

Municipalities send clear message to Province on 'Places to Grow' plan

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The Province needs to do a better job when it comes to consulting with the public on its proposed Places to Grow plan.

That's one of the messages the Region and its municipalities deliver in a joint response paper they recently sent to the minister of public infrastructure renewal regarding the initiative, which aims to stop urban sprawl and focus compact development on urban growth centres, including downtown Milton and Burlington and midtown Oakville.

Other recommendations to the Province contained within the joint submission, which Halton council endorsed at its meeting last week, include:

- Recognizing the important contribution of the local municipalities in setting and implementing policies of the growth plan.
- Enunciating a clear strategy in dealing with the management of solid waste and bio-solids in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- Ensuring adequate funding is available to meet the human services needs of the future population, in addition to building community infrastructure.

Prior to approving the response paper at last week's meeting, regional council members first heard local residents' concerns regarding the Places to Grow plan.

Local farmer Lieven Gevaert, acting on behalf of the Milton Rural Residents Association, noted the group feels that no green land in Halton should be urbanized before 2021.

He added the group also wants to see development densification applied equally across the region.

"There should be no preferred part of Halton where densification is ignored," he said. "Every citizen must have the opportunity to contribute to the densification process, which is held so dear to the Places to Grow philosophy and by the vast majority of citizens."

Bert Andrews of Andrews' Scenic Acres also stopped by the Halton Regional Centre to share his thoughts on the issue.

He said he thinks the growth plan does nothing to reduce the average age of farmers in Ontario — 59 years old — or increase the demand for Ontario-

grown food.


He noted that in British Columbia, the ministries of health, education and agriculture work together on a school fruit and vegetable program that improves children's health and increases the market for locally-grown produce — something he'd like to see happen in Ontario.

"I think we all need to do our best to lobby that all these ministries work together (in Ontario)," he said. "We need to spend money on promoting Ontario-grown food."

The Province is expected to approve the Places to Grow plan this spring.

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