

Province defends growth plan

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forms the next government."

Burlington Mayor Cam Jackson shared similar sentiments. He said if the Province is going to "dictate" what goes on inside Halton's urban boundaries, then it has a moral obligation to become the Region's financial partner.

"Taxpayers can only afford so much," he said.

Meanwhile, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton said he thinks the motion delivers a helpful message to the Province.

"We want to remind them there's still time to keep their promise from the 2003 election to make growth pay for itself," he said.

At a press conference following the council meeting, Burton became critical of the Places to Grow plan. He told reporters that, in his opinion, the document has two faces — one that identifies areas for intensification (building in already-established places to prevent sprawl) and the other that identifies greenfield development (building on land that's currently 'green').

In those latter sections, Burton said the plan should be called "More Places to Sprawl."

While Krantz said he supports growth, he also indicated he's opposed to the large population numbers presented in Places to Grow.

Plan not creating growth: Province

But according to the Province, there are some misconceptions out there about the population forecast in the plan.

"People think the growth plan is creating growth. It's simply shining a light on it," said Brad Graham, assistant deputy minister for the Growth Secretariat at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. "We can either just let this growth occur, or we can actually plan for it."

He explained the premise of the plan is to use urban lands much more productively and use less green space, in turn avoiding an "endless sea of subdivisions."

In terms of the financial commitments Halton is looking for, Graham said the Province is committed to aligning its infrastructure spending with the priorities and populations set out in the growth plan.

He noted that the Province isn't the sole financier of infrastructure, pointing to development charges and the money pitched in by municipalities.

Graham also highlighted the fact that financial investment decisions get made over time, not all at once. For example, he said the Province created a Renew Ontario plan in 2005 — a five-year plan that allocates, amongst other things, \$7.5 billion for growth-related capital projects in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The motion from the Region, which was also supported by all four local municipalities, says Halton will need an additional \$4.8 billion for municipal infrastructure like roads to support the coming population increase and an extra \$3.8 billion for provincial infrastructure like hospitals.

Chairman Gary Carr said he hopes other municipalities will follow Halton's lead and crunch their own growth-related numbers. He also indicated he'll be meeting with each of the candidates whenever a provincial election is called to push the issue.

The chairman and four mayors took their message to Queen's Park yesterday. Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh and Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott were both on hand.

Chudleigh said there was only one news camera at the press conference, but that wasn't unusual because he said the media could be watching from elsewhere in the building.

Carr said press coverage wasn't the only purpose of the event, noting that the conference was televised at Queen's Park to all MPPs and staff.

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LIESA KORTMANN / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION
Milton Mayor Gord Krantz speaks to reporters during the press conference at the Halton Regional Centre Wednesday.

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