

Places to Grow, people to see

Region seeks input on province's growth plan

BY DONNA DANIELLI

A public meeting held by Halton Region, asking for public input into the Region's response to the province's new growth management plan drew over two hundred residents, elected officials, school board representatives, and municipal staff planners from all of Halton's four municipalities.

The *Places to Grow* discussion paper is the first step towards the legislation and implementation of a growth plan that dictates where and how municipalities will grow, what infrastructure will be in place to support that growth and which areas of the Greater Golden Horseshoe will be protected from development.

"The purpose overall is to use our current urban lands more efficiently and take the pressure off of agricultural lands," explained Hannah Evans, Manager of Partnerships and Consultation for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

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A presentation by Jane Clohecy, Director of Planning and Transportation for Halton Region, unveiled the Region's draft response to the discussion paper. While the Region's response applauded the aspects of the discussion paper that outlined nodes and corridors, making transit a priority, compact urban boundaries and a focus on environmental protection, it also admitted an uneasiness with other aspects. Of particular concern for the Region and its municipalities is what they refer to as "the fuzzy peach" growth areas on the discussion paper. These ill

defined peach coloured areas on the maps identify a large, undetermined portion of North Halton as "future growth area - conceptual."

Clohecy pointed to the Halton Urban Structure Plan (HUSP) already in place, saying "There is sufficient land area to accommodate both a generous Greenbelt and 2031 growth and it is far less than the fuzzy peach area shown on the map." It is the Region's view that identifying such an unnecessarily broad base for potential growth both "raises expectations and creates speculation."

While Hannah Evans did not identify exactly where the boundaries of this conceptual growth area would fall within Halton, she did argue that "We're not suggesting that everything in this area is going to be paved over." She also pointed out that "eventually our urban boundaries may need to expand. We want to make sure that the process for that is ahead of the game."

While reactions to the presentations by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Halton region varied, one message came through loud and clear: Halton residents have serious concerns about the impending growth planned for their municipalities. Campbellville's Mike Grimwood, speaking on behalf of the Milton Rural Residents Association, maintained that "We don't agree with the notion that growth is needed for economic viability." Halton resident Helen Dutka pointed out that growth is actually driven by immigration numbers, which are the responsibility of the federal and provincial governments. "If you want to divert growth, why are a lot of the emerging urban centres in the west?" she asked. "Why not put them in areas where growth is needed?"

This sentiment was echoed by Milton Mayor Gord Krantz in an interview with the *Compass*. "What's going

to be done about immigration and migration from the eastern provinces?" he asked. "What is in place to help those growth areas besides the property tax base?"

"IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE BRAMPTONIZATION OF HALTON HILLS"

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette was dire in his predications of what uncontrolled growth could mean for his constituents. "If we're not careful, this is the beginning of the Bramptonization of Halton Hills," he said bluntly. He stressed the importance of intensification and urban separators. "Otherwise, we will be one big urban centre with no identity."

One of the few voices praising the province for the identification of the area in North Halton for future development came from Garry Stamm, an urban and regional economist representing the South Georgetown Land Owner's Association. "Ontario is growing at the rate of one City of Barrie per year... All of those new jobs and billions of dollars that pour in bring people with it," he argued. "We can't tell people not to put their factory in Milton, that you must put it in Peterborough."

Region staff noted all comments from the meeting and used them in compiling a report that was presented to the Planning and Public Works Committee on September 15, and will be presented to Regional Council on September 22. This report is accessible to the public through the Region's website at www.region.halton.on.ca. "It's very important to us to continue the dialogue with you," concluded Region Chair Joyce Savoline. "We can't do this alone, we need your input."

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