

Planning and Development Council Meeting

January 17, 2022

**Comments Received Regarding Item 7.3 - Update Report - Regional
Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy,
January 17, 2022**



Council is being asked to endorse Halton Region's proposed "Preferred Growth Option" which includes turning over 5000 acres of farmland and greenspace for development in Milton and Halton Hills.

This growth option, is being billed by some as a "compromise" but it would be unconscionable, to condone continued, expensive, unsustainable suburban sprawl in a climate emergency.

Staff Report re Preferred Growth Concept

Endorsing the Preferred Growth Concept (PGC) is premature. There are very crucial considerations, studies and pieces of information missing, as noted in the Town of Oakville Staff report. Some major studies will only be conducted AFTER the vote, which seems backwards. This is corroborated by Staff's comment:

".... there remains a significant concern with the sequence of the (ROPR) Regional Official Plan Review work plan and the priority in which matters are being addressed. It appears out of order to be dealing with fundamental policies on agriculture, the Natural Heritage System and climate change after growth management matters, including settlement area boundary expansions have been decided at Regional Council."

The Oakville Staff report lays out concerns and objective warnings for the proposed growth plan. It states that expanding into greenfields will not mitigate the climate change emergency.

"Decisions to expand settlement areas will permanently alter future land uses in Halton Region. Furthermore, the Region's climate change analysis has demonstrated that expanding communities into new greenfield areas will not help mitigate the climate change emergency,

compared to intensifying growth within compact communities, and established built-up areas."

Staff warn of the irreversible nature of such a monumental decision:

"Once lands are designated for urban development through a settlement area boundary expansion, that decision is unlikely to be reversed, even if it is later determined that those lands are not required to accommodate growth."

Staff in same report state:

"Throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS), town staff have consistently expressed support for a Preferred Growth Concept that does not open up new lands for development and that achieves a high rate of intensification within a defined urban structure."

It seems that in its report to Council, Staff are far, far from recommending the Preferred Growth Concept (PGC) currently on the table tonight.

Perspective Needed

A wise colleague summarized this growth decision perfectly in 2 succinct points:

Land use decisions in north Halton DO impact us all...and our future.

We are **all Halton residents**, and thus we expect **all** elected officials at the Regional table to be applying a region-wide lens on this decision.

Secondly, there are no borders when it comes to the impacts of escalating climate change and local food security.

Facts about public/voter input; via Halton Region's poll

I bring to your attention the results published by Halton Region, after virtual public input in fall 2021. **62% of Participants were in favour of a NO Urban Boundary Expansion.** This is a significant endorsement by residents. The distant second option, was only supported by 15% of residents.

In the same report, Halton Region asked residents to identify the top 3 "themes" for the development of a growth concept. They are, in order of number of votes, most importantly: Addressing Climate Change, Protecting

Agricultural land and the Farm Economy, and Affordability of Housing, followed closely by 2 other options, Choice in Housing Options and Maximizing Preservation of Natural Heritage.

All of these can and must be achieved without costly suburban sprawl.

This sounds like the voice of the people with a pretty clear message that Councillors should heed.

In conclusion, be suspicious of placating statements about 'ongoing monitoring' or that 'decisions made now will be fine- don't worry' or 'this won't affect us now, it's a long way off'.

Make no mistake. This type of placation fails to address the actual fact ...that if that 5000 acres is opened up for development as per the Preferred Growth Concept... it's gone.... really gone...gone forever.

The decision by councillors within Halton, will lock in land use for the next 30 years...to 2051. It may be the most crucial and visible decision that you ever make as a councillor.

Taxpayers and future generations will thank you, if you make a decision to reject the Preferred Growth Concept.

Oakvillegreen is NOT in favour of the Preferred Growth Concept...we are asking for a NO Urban Boundary Expansion option. Any compromise would be unconscionable and ill-advised.

Thank you.

Karen Brock
President, Oakvillegreen
c/o 2089 Nipigon Drive,
Oakville, ON L6H 4G3

**A presentation to Oakville Council on Oakville Planning Services Report on the
Regional planners Preferred Growth Option**

January 17th 2022

Thank you, Mayor for the opportunity to address Council this evening. As most of you know, I am Mervyn Russell, a retired clergy person who has lived in Oakville for 15 years I am a member of Halton Action for Climate Emergency Now, [HACEN] and, through HACEN, a participant in the Stop Sprawl Halton campaign.

I want to begin by congratulating Oakville Planning Services on an excellent report. It is clear, even to a layperson such as myself. But more than that, it is a report that I would suppose all the people who are supporting Stop Sprawl Halton could agree with. I like this report because it implicitly does not support the Preferred Growth concept recommended by the Region's planners. I believe it implicitly disagrees with the Preferred Growth Concept because that concept does not abide by the criteria that Oakville planners consider good practice, criteria that they mention several times and which environmentalists involved in the Stop Sprawl Halton campaign, strongly endorse.

