awareness of MFTIP owing private landowners
- Very important
- Logging and lumber industry should remain
- Very important but also need to promote private land for sustainable forest management and using forests for other products (e.g., maple syrup)
- Forestry is crucial for employment and taxation purposes
- Adhere to environmental rules- maintain its production, do not increase
- Promotion of long term positions for employees coming into the town
- Need to diversify the economy beyond logging, forestry and lumber
- AFA does good job restoring forestry resources support them

Tourism: Should tourism development be promoted?

- Eco-tourism
- There are lots of opportunities for tourism development for the town, right now there are many companies bringing tourist to the area and the local businesses are not benefiting
- Tourism development must be promoted in a big way if South Algonquin is to flourish
- Tourism is second only to logging and may be more important in the long term
- Tourism is probably the business opportunity with the best (most natural) potential in the area
- Tourism should definitely be promoted

- This is a wanted resource we have local attractions that are lying dormant
- Tourism especially should be encouraged (e.g., the ski hill in Barry's Bay supported by locals)
- Tourism lots of opportunity need new lakes
- New ideas should bring new jobs
- Seasonal or full is better
- Develop tourist attractions that are educational and attract families – for example, heritage museums or rail history
- Yes, tourism is going to be increasingly important
- Second employer of the area – very important to the area
- Tourism is very important to this area
- Find new ways to get tourists to spend their money here, i.e. Alternative services and food stalls during summer and winter months, farmers markets
- Yes, as long as its function is environmentally sensitive and respectful to the privacy issues of residents
- Even though tourism has worked well for the community they want the local history promoted
 - Round house
- Promote the townships signage (e.g., "Welcome to Madawaska")
- Need for economic development-committee with enthusiasm to bring more and a variety of business into the township
- Economic development committee should be produced
- More food and gas availability – longer hours of availability, more choices, more stores (e.g., hardware, grocery, bank, and medical)
- A downtown core off the highway to promote walking to work

Summary

As would be expected in any community, participants expressed a strong desire to see an increase in local employment opportunities within South Algonquin. In this regard, the participants' individual responses provided great insight and an abundance of ideas. One issue that was particularly important to people was the desire to see any new jobs be year-round rather than seasonal, like many of the current tourism jobs are.

Many ideas were provided regarding the types of businesses that could serve as valuable additions to the Township. Some suggestions were vague, such as a new 'industry' and 'manufacturing', but others were more specific, with ideas such as improved grocery stores, unique furniture manufacturers and alternative energy generators. The participants also recognise that, in order to attract new businesses, an effort needs to be made to make South Algonquin a more aesthetically-appealing location for commercial development. A perspective widely expressed in the workshops was that the built landscape along Highway 60 needs to be made more attractive and better organised, in a land use sense.

The workshop participants also recognized the importance of forestry to South Algonquin, both in terms of creating employment opportunities for local residents and, subsequently, as a way of limiting out-migration from the Township. Because of its importance, there is a great desire to ensure that South Algonquin's two lumber mills remain in active production. Individuals' comments also demonstrated an awareness that forestry has been the most important employer in the area for as long as it has been settled and that, during this industry's history, safe and sustainable forest harvesting practices have been developed and practiced. Some participants also expressed a desire to increase awareness of the specifics of these practices to those who oppose logging in Algonquin Park. The comments also include some insight regarding how forestry jobs might be maintained through non-traditional methods, such as in furniture building and using certain types of trees for research.

Participants also recognised that the tourism industry plays a critical role in shaping South Algonquin's economy and that it may play an even more important role as a source of employment opportunities in the future. Many participants argued that tourism should be promoted and supported much more extensively by the Township, while a smaller number expressed the opinion that tourism activities should remain at, and not exceed, their current levels. Job creation and the infusion of tourist spending were most commonly cited as reasons for supporting tourism growth, while, at the same time, many people argued that the resources and infrastructure needed for expansion of the tourism industry are already present within the Township.

When considering the individual comments made by the participants, it is clear that most of them want the same thing, but through different methods. There is a strong desire to generate more jobs in South Algonquin, and it is also considered necessary that people get to work year-round, rather than just seasonally. Although many different ideas were expressed regarding how new jobs can be created within the Township, solace can be taken in the fact that most participants have the same ultimate goal.

Participants' Responses (Focus Groups)

Many of the individual ideas discussed above were addressed further within the focus group discussions. Participants expressed a desire for a greater variety of retail services in South Algonquin, such as a pharmacy or bigger grocery store. At the same time, however, most people were also realistic as to what could be supported in a community with such a small and dispersed population. A key focus of the discussions, however, was the question of how to improve the Township's existing retail services. Ideas included the introduction of high-speed internet service for businesses, in order to increase their efficiency, and the creation of a local chamber of commerce. The latter idea emanated from discussions that retail and other businesses in South Algonquin could benefit significantly if they co-operated and communicated with one another more extensively. The participants noted

that it would be best if businesses in South Algonquin worked together, rather than competed against each other. It was also suggested that the Township could help build such cohesion, and thus promote cooperation, by clustering retail development rather than allowing it spread out in a more haphazard fashion. Creating more distinct commercial zones was also seen as a way to encourage more people to stop in Whitney or Madawaska rather than the more common current practice of visiting only one business before re-entering the highway and leaving the Township.

