Four Steps to a Defensible Planning Decision

Haldimand County

1 Gather the Evidence

- Planning reports
- Technical studies
- Public input
- Consultation feedback

2 Apply the Policy Framework

- Planning Act
- Provincial Planning Statement
- Official Plan
- Zoning Bylaw

3 Follow a Fair Process

- Keep an open mind
- Treat applicants fairly
- Follow established procedures
- Ask respectful questions

4 Make a Decision

- Evidence-based
- Policy-aligned
- Clearly explained
- Able to withstand appeal

Council Checkpoint: Is this decision defensible?

- ✅ Was all relevant evidence considered?
- ✅ Was the process fair and impartial?
- ✅ Is the decision consistent with planning policy?
- ✅ Is the rationale clearly documented?

⚠ **Planning decisions are different from many other Council decisions.** Pre-judging applications, making public commitments before hearings, relying on incomplete information or departing from established processes can increase the risk of appeals, allegations of bias, legal challenges, and loss of public trust.