This disagreement between Oakville planners and the Region's planners is expressed in Oakville's planners questioning the Region's planners methodology, procedures and proposals.

As regards methodology, the Oakville report questions and finds incongruous [the report's word] the Region's planners' decision to lower the proportion of growth assigned to intensification in Delineated Built Up Areas [[DBUA] from the Provincial government's Growth Plan requirement of 50% to 45%.

It would seem from the Oakville staff report that this change of ratios was made by the Region to accommodate Oakville's existing planned urban structure. This structure was planned and put into practice, under a different Provincial Government, with different land needs assessments. The present land needs assessments cause a serious problem for Oakville because these assessments express the present Provincial Government's required ratio of low density, ground based, single dwellings. This density cannot be accommodated in Oakville's only Designated Greenfield Area which is north of Dundas Street. This area is already

under development as part of Oakville's compact neighbourhoods, urban structure. To accommodate Oakville's deficit the Region's procedure has been to make it up somewhere else, namely in Milton and Halton Hills, resulting in the proposal to expand their urban boundaries into 5,000 acres of grades 1, 2 and 3 farmland. As I understand it, it is to protect Oakville's urban structure, that the Oakville staff report gives qualified, conditional support to endorsing the Region's Preferred Growth Concept, and, I presume, why you, Mayor, have been campaigning for the PGC's adoption.

And that is understandable. But, is it good enough? Should Oakville's benefit be to the detriment of the environment that affects us all? Oakville's urban structure is based on good planning and environmental principles. Should this not also be the case for the rest of Halton? According to the way I read the Oakville staff report, that is its position, and why it so clearly criticizes the procedure and positions expressed in the Preferred Growth Concept.

The staff report suggests three ways by which that this win, win objective can be achieved.

The first is to open a negotiation with the Land Needs Assessment Board to seek a revision of the ratios between apartments and single ground-based dwellings since these assessments do not coincide with documented, real time, market demand in Oakville and, possibly, Halton.

The second is to insist that the Region take into account, and I quote: 'There are lands currently designated for urban development throughout the region that could accommodate additional population and employment growth beyond what the Region has allocated '

The third is to insist that the Region carries out assessments of the impact of the PCG on Halton's agricultural and heritage systems, and its impact upon climate change in the region.

The LNA's assessment of market demand for single, ground based dwellings at the low density required by the province, will result in urban sprawl with all its undesirable environmental, community and urban maintenance costs.

Keeping excellent, food producing farmland in a climate emergency, retains a source of carbon absorption, food security, recreation and spiritual revitalization.

As the Oakville staff report says, farmland should be preserved. Once let go, it is lost forever.

If Council endorses this staff report I hope it will at the same time make it clear that that does not mean it endorses the Preferred Growth Concept as is, and that Oakville intends to have further negotiations with the region on the basis of the areas of concern raised in the Oakville staff report.

Thank you, your worship. I am ready to answer any questions.

Mervyn Russell Jan 17th 2022

-----Original Message-----

From: Janet Duval

Sent: January 16, 2022 1:32 PM

To: Town Clerk <TownClerk@oakville.ca>

Subject: Monday item 7.3 The party's over

Hello

It was nice that many of us could grow up in big houses with big yards, but that party is over. It depended on the car, it created huge carbon emissions, and it discouraged healthy walking to shops and work. We have to think and build differently if we want our children to have a future.

While I live in Georgetown, your decision on Monday night affects me and everyone in Halton and beyond. Please vote against urban boundary expansion. You declared a climate emergency. Now please act like it!

Janet Duval, Georgetown

Received from Manju Sekhri, January 17, 2022 at 11:45 a.m.

To the members of Oakville's Regional/Town Council,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide input into Halton's urban development plan. While I am a resident of Milton and my statements are directed to my neighborhood. But as our more well-established neighbor, Oakville does have significant influence over what happens in Halton overall, which is why I am sharing this letter with you today.

Let me begin by stating that I have reviewed the plan and oppose the "Preferred Expansion" option and support Option 3B.

This letter explains why I believe Option 3B best supports Milton's projected growth in a fiscally and environmentally responsible way, while retaining its heritage.

I want to provide full transparency, to provide some background and context about myself:

- My husband and I lived in Mississauga for 5 years before moving to our current residence Omagh, Milton in the late 90s. Some of the key decisions that factored into this move were:
 - Affordability (vs Mississauga)
 - Community "Small Town" Feel
 - Proximity to nature/green spaces
- Our home in Omagh, Milton:
 - Is rural and sits on 1/2 acre of land, flanked by multiple rural homes and farms.
 - We are the 2nd owners of this property.
 - Will see much large-scale suburban expansion in the next few years.
 - Is a large space and is expected to gain significant property value as a result of the current development plan.
- My husband and I are partners in life and in business. Together, we have successfully run a software development and consultancy business for 30+ years, that has taken us to over 27 countries across all continents.
- I volunteer and fundraise for many not-for-profits like Sustainable Milton and Stop Sprawl Halton, but also Milton Pickleball Association, Prime Care Health Team, Out of the Cold Program (Hamilton), Halton Food for Thought to name a few. With these experiences, I feel I have a fairly balanced view across many domains.