It was widely acknowledged in both community workshops that forestry activities in and around Algonquin Park have recently been heavily scrutinized by several environmental groups. Most participants were comfortable with the level of forestry activities in and near the Township, but were also aware that it may be difficult to maintain these levels. To combat this, it was suggested that greater efforts be made to educate non-residents of current sustainable forestry practices in Algonquin Park. Such education could go far in convincing opponents to forestry that the methods used in Algonquin Park are perhaps less environmentally harmful than they imagine and also in maintaining the good reputation the community has in the eyes of tourists and other people. Participants also recommended an expansion to the forestry industry, not in volume, but rather in terms of pursuing several value-added manufacturing activities. Some ideas included production of furniture and veneers, as well as research into possible pharmaceutical uses for products such as birch trees. It was argued that the identification and capturing of some niche markets could be seen as ways to sustain (and, ultimately, grow) South Algonquin's forestry industry, even if restrictions are placed on extraction.

Tourism generated the greatest level of discussion among the economic development topics highlighted at the community workshops. An overwhelming majority of participants were in favour of pursuing further growth in the local tourism industry; indeed, the words 'promote tourism' were spoken several times. In light of earlier discussions about the possible decline of forestry sector activities in and around South Algonquin, many people saw tourism as the leading industry of the future; however, a considerable degree of concern was expressed as to whether or not tourism can sustain the community in the way that forestry currently does, and has for so long. The most common concern in this regard was that tourism will continue to thrive only in the summer months. One participant noted that it is not difficult at all to find a job during the summer, as many tourism businesses in South Algonquin need extra employees. This circumstance is what most would like to see on a year-round basis; however, the other three seasons are far less busy than the summer months. It was agreed that winter tourism, in particular, has great potential, but that it is also critically dependent on weather conditions. As several participants noted, a lack of snow or lack of cold temperatures can seriously harm the local winter tourism economy, as it depends on activities such as snowmobiling and ice fishing.

Some workshop participants were, however, strongly opposed to any focus on tourism as a key economic development sector for South Algonquin. One concern was that the Township's quiet, rural atmosphere could be jeopardized if there was an expansion of tourism development and a subsequent increase in visitors to the community. Other participants who were critical of tourism development questioned how much the Township would actually benefit; for example, one suggested that jobs in South Algonquin's two lumber mills likely pay much better than most tourism jobs ever would. Another person argued that, even if they were successful, tourism development efforts would bring financial benefits only to the owners of tourism-related businesses, and not to the many individuals working for them.

According to several participants, achieving the objective of increasing tourist visitation to South Algonquin is a matter of promotion and, more specifically, making people aware of what the Township has to offer. One suggestion was for the Township to engage in a branding exercise that would lead to the development of an image or trademark that would make the community recognizable to others. It was argued that the area is not very well-known and that, because of this, few people consider visiting South Algonquin, even if they are planning to visit Algonquin Park.

Conclusion

For the most part, people in South Algonquin want the same thing: the opportunity for anyone who wants a job to get one. Even though there are many different opinions on how this goal can be achieved, there are also some commonalities among the viewpoints expressed during the workshops. The one suggestion that did not appear to have any detractors was for a greater degree of cooperation amongst residents, businesses and councillors.

Property Development

Overview

Property development can be defined as 'Determining the conditions for lot division and considering the visual appearance of the Township with regard to these decisions'. Determining conditions for lot division can make a plan unique from others and gives an excellent opportunity to affect the appearance of the entire municipality, not just a certain section. Many challenges regarding the development of land and property within the Township of South Algonquin were discussed in the community workshops and public meetings. The main concerns expressed by participants were issues related to the land severance process and the legal environment within which it takes place, Crown land acquisition, maintenance of the "rural lifestyle" within the community, and the enhancement of municipal infrastructure.

Participants' Responses (Individual)

What are your attitudes towards the creation of new lots in the township?

- Needed, but need to control quantity of development to keep small town feel
- Low height restrictions to blend in with landscape
- Require clean appearances
- Cluster development for ease of access (i.e. Within walking distance of residents, shopping and services)
- Businesses and housing could be put together to be more attractive to tourists who visit
- Need for more cottage lots
- Need for apartments for seasonal workers
- Need for height restrictions
- Restriction on style, colour, shape, size and materials used for the highway corridor
- Need for new lots to be available for housing and business
- Planning for the future should start now
- Need for more land to become available for house (Crown Land)
- Be able to control where alternative energy sites can be located (wind turbines)
- Minimum restrictions to encourage development as opposed to hindering it
- Lot dimensions should continue to allow present 1500 ft lots to be built in the future
- Property development should only be approved through community consultation
- Lots with direct road access need extra snow clearance

