

Province's planned changes to growth plan called 'insanity'

By CYNTHIA GAMBLE
Staff Writer

An irritated Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette says the "ink isn't even dry on the Place to Grow" document and already the Province is trying to change things.

Council recently endorsed a joint submission by Halton Region's and its four municipalities' planners, which called the Province's plan to introduce an amendment to the Growth Plan to shift the planning horizons from 2031 to 2041 as "premature".

The shift would mean an additional 15 per cent growth in Halton Region from the planned 780,000 people in 2031 to just over 1 million people in 2041. There are currently about 520,000 people living in the region.

"Now they're coming out with new numbers and coming out with a new study and all that's going to do is drive the prices of vacant land up," said the mayor.

"To say this is premature is definitely the right word, if not an understatement. At least let the Ontario Municipal Board decide what's going to happen on Places to Grow. ...It's ridiculous."

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville called it "insanity" and said the Provincial planners are pushing it through with their own agenda. He suggested some time for "pause" and "sober-second thought" would be more the appropriate action.

Other major planning studies are still underway, including The Big Move (transit), GTA West Corridor Study and the Source Water Protection Plan.

"If you're going to have a million people, you'll have to know how to move all these people," said Bonnette.

Councillor Dave Kentner, the Town's rep on the Source Water Protection Plan committee, agreed, saying, "You're going to have all these people here. What are they going to drink?"

The joint planner submission suggests this would be more appropriately considered when the Growth Plan comes up for review at its scheduled time in 2016.

At the same meeting council endorsed a Halton Region motion asking the Province to assume financial responsibility for the financial costs that will be incurred to defend the current provincially-mandated growth plans for Halton and Halton Hills at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearings

Nineteen weeks have been set aside this to deal with the more than 50 appeals to the Growth Plan. Halton Region has budgeted \$4.5 million for lawyer, consultants and staff time at the OMB hearings, said the mayor.

"That's a lot of dollars (for local taxpayers)," he said.

"This a provincial plan, and yet we have to pay to defend it," he said. "I think that is what is wrong."

While Bonnette said he doesn't think the resolution will go far, "hopefully it will make the Province think."

'If you're going to have a million people, you'll have to know how to move all these people.'

—Mayor Rick Bonnette



Hitmen not a hit with parents

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I was considering signing my daughter up but I think I'll keep her on the Twisters now."

At a meeting last Tuesday night, the HHMLA officially announced that Hitmen would be the nickname for traveling rep teams comprised of players from the former Georgetown and Acton youth organizations.

A contest to come up with a name for the new association was held last month at a fundraising hockey game for the Halton Hills Arena Users Group called the Coaches' Cup. Youth members were provided with a list to choose from potential

names consisting of the Heat, Hazard, Thunder, Hitmen, Raiders, Ice Hogs and Hammerheads.

According to organizers of the vote, close to 700 votes in favour of Hitmen were received.

The winner of the contest, 14-year-old Blake Ghesquiere of Georgetown's minor bantam AA Raiders, was promised a free registration for next season for coming up with the name.

His father Mike said that Highlanders was actually Blake's first choice, but he submitted Hitmen as well because the family lived in Calgary for three years and became fans of the Western Hockey League franchise known as the Hitmen.

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