

# Urban sprawl is not sustainable

(This is the first part of a series of articles that will examine the challenge and potential solutions to urban sprawl, not only in Wellington-Halton Hills but throughout Canada.)

Urban sprawl represents a serious threat to our food supply. We are destroying much of the prime farmland needed to grow our own food. Good soil, good climate and consistent rainfall are needed to do that, precisely what we have in southern Ontario. We cannot assume the long-term security of our imported food supply. A disruption to imported foodstuffs would be devastating; Cuba has survived five decades without American automobiles, but would not survive a month without food.

Urban sprawl also represents a serious environmental threat. It is destroying thousands of acres of habitat for flora and fauna. Wellington and Halton alone are home to over a dozen species at risk of complete extinction, including the great egret and the green snake, due to habitat loss, most of it caused by urban sprawl.

Perhaps the strongest environmental argument against sprawl is the global threat presented by rising greenhouse gas emissions. In destroying this farmland, in creating this sprawl, we are constructing a high-carbon infrastructure system of highways and sprawling communities that will not only prevent us from reducing our greenhouse gasses, but will in fact ensure we only increase them.

If the environmental arguments remain unconvincing, then certainly the harsh economic reality must be faced. Over the last 50 years we have built an infrastructure system of highways and sprawling communities that we cannot afford to maintain.

There have been major bridge collapses in Montreal and Minneapolis. Closer to home, dozens of bridges and roads are in need of replacement. Even with record government

**Michael Chong**



revenues, there is simply not enough money to maintain all this infrastructure. As a result, property taxes continue to march upward. The ability of a city like Mississauga, built on low density sprawl, to raise property taxes from its population base is only half of that of Toronto.

Another reason is that municipalities have been prevented by the province from charging developers the full cost of development. One study found that for every dollar in development charges collected, \$1.40 in services were put in. Guess where the other 40 cents are coming from? From existing ratepayers, who are, in effect, subsidizing development.

More growth means rising property taxes. In addition, this infrastructure system was all built during that period when oil was cheap. What happens to sprawling suburbia and the commuter lifestyle when oil reaches \$200 a barrel and gas reaches \$3 a litre? Clearly, urban sprawl is not economically sustainable.

In some ways, the most important argument against urban sprawl is that we are destroying what is most beautiful and what we cannot ever re-create: the land. The land in which we live is intrinsically tied to who we are as Canadians. The way we treat it is a reflection of who we are as a people.

We can be reached at chongm@parl.gc.ca or at 866-878-5556.

—Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills

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Tuesday	1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Beginner/Intermediate
Thursday	8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	Beginner/Intermediate
Friday	8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	Beginner/Intermediate (10 weeks)

**Terra Cotta Community Centre\* (High Street, Terra Cotta, 15 mins. from Georgetown)**

Monday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Beginner/Intermediate
Tuesday Meditation	9:15 a.m. - 9:55 a.m.	(no charge)
Tuesday	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Beginner/Intermediate
Tuesday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Intermediate/Experienced
Wednesday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Beginner/Intermediate

For details and registration call: 519-833-9402

**tdi Dance Center** 17 Mill St. East Acton 519-853-8628  
website: [www.tdidancecenter.com](http://www.tdidancecenter.com)  
email: [info@tdidancecenter.com](mailto:info@tdidancecenter.com)

**10 WEEK WINTER PROGRAMS**

<b>Belly Dance</b> (Ladies 17+) Fri. 7:30 - 8:30 pm Program Fee: \$130	<b>Tip Toe Toddlers</b> (2 1/2 - 4 yrs.) Sat. 11:30 - 12:00 pm Program Fee: \$65	<b>Hip Hop Hurray</b> (5 - 8 yrs.) Sat. 12:00 - 12:30 pm Program Fee: \$65	Also Classes offered by Dorri Bland CDTA <b>Couples Ballroom</b> <b>Ladies Latin Jam</b> <b>Dance Fit</b> Please call Dorri at 905-873-4907 for more info
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All fees include GST.  
Register at TDI Dance Center the week of Jan. 7/08  
10 week classes begin week of Jan. 14/08

**NORTH HALTON POWER & SAIL**

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