- Crown land severance must consider the land claim issue with the Algonquin's
- Any severances should take into account the privacy of existing residents and also consider the pending land claim of the Algonquin's
- New lots equal more revenues from taxes for township
- Infrastructure needs to be in place to support as well
- Supporting infrastructure needs to be in place first as lots can then be developed, encouraging growth
- Property development needs planning
- Essential especially in the township
- Need for growth within the township
- Land owners need to be able to maximise investment in property and plan for the future
- Do not block access to crown land and lakes
- Important for younger influx of residence services for school's, recreation
- Need for development for township to survive- should encourage a retirement area, good quality of life

Summary

Most of the individual comments about property development in South Algonquin concerned land severances within the community, the perceived underutilization of the surrounding crown land, and the desire to keep a "rural feel" to the community. The implementation of restrictions such as those influencing building heights and colours, lot sizes, and where lots could be created within the Township were all discussed as ways of maintaining the Township's rural identity. The provision of supporting municipal infrastructure was also an important topic within the individual responses. Many participants argued that it was necessary to ensure that appropriate levels of infrastructure were in place if growth was to be promoted within the Township's boundaries.

Participant Responses (Focus Groups)

During the focus group sessions, the central topics of discussion included the concept of community, concerns about the land severance process, as well as issues regarding residential and commercial development within the Township.

Land severances were among the most important topics discussed during the meetings. Many respondents suggested the need for further lot creation as a means of promoting employment growth in the area, as it was deemed that the severance of new properties might then open up areas for commercial and residential development. These discussions also led to conversations regarding environmental issues associated with land severance. For example, the challenge of defining minimum sizes for new lots was mentioned, in order

to ensure that well-water supplies could be maintained and waste could be properly managed.

The concept of community was another broad topic associated with property development. The challenge of “bridging the gap” between the two major communities of Madawaska and Whitney was discussed during both meetings. The general consensus was that there was a need for active community-building, in order to promote a better sense of community within the Township. The proposal of how to bridge the communities while still enabling them to maintain their own distinct identities was discussed, and ideas such as starting with the younger generations within the community or equalizing services between the two communities were identified as possible ways of bridging this “gap”.

Residential and commercial development were the two major types of development that the workshop participants wanted to see within the Township. At the same time, however, many individuals expressed a desire to see tight development controls put in place that would assist in maintaining South Algonquin’s “rural feel”. Another concern was for infrastructure provision to be based on the needs of the community. For example, many respondents identified a need for seniors’ housing or assisted living facilities within the community, as well as healthcare and dining facilities that cater to elderly persons. Residential developments, such as cluster development, were also ideas that were discussed. The majority of participants wanted to ensure that adequate access to public waterfronts was maintained so that all residents and visitors could enjoy the scenic landscape, regardless of income. Commercial development within the community, such as recreational trails and marketing the area as a resort town, were also discussed. Respondents were keen on keeping a rural sense of community within the Township; for example, although they acknowledged the limited likelihood of this ever happening, the entry of large chain and big-box stores into South Algonquin was seen as a negative form of development by most participants. Almost all in attendance were concerned that a loss of privacy was highly possible as a side effect of commercial or residential development; therefore, a need was expressed for restrictions on building types, lot sizes, and the distance between built structures.

Conclusion

Property development policies are an important part of any official plan. In this regard, land severances, maintenance of the ‘rural lifestyle’, and the creation and development of residential and commercial infrastructure were the main topics discussed during this part of the community planning workshops. The majority of participants identified the need for land severances, along with residential and commercial development, to encourage employment within the area. However, they also wanted to maintain the rural way of life within the community.

Residential Development

Overview

The term “residential development” deals with the physical building of various types of dwellings in specified areas, and also encompasses issues that arise regarding dwellings that have already been built. Furthermore, the physical development and layout of dwellings is closely interrelated to the creation of the social sense of community, as the physical layout is the key to encouraging social interaction which results in providing a sense of belonging for each member of the community. This fragile connection must be understood before any drastic changes are made in order to ensure positive growth physically, socially and economically for the community.

Once adopted, the Township’s official plan will include legally-binding regulations regarding future residential development activities in South Algonquin. With that being said, it is imperative to understand what residents already know about the existing issues concerning residential development and to gather an idea of their feelings towards a sense of community. Therefore, understanding how members of the community feel towards possible changes in residential development patterns is important; indeed, once the plan is in place, these new guidelines will directly impact all members of the community.

Participants’ Responses (Individual)

Housing: Do you feel the housing needs of local residents are being met?

