

# Regional council endorses response to the Province's growth management strategy

By MELANIE HENNESSEY  
The Champion

A municipal and regional response paper to the Province's growth management strategy has been endorsed by Halton council and is off to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal today.

The strategy came forward this summer through a discussion paper entitled 'Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future', a document aimed at stopping urban sprawl and focusing compact development on 11 priority urban centres and 15 emerging urban centres.

Milton and Burlington's cores have been listed as emerging urban centres and downtown Oakville a priority urban centre.

Regional and municipal staff prepared a joint submission to the discussion paper, taking into consideration input from the public and councillors.

Halton Director of Planning and Transportation Jane Clohecy presented highlights of the submission to regional council Wednesday.

Generally, the document is supportive of what the Province is doing, but staff have concerns about the future growth area that has been identified, a strip running across southern Ontario that cuts through an area designated for agriculture between Burlington and Oakville.

"The main concern is that they've identified too much urban land within those boundaries for a 30-year plan," Ms Clohecy said at a meeting earlier this month on the discussion paper. "There's really no planning rationale."

The paper suggests the future growth area be removed from the plan altogether and that defining new urban boundaries should be left up to municipalities.

The response paper also said the Province should set public transit as its first priority in investing in

public infrastructure and that the strategy would be best delivered through regional and local official plan policies.

"I don't agree with everything, but I can live with it," said Burlington Mayor and Regional Councillor Rob MacIsaac of the response paper.

Council members once again heard presentations suggesting that growth pressures could be redirected from other regions to Halton and the Region should embrace it.

"Halton has a unique opportunity in the future to become a relatively substantive employment hub in the GTA, if council wishes," said Neil Rodgers of the Urban Development Institute/Ontario.

Burlington and Regional Councillor John Taylor was quick to voice his opinion that the growth called for in the plan shouldn't have to be accepted by the Region.

## One part debated

One part of the staff recommendation caused lengthy debate, which stated that when the growth strategy and greenbelt plan are finalized, staff will report back on the realignment of the official plan to ensure consistency with the new provincial mandates.

Mr. Taylor put forward an amendment to the recommendation for staff to report back on the implications of the plan and what courses of action, including legal remedies, the Region should undertake to ensure the regional vision is achieved.

"We have prided ourselves in Halton in having an urban structure plan," said Mr. Taylor. "The government is proposing taking the area below the escarpment and making it available for urban development. It is a massive change. It's completely different than our vision."

But, Burlington and Regional Councillor Mike Wallace said he

thought the amendment was worded too strongly.

"I find this amendment slightly threatening," he said.

In a recorded vote, Mr. Taylor was the only person to support the amendment.

Burlington and Regional Councillor Carol D'Amelio then put forward an amendment to Mr. Taylor's amendment, taking out the wording about legal remedies.

But, after more council discussion, she decided to withdraw it. Mr. Taylor tried to reintroduce it, but couldn't get anyone to second the motion.

In the end, council endorsed the original staff recommendation.

The topic also came up at Milton's administration and planning standing committee Monday night, where some councillors voiced their concerns and displeasure with the provincial initiative.

Wards 1 and 3 Councillor Barry Lee said it's one of the most disappointing things he's seen since he's been on council and that it disregards the Halton urban structure plan.

"This pays no regard to it whatsoever," he said. "There's an agenda here I don't think we fully understand."

Ward 4 Councillor John Challinor, who recently brought forward a resolution at council calling on the federal government to review its immigration policy, said the growth plan should be set aside for now until the policy is reviewed.

He said the document fails to deal with the challenges growth presents and makes a number of assumptions, such as that money will magically appear to support infrastructure.

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# Construction to start on new public school in the east end

It's another sign of growth.

An official ground-breaking ceremony will take place Monday morning for a new public elementary school.

The ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. at 850 Bennett Blvd., where the new school will be built in the

town's east end.

This new school is being built to address growth in Halton in accordance with the Halton District School Board's Capital Strategic Plan.

Construction will begin immediately said board officials, with the

official opening being anticipated for next September.

To get to the school site, take Derry Road to Thompson Road South, and turn south. Turn east onto Yates Drive and take it to Bennett Boulevard. Turn south to the site.

## Ontario's new free vaccines will protect kids

The government of Ontario is helping kids stay safe from **chicken pox** and **meningococcal meningitis**, and helping families by adding these free vaccinations to the routine immunization schedule. Here's how it works:

- Vaccines for chicken pox and meningococcal meningitis are now available for one-year-old children in Ontario born on or after September 1, 2003.
- Starting in January 2005, 5-year-olds who haven't had chicken pox can also get the vaccine, as well as high-risk people of any age.
- Also starting in January 2005, 12-year-olds, 15- to 19-year-olds and high-risk people of any age will be eligible for free meningococcal meningitis vaccinations.

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