

Hefty funding needed to pay for growth: Carr

Regional chair says Halton municipalities don't have the money to implement policy of Province's 'Places to Grow' plan

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Regional Chair Gary Carr wants to make something very clear to the Province — there's no way Halton can accommodate thousands of extra residents the Places to Grow plan calls for unless it receives some hefty funding to do so.

The head of regional council gave notice to his colleagues Wednesday that he plans to introduce a motion to that effect at council's March 7 meeting.

The resolution says the Region and its four municipalities can't make way for the massive population increase slated for the area in Ontario's Places to Grow plan unless the Province commits to providing Halton with the needed financial capacity to address infrastructure deficits and requirements.

"This says to the Province that action is required before we proceed," Carr told *The Champion*. "We believe we don't have the capability financially to implement the policy of Places to Grow. We're going to be asking them for some changes."

The provincial plan, which directs where future growth will go in Ontario, says Halton's population is required to increase to 780,000 by 2031 — a jump of more than 300,000 over today's population.

But Halton has its own set of staggering numbers that it wants the Province to know about first, such as:

- The combined local infrastructure

deficit of \$300 million as a result of growth to date

- The additional \$4.8 billion needed for municipal infrastructure like roads and sewers to support the growth required in Places to Grow

- The extra \$3.8 billion required for provincial infrastructure like hospitals and schools to keep up with the growth plan.

"I think the numbers certainly shocked a lot of us," Carr said. "It just shows you the magnitude of the situation we face. Taxpayers just can't afford to pay for these services."

The Region has also prepared a summary that lists what the combined \$8.6 billion is needed for to handle the growth, including 1,100 new hospital beds, 50 elementary schools, 14 secondary schools, 1,650 acres of parkland, 22 firehalls, 11 local transit facilities, 175 buses and more.

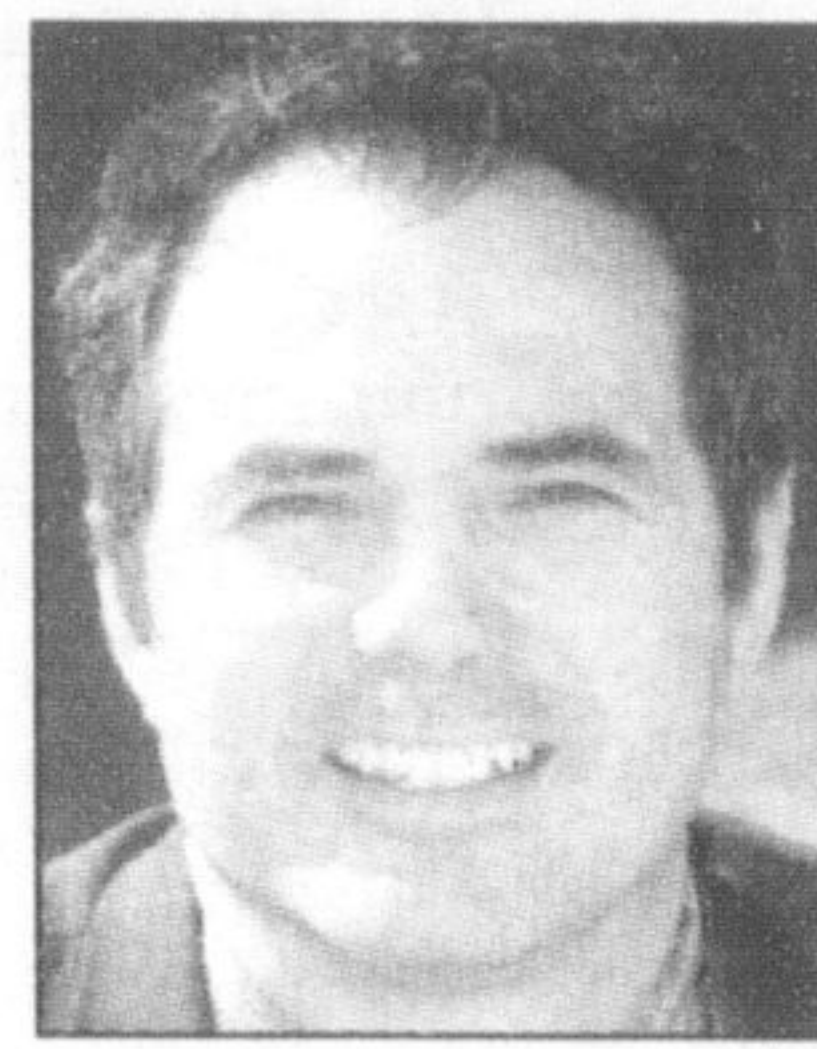
To address the shortfalls, the motion asks the Province to provide an enhanced municipal infrastructure funding program and make changes to the Development Charges Act, GTA pooling (the system that helps Toronto pay for its social services) and provincial cost sharing requirements.

It also calls for a funding plan to provide for the needed provincial infrastructure.

"I think they're going to realize we do have a problem, and we're giving them some very, very clear solutions," Carr said.

In addition to being on regional council's agenda, the motion will also go before the four local municipalities for consideration, likely before Halton's March 7 meeting.

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Gary Carr

Halton's child care plan approved by council

A five-year plan for child care delivery in Halton was approved by regional council Wednesday.

The document, entitled the Integrated Early Learning and Child Care Plan, aims to provide increased access for residents to quality early learning and child care opportunities.

It contains a long list of actions slated for the coming years, such as:

- Continuing collaboration with the community to expand centre-based licensed child care by two per cent annually
- Increasing integration services for children with special needs
- Increasing the number of licensed home child care providers by two per cent every year
- Distributing wage subsidies and wage improvement funding to child care workers

"Increasing the number of licensed child care spaces is a top priority for Halton," said Regional Chair Gary Carr.

"Without these spaces, waiting lists will continue to grow and those families most in need will not be able to access or afford the child care fees. However, we can't do it alone. We need to continue to work with the federal and provincial governments to find a way to fund early learning and child care in Halton and stabilize our child care system."

The plan reveals that Halton's exploding population has led to a dire need for child care spots, with a shortage of almost 9,000 licensed spaces.

All in all, the projected cost of meeting the region's child care needs from now until 2011 is \$94.5 million.

The plan was developed jointly by the Our Kids-Early Years/Our Kids Network and the Children's Services division.

A full copy of the document can be found at www.halton.ca.



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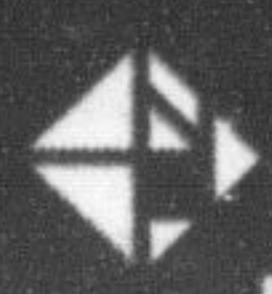
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