- Ensure the plan allows for large acreage lots to be severed and built on (possibility up to 3-5x)
- No little opportunity for new building in towns
- Yes at the present time, before we could consider more housing we require more industry within the townships to allow our families to establish a good lifestyle here
- Area seems not to be restricted from development of new lots and property due to the mass of crown land and Algonquin land claim
- No - hard to find housing when I moved here
- We need some rental units for seasonal workers
- Keep large lots
- Let full time residents enjoy waterfront
- There are many seniors here but no housing to keep them here when older
- Maybe a need for seniors housing as there are a lot of retirees in the township
- Small community cannot afford low income housing projects as it puts a burden to tax payers also encourages community problem

- No
- Encouragement for participation in local events
- We have community centres, need to encourage more events involving people from all over the township
- Programs for the people
- New housing needs to be encouraged to entice in new residents to expand the township
- No renovations and new homes need to be encouraged
- Better communication from council concerning the community
- Need for seniors units in the township to keep seniors in their home town
- A need for assistance for people renovating older historic homes
- Assisted housing for seniors
- Need an official plan to be able to build new homes and tax base for communities within the township
- New homes require to encourage more revenue into the area, for full time residents and second homes, not every profession needs to work in offices
- With high speed now in Madawaska people can work from home
- Housing issues need to be addressed but caution needs to be taken when considering a low income residential complex. Research needs to be done, complexes like those do not often have positive results
- We need people with innovative ideas for planning and development

Community: What could you suggest that would foster a positive sense of community?

- Look back into the community assessment project for a few years ago and do some of those suggestions
- The future of new building residential and commercial and recreational should start now
- A need for senior housing, apartments
- The town needs a face lift we need to promote the historical part of the town, for example logging. The township needs to allocate money for recreation and promotion of tourism
- Recreation for teens to keep them busy and safe
- Water supply is of concern in some residential areas
- Care for parks better
- Support community events
- Pay for events coordinator position
- Better positive relations between town council and residents
- More community events attended by folks from both Madawaska and Whitney
- Getting together to work this project

Summary

Similar responses to the questions were evident throughout each workshop and meeting. A key concern that generated a large number of participant comments was the current and future provision of housing opportunities for senior citizens. This is a major concern of residents because the community is aging and there is a strong desire to age-in-place; accordingly, it was often stated that there is a need to create affordable and accessible housing for seniors in South Algonquin. Moreover, the need for affordable housing and rental homes came up a few times in other contexts, such as the need for such accommodation to house seasonal employees working at Algonquin Park and for lower income families already residing within the community. Most participants also seemed to agree that there is a need for permissive land severance policies that will enable the creation of new building lots. The creation of new lots was also seen as something that would allow for more people to migrate to South Algonquin, permanent or seasonally

Participants' Responses (Focus Groups)

The key issues that emerged regarding future residential development in South Algonquin included the perceived need for more permissive land severance policies and for an increased supply of affordable housing, the potential for the Township to benefit from further cottage and tourism development, the apparent need to improve and protect public access to lakes and wilderness areas, and a desire to ensure social equality amongst all residents.

The topic that generated the greatest discussion was that of land severances. It has already been well established that South Algonquin is in need of an official plan in order to have better approval rates from the provincial government on land severance applications. It was apparent that again the majority of participants were in favour of allowing land severances, but there is an underlying fear that the official plan will contain too many restrictions that would work against property owners. This is something that would have to be further researched by the planning team in order to elaborate on the details of how the severances will be described in the official plan and this would put the residents at ease.

On that note, a few participants expressed concern over the lack of affordable housing in South Algonquin. They understand that there is currently very little land available for sale. At the same time, their biggest concern was that, when new lots are created, there may already be a potential buyer lined up and that there would then not be an equal opportunity for people of all income levels to be eligible to purchase the new lots. The opposing side felt that if affordable housing was made too accessible, it might also attract "troubled" outsiders to the area. Clearly, the

provision of affordable housing in South Algonquin is a contentious issue. If it is to be dealt with properly and fairly, it will be important to separate the myths about affordable housing from the facts as part of the official plan development process.

Another housing issue that arose during the workshops was the fact that the Township is home to a growing proportion of seniors, many of whom would like to remain as residents of the Township for as long as possible. Indeed, there currently is a trend of "aging-in-place" which can be seen in the Township. Many second-home buyers are flocking to South Algonquin, either to buy lakefront property or turn existing summer homes into year-round residences. Many stressed the need for an adequate senior citizens home, or an adult assisted living facility that has the needed amenities such as health facilities within proximity. Not only will this enable seniors to feel less forced to relocate to larger towns outside South Algonquin, but it will also be a selling point to newcomers to the community, in that they can retire in South Algonquin comfortably with all the needed amenities, but still enjoy the peace and quiet of the great outdoors.

This then ties into the next issue that was highly contested: tourism development. Some participants felt that South Algonquin had a lot to offer that Algonquin Park did not, and that the Township could capitalise on this through the expansion of its tourism industry. However, some people were opposed to further tourism development in the Township, as they felt that the presence of greater numbers of visitors would decrease the chances of locals achieving a positive sense of community with respect to the fact that local businesses would be busy catering to the visitors' needs and wants.

Community Services

Overview

The availability of community services is highly valued within a municipality, as they have a strong effect on the quality of living within that place. The conveniences of such services to residents, as well as the economics involved, are two factors which greatly affect perceptions of the quality of the services offered. The availability of services and decisions regarding their location within the Township affect not only current residents but also influence the potential for future economic growth and residential development within the Township.

Participants' Responses (Individual)

When providing opinions on community services, residents were asked what they like and what they dislike about current and potential services. The following bullets outline important issues raised by residents, areas they feel the Township needs to improve and many beneficial services residents currently enjoy.

What do you like?

