

# Memo

To: Mayor Burton and Members of Council  
From: Planning, Design and Development  
CC: Neil Garbe, Commissioner, Community Development Services  
Date: 11 April, 2024  
**Subject: Oakville Estimated Population in 2051**

---

## **Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) is a key provincial tool used to guide where and how growth within Greater Golden Horseshoe should happen.

Schedule 3 in the Growth Plan indicates that Halton Region needs to plan and manage growth for 1.1 million people and 500,000 jobs by the year 2051. The Growth Plan indicates that this is the minimum population and employment that Halton Region needs to plan for.

## **Halton Region Integrated Growth Management Strategy & Land Needs Assessment**

In order to figure out where and how to distribute this planned growth, Halton Region developed an Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS), with the participation of the local municipalities in Halton (Oakville, Burlington, Milton, and Halton Hills).

Part of the IGMS work was a Land Needs Assessment (LNA) that determined how much land would be needed to accommodate the growth required by the Growth Plan. The LNA identified 375,000 people and 180,000 jobs for Oakville by 2051.

Town staff raised concerns, with which Oakville Council concurred (see [Update Report - Regional Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy, January 17, 2022](#)), that the population and employment forecasts in the LNA for Oakville may be underestimating the amount of growth that could be expected for Oakville, particularly in the short term to 2031.

The IGMS and LNA attempted to distribute population by working towards the fixed outcome of 1.1 million people and 500,000 jobs for Halton Region in 2051. A drawback to this approach is that the model did not fully account for the number of residential units

**Town of Oakville** | 1225 Trafalgar Road, Oakville L6H 0H3 | 905-845-6601 | oakville.ca

and anticipated population already being planned for in existing development applications currently under review in Oakville. It was evident from these applications under review that growth was already accelerated beyond what was expected in the LNA.

This also raised the question of when (or if) the anticipated urban boundary expansion in Halton would be required should Oakville realize the anticipated accelerated growth, particularly if the accelerated growth rate continued beyond 2031.

### **Regional Official Plan Amendment 49 (Halton Region Official Plan Review)**

The IGMS and LNA were a foundation for Halton Region's Official Plan update. Regional Official Plan Amendment 49 (ROPA 49) was adopted by Regional Council without 2051 population and employment figures. Regional Council elected to advance growth in Halton to 2051 in two phases:

- for growth prior to 2041, where population and employment growth will be directed to the existing approved urban boundary; and
- for growth between 2041 and 2051, where a clear framework is provided for when and how planned growth will be distributed based on principles of minimizing land consumption, making the most efficient use of land and infrastructure, and achieving other principles of the Growth Plan.

Regional Council directed that the framework for growth between 2041 and 2051 be defined through another Regional Official Plan Amendment prior to, or in parallel with, the next statutory five-year official plan review.

As the approval authority for ROPA 49, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Province of Ontario) approved ROPA 49 with forty-five modifications in November 2022, inserting an Oakville population of 349,990 for 2051 into the Regional Official Plan.

Although this decision was pulled back by the Minister through Bill 150, it was later proposed to be reinstated through Bill 162 (currently in second reading). Throughout, the province has not provided any supporting information regarding this population forecast for Oakville. Nor does the 2051 population figure from the province include the Municipal Housing Pledge.

### **Municipal Housing Pledge**

In October 2022, the province requested select municipalities sign a housing pledge. For Oakville, this meant committing to facilitate 33,000 new housing units by 2032. Oakville agreed to this.

The municipal housing pledge does not represent new or additional growth. Rather, it represents a commitment to facilitate accelerated growth to 2032. Some of the growth represented by the municipal housing pledge is growth Oakville would have otherwise experienced. By committing to the municipal housing pledge, Oakville is facilitating growth that would have happened after 2031 to happen sooner than 2031. The municipal housing pledge is an attempt to facilitate a faster growth rate than otherwise anticipated over the next ten years to address the current housing supply crisis.

There is also no requirement in the municipal housing pledge to identify the housing types for these units (i.e. apartments, townhouses, single-detached, etc.). As such, the population to be generated from these units can only be estimated based on where the town is expecting to accommodate future housing. The town's official plan, through Oakville's urban structure, directs the majority of future growth to be accommodated in the town's strategic growth areas (i.e. Midtown Oakville, Uptown Core, Palermo Village, Trafalgar Urban Core, etc.). Apartment units will be the predominant form of future housing in these areas, which typically generate less population per unit than other forms of housing such as single-detached houses or townhouses.

### **Joint Best Planning Estimates (JBPEs)**

Halton Region and the local municipalities then worked on the Joint Best Planning Estimates (JBPE) to further understand where future population growth would be located within the region. This was an important exercise for two reasons:

1. to understand the impact of accelerated growth resulting from the Provincial Housing Pledge on the 2031-2051 timeframe; and,
2. to ensure that servicing capacity (water, sanitary and streets) will be available for those areas.

The JBPEs integrated several pieces to gain a better understanding of anticipated future growth within the region, including:

- the LNA from the IGMS,
- the municipal housing pledges,
- the local urban structures (i.e. where and how each local municipality is planning to accommodate future growth), and,
- the development applications recently approved and under review within local municipalities.

It is now evident from the JBPE exercise that Halton Region will experience faster growth than the targets identified in the Growth Plan (which are intended to be

minimums and the expectation is that municipalities will exceed these values) as well as the LNA prepared as part of the IGMS.

The JBPEs identify that Oakville is not the only local municipality in Halton that is, or will be, experiencing growth that is arriving quicker than anticipated by the IGMS and previous LNA. Based on the JBPEs, Halton is now expected to have a forecasted population of 1.39 million people in 2051. Oakville's share of that is 442,941 people in 2051.

The revised population figures in the JBPEs represent accelerated growth, rather than additional growth. This is growth for Halton and Oakville that would have otherwise come after 2051. It is now anticipated to arrive earlier (i.e. before 2051) due to the accelerated pace of population growth happening throughout Halton and the GTA generally.

Oakville is not anticipated to grow faster than its neighbours in Halton. Over the last couple of decades, Oakville has represented approximately 35% of the population of Halton Region. Oakville will continue to maintain this proportion with approximately 32% of Halton's population in 2051, as indicated in the JBPEs.

### **The Danger of Underestimating Growth**

The JBPEs remain the most reliable and relevant population estimate for Halton and Oakville to 2051.

It is vital to avoid underestimating the growth being anticipated as this jeopardizes the ability for Halton Region and the local municipalities to finance the hard and soft infrastructure to support the growth that is coming. Hard and soft infrastructure includes parks, roads, water and wastewater servicing, storm water management, libraries, schools, fire and emergency services, healthcare, and community centres.

Some of the dangers of under-planning for growth include:

- Master plans and budgets based on artificially low growth numbers, resulting in a shortage of community services, infrastructure and parks/open spaces;
- Growth funding tools may not be collecting appropriately for the land and infrastructure needed, and would require updates. This could result in delays to the key infrastructure required to support growth, impacts to service levels, and/or impacts to property taxes;
- Risk of increased appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal, whose cumulative decisions would govern development within the town, rather than having development that is directed by the Official Plan and town master planning;
- An endless cycle of attempting to “catch up” to development pressures; and,

- A loss of control of the town's vision for well-planned growth.

Ultimately, under-planning for growth will put the town in an undesirable position of being unable to secure the infrastructure and services for a complete community. The experiences of other comparator Urban Growth Centres across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area are cautionary tales.

One of the best ways to ensure that Oakville is not under-planning for anticipated growth is by planning for growth that is anticipated to come, rather than putting the municipality at risk by planning only for a minimum target if we expect more is coming.