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Through our work engagements in other countries, particularly Europe, my family had a chance to experience what it's like to live in walkable, bike-able, denser communities and this was what we noticed:

- Low-rise apartments formed a large portion of the urban plan.
- High-rises were reserved primarily for core city centres.
- Apartments were stylish, spacious and very liveable. Many had a common courtyard, shared with all residents.
- A lot of attention was put into making sure that all residences and businesses had great curb appeal.
- Housing prices ranged widely, supporting a wide demographic all in the same community.
- Accessibility was central to all home and neighborhood plans/design:
 - A great deal of attention is to create neighborhoods that are not dependent on cars.
 - Apartments, townhouses and semi-detached homes are all equipped with elevators/ramps etc. to account for strollers, bicycles, grocery carts, wheelchairs, etc.
 - In the event stairs were needed, there was common space/storage on the main floor to support resident mobility around the neighborhood
- Most low-rise apartment complexes were mixed-use of residential and business, creating lots of affordable spots for first time home owners/businesses in central locations.
- Density allowed for larger, common, multi-use green spaces that became the centre of countless social interactions and outdoor events for the community. This was true even in the busiest city centres.
- Public transit was conveniently located within 300m in any direction, making it the cost practical, low-cost, first choice for travel.
- Large businesses/companies that were located outside the city centre in business-parks.
 - Most of these companies organized their own bus/transport service to and from the city centre for their employees.
 - These private transport services is seen as an employee benefit and reduced, even further, costs and dependency on other forms of transport.
 - It was also a very stress-free, social mode of transport.
- Groceries, hospitals, convenience stores, gyms and other amenities are all located in walkable/bike-able distances from our home and office.

The experience had so many unexpected benefits:

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- Beyond the obvious reduction in costs, living in neighbourhoods that puts people above cars made us realize the amount of effort that goes into planning outings around car-use.
- Walking and biking became part to our daily routine, and we all got fitter and leaner without even thinking about it.
- Proximity created more casual social interactions and, particularly for my elderly mother, this had significant positive outcomes. My mom felt less lonely and isolated. It was a lot easier for her to meet new people.
- My teenage daughter also enjoyed the freedom of going to see her friends independently. It gave her confidence and exposure to many useful, practical life skills.

So, while I love my Milton home, when it came time for my husband and I to think about retirement and my daughter's future, none of wanted to continue to live in a community that continues to revolves around car-use.

When we started looking for areas that met some of this criterion, nothing in Milton was available within our budget. Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo were the closest.

How did we get here?

Daily, I watch from my living room window, us literally bulldoze a path already well-traveled. One day I see "Environmentally Sensitive Area" signs up. The next day these signs disappear and farms/trees are levelled. That is not OK.

We seem committed to this "one-size-fits-all" model and seem to be well on our way to becoming the next Brampton or Mississauga, where suburban sprawl is front-and-center, cars are "King", local farmlands are gone and traffic define our way of life.

I cannot fathom why we seem to be so invested in these old ideas and so quick to give away our local character in the name of progress. Especially when there is no financial, emotional or social benefit to a majority of its residents.

According to Dr. Saxe,

“Most Ontarians live inconveniently far from jobs, grocery stores, libraries and schools, because government decisions about land use and transportation have given them no real alternative.”

Perhaps there was a time when this type of urban development methodology made sense. But that time has long since gone.

We are at the center of a climate crisis and the decision by Council today can help change the trajectory we are on. More than ever, we need fresher, creative ideas that provide better synergies between people, the environment and industry because we all know:

- The climate-crisis is real.
- Housing affordability is a critical issue and creating inclusive communities is key to solving this.
- We are stewards of this land and we must find a way to live *with* it rather than *on* it.
- Suburban sprawl is not sustainable in the long-term.
- Local food supply is critical for our long-term food security.

To quote Maya Angelou:

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

We can no longer ignore the science or the facts. We know better. So, we need to do better. This Council has the power to create liveable, walkable, bike-able communities, that will benefit generations to come. It just requires the political will to do the right thing.

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Milton/Halton can and should forge a different path.

Council should vote against the “Preferred Option”.

Council should vote for no urban boundary expansion.

Council should vote for Option 3B.

Thank you,

Manju Sekhri
Brian VanHeesch
Sasha VanHeesch