- Nature trails and outdoor recreation
- Existing facilities are relatively new and in good shape
- Volunteer networks within services

What do you dislike?

- Lack of organised programs for youth and children
- Lack facilities for seniors, such as retirement homes
- No local family doctors or nurses
- Multiple sets of similar services, such as library
- Lack of picnic and park facilities for tourists and residents
- Length of travel required to access services

Summary

Residents generally held positive feelings about existing services and the volunteer networks that sustain them; however, the lack of some necessary services, such as family doctors and nurses, was seen to greatly outweigh the benefits of the community services presently available. As well, many residents identified the lack of organised programs and facilities for youth as a problem, as was the absence of facilities for South Algonquin's aging population. Lack of services for tourists was also identified as an issue; for example, several participants commented on the lack of picnic and park facilities in the area. Interestingly, residents also perceived the availability of some services in multiple locations, such as two libraries within the

Township, as being economically problematic, and perhaps also an influence on the quality of such services. Finally, it was also noted that the unavailability of some services within South Algonquin forced residents to travel large distances to larger towns and cities for specialised facilities, something that was seen to be increasingly difficult for an aging population. Overall, while residents are pleased with existing facilities, the lack of services for youth and seniors was clearly seen as an increasingly important issue.

Participants' Responses (Focus Groups)

Residents provided specific and detailed examples of services they felt were adequate and others they saw as lacking within the Township. In general, participants expressed that they were grateful for the services they did have, considering the population size, but that if the Township was to grow, increased attention to expanding the current level of community services was necessary. In regards to the current services, differing opinions were apparent in the location and number of services required. Some participants felt that the division of services, such as two libraries (one in Whitney and one in Madawaska), has affected the quality of these services and would better serve the residents in one location. However, other participants felt that spreading the services out between the towns brought with it the benefits of greater accessibility, with some participants going so far as to state that this division of services was essential, especially for the benefit of local children, youth and seniors.

Concerns over facilities for youth were also expressed; however, the definition of "services" was expanded to include athletics and recreation, formal programming, anti-bullying initiatives, social services, and in-school programs. In this regard, many residents suggested looking into possible sources of government funding as a means of better meeting the needs of the younger generations, without straining the municipal budget.

The needs of seniors were also discussed more thoroughly in the focus groups. In this case, the desire to age in place was the point perhaps most strongly expressed by the participants. Aging in place is the desire of seniors to live out their life in their community and moving into retirement homes (or other appropriate forms of accommodation) within the same community. Residents noted that, while South Algonquin has an aging population, there are no senior homes and as a result, aging residents are often forced to move out of the Township to find adequate housing. It was also argued that, because other needs of seniors, including pharmacy services and transportation to medical facilities in nearby towns, are not being met, the well being of residents was compromised. Residents were adamant in expressing that while South Algonquin is as an aging community, services specifically aimed at meeting their needs are lacking, if at all acknowledged.

In general, residents understood the limitations faced by the community when it comes to the expansion of service delivery, but, at the same time, they also expressed a desire to find creative ways of meeting the needs of seniors and youth by expanding or creating facilities directly aimed at their needs.

Conclusion

Overall, the participants understood the limitations facing the Township in regards to the provision of community services. However, the participants were able to provide feasible recommendations for community services, including restructuring current facilities to include new services, such as libraries, within the local schools or multi-use recreation halls, as well as increasing the facilities available to seniors and youth groups. Additional recommendations included creating volunteer networks to increase the mobility of seniors to reach specialised treatment facilities in nearby towns as a viable solution to lack of local transportation services. Finally, the participants felt that an improved sense of community, increased coordination of services, and increased communication between councillors, businesses and residents, were all essential if the needs of South Algonquin residents were to be better served.

Transportation

Overview

The provision and management of transportation infrastructure is an important issue because it does and will have a significant impact on the environment. There is a balance that must be kept in order to achieve environmental sustainability, while at the same time providing adequate accessibility to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, consideration needs to be focused on the management of the transportation system to ensure the safety of Township residents. Furthermore, by improving the availability of alternate (i.e., non-automobile) modes of transportation, positive effects will directly influence residents, either financially or physically.

Participants' Responses (Individual)

Where do you feel are unsafe places on the trails? Where do you feel are unsafe places to be on the road?

- Trails are safe as long as drinking is actively discouraged (ATV, snowmobile)
- Lakes and rivers at certain times of the year
- Township roads are well maintained compared to surrounding townships
- Need transportation out of town, e.g. Bus route between Ottawa – Huntsville
- Major lake road from Madawaska (unsafe)
- Sidewalks would be good for the elderly and mothers with babies
- Intersection at HWY 60 and post office and liquor store is dangerous
- Highway 523 townships road through Williston must be improved for safety and better access to area
- Cars travel too fast through the town, need more signs, more enforcement
- HWY through Whitney should have more signage to slow down before entering town
- Skidoo trails though improved in width needs more culverts-wet year washouts – very dangerous
- Passing land through middle of Madawaska
- Bus service to Barry's Bay needed, link with trains and Toronto via Huntsville
- The HWY through Madawaska should not be designated for passing lane traffic moving too fast
- Safe and proper speed, more policing

Summary

In general, the number and nature of responses indicated that transportation issues were seen to be far less important than other issues discussed at the workshops. However, several issues and ideas were mentioned and did generate discussion amongst participants. These issues were: speeding; sidewalks; maintenance of township roads; and property and environmental damage caused by ATVs and snowmobiles along the Township's trail networks.

Speeding was addressed as a topic of discussion and, in this regard, participants had conflicting points-of-view as to whether or not it posed a problem. Some participants felt that "cars travel too fast through the town" and suggested increased signage and more enforcement as possible solutions. Other participants suggested that speeding was not a problem and, furthermore, that it would be difficult to increase signage along Highway 60, since it is a provincial highway under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation. They referred to a past failed effort where a group of residents tried to bring about the erection of a sign that would implore drivers to slow down. Other ideas, such as crosswalks, stop signs or traffic lights, were suggested. Some participants thought it was a great idea to implement in certain areas of the town such as the intersection at the Post Office and the LCBO. Participants agreed that guard rails were a bad idea since they limit visibility and could potentially cause accidents. Turning lanes were suggested as a solution to reduce traffic dangers for drivers travelling through Whitney and Madawaska.

Sidewalks were also discussed by participants with mixed viewpoints. Some participants felt that the construction of new sidewalks would benefit the residents of both Whitney and Madawaska and would increase levels of pedestrian activity. For example, one participant noted that sidewalks would be well received by the elderly and mothers with young children and babies. As well, sidewalks would be safer for residents of the Township to walk on than the paved shoulder along Highway 60. Other participants felt that the paved shoulders along Highway 60 were already safe to walk on and easier to maintain. Participants also raised the issue that sidewalks would cost money to build and maintain; for example, new snow removal equipment would have to be purchased.

Current levels of township road maintenance were praised by many workshop participants and, when compared with those of other nearby municipalities, South Algonquin's road conditions were seen as outstanding. However, it was indicated that Major Lake Road in Madawaska was seen as unsafe, due to its narrowness. Another suggestion made by participants was the need for a bus service to link to Barry's Bay as well as an out of town bus service that would connect to Huntsville then to Toronto. Some participants felt that such a bus service would cost too much and that there was not a great demand for one because almost all residents either own or have access to a vehicle. This, however, contradicts comments made in other parts of the workshop sessions, during which it was repeatedly noted that elderly South

Algonquin residents face serious difficulties travelling to the many out-of-Township destinations they must visit.

Issues concerning trail networks within the Township also generated debate, particularly in regards to the damage caused by ATVS and snowmobiles upon the natural landscape. Participants felt that individuals who partake in these winter activities (with out-of-Township visitors often cited as the main group of concern) have no commitment to the land and that, as a result, they are more likely to abuse the land. Participants suggested several solutions, including increased signage, requiring permits for trail use (which could possibly also generate income for the Township), and the creation of separate trail networks for ATVS and snowmobiles. However, concerns arose regarding the idea of issuing permits through the Township offices, as some participants felt that this would negatively impact winter tourism by leading to a decline in the number of individuals using the trail networks.

Participants' Responses (Focus Groups)

When addressing concerns during the workshops and public meetings participants had mixed feelings about the transportation issues at hand. It was difficult to draw substantial conclusions based on the diversity of responses. However, it is important to address all of the concerns raised during group discussion so that, wherever relevant, they can be addressed in the creation of the Official Plan. To try to encourage as much dialogue as possible, the transportation discussions focused on the following specific topics: speeding; sidewalks; maintenance of township roads; trail networks; out-of-town bus service; and commercial signs along Highway 60.

Participants felt that speeding was a significant concern that must be addressed. Suggestions included the implementation of stop lights, cross walks, and turning lanes to reduce speed of vehicles traveling through the Township. However, some participants felt that this was not possible because of provincial restrictions or that it was "useless" and a "waste of taxpayers' dollars". The suggestion of increasing police presence was widely rejected by participants as a feasible and viable solution because of what was already perceived to be a lack of support from local law enforcement personnel.

Sidewalks were a topic that generated diverse comments from meeting and workshop participants. Some participants wanted to see the creation of sidewalks within the Township because it would create a "walkable" environment that was safe and secure. Other participants felt that the creation and use of sidewalks was unnecessary because "residents do not walk anywhere" and that, furthermore, the Township has adequate paved shoulders that residents could use instead of sidewalks. They also noted that the paved shoulders are "easier to walk on" and that they "were easier to maintain." Maintenance of Township roads was briefly discussed amongst participants and the general consensus was that roads are "good when

compared to surrounding townships” and that there are “always going to be hazardous spots on the roads”

The trail networks within the Township generated diverse opinions from participants. The main concern was whether or not South Algonquin had an adequate amount of trails to support tourism. Some participants felt that South Algonquin did have enough trails and that “no more tax dollars” should be put into the development of trail networks. However, some participants felt that there were not enough trails and that a separation of trails needed to occur. However, the concern that all participants had was that the maintenance of the trails is slowly declining. Suggestions were made that the Township could sell permits to individuals that use the trails, this was counter-argued with the concern that by establishing a law forcing individuals to purchase permits this could negatively impact tourism. Participants were proud and felt that the rails to trails movement offers a unique advantage to promote tourism and local heritage compared to surrounding communities.

An out-of-town bus service was suggested by some participants because they felt that there is not enough transportation into the area, giving specific mention to students. Participants also felt that, if land was zoned for a bus station, this would stimulate interest and could lead to potential out-of-town services such as bus service to Huntsville and Toronto. Participants also felt that a local bus service within the Township would provide residents who do not have access to an automobile or who have limited mobility increased opportunities to travel to surrounding municipalities in order to acquire goods and services that are not available locally.

Commercial signs along the highway were seen by participants as destroying the aesthetics of the environment or considered to be “eye sores”. As well, participants felt that signage should be limited because, over the years, their numbers have grown significantly, thus taking away from the natural beauty of the landscapes upon which they are being erected.

Conclusion

Overall, transportation issues within the Township were not of major concern to residents in comparison to the other topics discussed. However, five issues were generated from the focus group discussions, as well as the individual activity. Participants felt speeding, sidewalks, maintenance of township roads, and trail networks should all be addressed in the official plan. The main concern participants felt was that in some cases a lack of money restricted the Township’s ability to pursue certain projects. As well, provincial restrictions need to be addressed because in certain issues participants felt “hopeless” because the province has not been addressing the issues and concerns that the Township has brought forth in previous years.

Environment

Overview

Environmental concerns will demand a great amount of attention in order to ensure the sustainability of South Algonquin. This "Environment" section will deal with issues ranging from recycling, natural resources, wildlife, and alternative energy methods. South Algonquin's natural environment is a vital part of its residents' everyday lives and, accordingly, must be adequately protected in the new official plan. Through the participation of community members and organizations, along with the adoption of firm policies aimed at preserving the Township's precious natural resources, South Algonquin's natural environment can be preserved so that it remains one of the Township's most endearing features.

Participants' Responses (Individual)

What would you consider a major concern affecting South Algonquin's natural environment?

- All plans need to be sensitive to Aboriginal rights to harvest in an environmentally responsible way, governed by conservation
- Less tourists
- Having too many policies allowing too much growth
- Wise forest management
- Be vigilant in avoiding water pollution
- Denied access to crown land
- Over development
- Stop hazards - planning/consent
- Non-renewable resources need to be protected
- Hydro dams need to be monitored by environmental assessment act
- Commercial road signs along highway - visual pollution were destroying the beauty that people came here to see
- Lull of the geese population
- Causing turbidity in water from goose poop
- Erosion of shoreline of Madawaska River and Bark Lake by Hydro-one control of water levels too high sometimes
- We need to secure our sub surface ownership to prevent future plans for mineral exploration or deep disposal of nuclear waste
- Limit motor use on lakes in respect to ongoing water sampling
- Need to establish a threshold of concern to be proactive
- ATV trails are interfering with natural wet areas in creeks and marshes
- We have clean water and air but must actively protect it
- Limit the size of outboard motors on the Madawaska River
- Protection of the water

- Water quality in the Madawaska River downstream from large water users i.e. Bear Trail
- Bear hunting around dumpsites should not be allowed, more public awareness concerning bear population “bear awareness programs”
- Spring bear hunt, bring it back
- Limits on stopping wolves and leave them
- Focus on the township as a whole not on individual communities
- Eye sores on private properties
- Large amounts of engine based recreation e.g. ATV, snowmobile, rather than human effort (bicycling and skiing)
- Only allow minimum level industry
- The introduction of unwanted species such as zebra mussels to our lakes
- Old septic systems and septic systems to close to rivers and lakes
- Industry that would affect the water quality of the area
- Placing businesses that pollute near water (e.g. Horse barn drains into Galeairy Lake)
- Logging
- Too much industry
- We could use the methane at the dump to produce electricity
- The negligence of people who throw garbage out of vehicles
- The lack of viable space for a new dump for airy ward
- Garbage disposal
- Lack of recycling program facilities
- Lack of septic system monitoring
- Garbage left behind by visitors, educate people
- Illegal dumping on back lots and trails
- We need wisdom in how we handle our waste

Summary

Based on the responses posted by workshop participants and at the public meetings, the most significant issues with which people are concerned were: garbage; industry; wildlife; pollution; water quality; and resources found within the Township. It can also be seen that many people are concerned with the environmental aspects of their community and they want to make sure that they are preserved or taken care of for the future. One of the major issues that was seen from this list and was repeated several times was the concern with recycling.

Participants’ Responses (Focus Groups)

Recycling was the main issue that people wanted to discuss when it came to the environment; indeed, this may have been the most widely discussed topic of all those covered during the workshop sessions. It was stated several times by participants that they were ashamed or embarrassed that there was no recycling program available within the Township. The participants viewed recycling as something important that they would like to see initiated, but

they also recognized that one of the main problems was cost. Many suggestions were made in regards to how to implement the program in a cost effective way. The most common response was to create a joint venture with Algonquin Park, where a recycling program has recently been initiated. With South Algonquin's close proximity to the park, several participants felt that engaging in such a partnership would be the most beneficial way to introduce a cost-effective recycling program within the Township. Another suggestion regarding the creation of a recycling program was for residents to simply pay a few dollars a month themselves to have the service.

As part of the discussions about recycling, it was also questioned as to whether a green box (i.e., composting) program should also be introduced. Many participants were unfamiliar with the nature of such a program, but felt that, if it were combined with an appropriate and informative educational/marketing campaign, they might consider doing it as well. Their main fear was the possibility of attracting wild animals to those locations where the compost material was being stored; however, one participant suggested that this could be solved quite simply by ensuring that the containers used in the program were "animal-proof".

A further topic discussed by participants was the Township's waste disposal sites. Some residents were worried about capacity of the dumps, although both have been said to have the capacity for almost another twenty years worth of Township waste. The other two issues related to waste disposal sites were accessibility concerns and what was being thrown away. Many participants felt that public access to the sites was insufficient. Residents often do not have access due to scheduling conflicts and are then leaving it outside the dump. As well, it was suggested that some individuals are even throwing away things that should not be there. This had some participants worried about the possible negative health and environmental impacts of such actions.

Water pollution was discussed briefly with concern about the possibility of major businesses located on Township water bodies polluting the water. Another concern regarding this type of pollution is that manure from farms located within close proximity to a water body could drain into the water and cause contamination. Participants also raised issues of motorized watercraft polluting the water as well. A suggested solution was to regulate the engine sizes allowed on certain lakes. Along with this issue was the concern of water levels dropping due to hydroelectric activities on some Township water bodies, with some participants expressing concerns about the various environmental and public health and safety impacts these might have.

Issues concerning animals, both wild and domestic, were raised in the discussions on numerous occasions. The concerns with domestic animals were primarily about animals running loose and about owners not picking up their animals' waste. In the case of wildlife, the most pressing concern was their encroachment into settled areas and the subsequent threats this posed

to domestic animals. Some residents felt that the cause of this is a restricted hunting regulation which causes wildlife populations to increase. It was suggested that an education seminar be available for the residents of South Algonquin for how to deal with this problem.

Another major issue discussed in the focus groups was the growing importance of alternative energy forms. There have been proposals to erect wind turbines within the Township, and it was questioned how the residents feel about this. The answers were diverse, in that some people felt that it was a good thing that would be a good solution to help with high energy costs. Other participants thought that it was a good thing as long as they did not have to look at it. A few participants felt that, if done properly, it could be used as a tourist attraction and have a positive effect on the Township that way. It was widely stated that this should be looked into in more detail to also create job opportunities for local residents.

Solar energy was also discussed, albeit more briefly. Some felt that it would be good to pursue developments in this area, but that the cost of doing so might be a major problem. However, a few participants said that they would not mind changing over if there were incentives provided.

The idea of community or individual vegetable gardens was suggested as a means to grow local produce and provide the Township with fresh vegetables. However, some participants felt that younger generations would not be motivated to be involved in such an initiative or that animals may eat them. It was suggested that a farmer's market day could be established, at which they could be sold; this was also seen as a possible opportunity to encourage socialization among community members.

In terms of the alternative energy forms and the vegetable gardens, it was widely stated that educational seminars should be provided to the community to learn more about them.

Conclusion

The first main issue that people in the Township are concerned with is recycling. Residents felt strongly towards a recycling program and were in agreement that one should be implemented. Wildlife in the Township is becoming more of a concern. Animals are starting to encroach on resident's private property and are causing concerns for people's well-being (and that of their pets). Although it should be noted that not all people were concerned about wildlife and some felt that it was a problem that the province should deal with since it was hunting regulations that they feel caused the problem. The last major issue that was discussed was alternative energy forms. Several participants generally seemed enthusiastic about the possibility of introducing new methods of generating electricity and would like to see more alternative methods in their townships if it were to help with energy costs.

Conclusion

Combined, the community workshop sessions and public meetings revealed that many residents truly appreciate the quality-of-life they enjoy in the Township of South Algonquin and that they wish not only to preserve it, but also to enhance it even further. It would have been ideal for all participants to agree on each issue, but, of course, that was not expected. There was, however, a great deal of agreement on many issues. Everyone is well aware of what living in a rural community generally entails and what its limitations are. Many services and amenities can only be made available in larger urban centres, but there are still ways that an official plan can assist in improving the quality-of-life in South Algonquin.

A common theme throughout the information sessions was that people want more autonomy when it comes to the use and development of their properties and also when it comes to planning the future growth and development of the Township of South Algonquin itself. The creation of a new official plan will help South Algonquin achieve this greater level of autonomy; however, it must be kept in mind that numerous provincial planning policies and other forms of government legislation must be respected throughout the formulation of this document. When completed, the official plan will not instantly bring to South Algonquin everything the participants have expressed that they would like. The adoption of an official plan will, however, provide a good framework for any development that takes place thereafter and will provide a certain level of self-governance that does not currently exist.