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Planning for Sustainability: Enhancing Our Quality of Life



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

Sustainability and sustainable development are top-of-mind terms and issues for people these days. They wonder when government, corporations and individuals will move forward to build a sustainable future in their community.

Through its Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 (ROPA 38), Halton Region has chosen a sustainable future that will continue to enhance people's quality of life.

It focuses on planned growth and building sustainable, healthy communities that will improve your ability to live, work, play and retire in Halton. Once approved by Regional Council, it will define Halton's new urban areas to 2031, identify an enhanced Natural Heritage System and improve support for agriculture.

This month, Halton Region will be taking ROPA 38 to public consultation.

A Little History...

In 2005, the province approved legislation and policies about growth in the GTA. The main documents coming out of this work were the Places to Grow Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

Soon after, the planning staff at Halton Region, in cooperation with the Local Municipalities of Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville, Conservation Authorities, and the Niagara Escarpment Commission, began the process of researching and creating Halton's response to these specific provincial requirements. The Region called this process Sustainable Halton.

Sustainable Halton is now in its final phase – where all of the research, ideas and recommendations are integrated into Halton's Regional Official Plan.

Getting It Right

It's a bit of a balancing act to make sense of all of this research, the provincial requirements, and expressed public and private opinions. Halton Region has to conform to the provincial growth requirements, ensure that the appropriate financial commitments are made and enhance the quality of life that everyone enjoys in Halton today.

To make sure that happens, Regional Council and the Region's planning staff need your assistance and input. They would like to hear what you think about the proposals outlined in ROPA 38.

Between now and December 2, 2009, you have five opportunities to have your voice heard in person. Come to one of Halton's public consultation sessions this month, or join the Planning and Public Works Committee Statutory Public Meeting on December 2nd (see sidebar). If you can't make any of those dates, send your thoughts in writing before November 12, 2009.

This fall when you're sitting in your backyard, hiking through one of Halton's many natural areas, or visiting one of the local farmers' markets, think what future you want for this community. Likely, it's one where the air is clean, the forests are green and food is locally produced.

Then, help determine how best to get there. Come to a public meeting, jump into the discussion at a public open house, or write a letter or email and give us your thoughts.

Help make Halton's future a truly sustainable one.

To learn more about ROPA 38, or to understand Halton Region's Official Plan Amendment process, go to www.halton.ca or email Perry.Vagnini@Halton.ca or call: 905-825-6000, ext. 7987 or 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866).

ROPA 38 Public Meetings

Wednesday, October 14, 2009
6 to 9 p.m. (Presentation at 7 p.m.)
Milton Seniors' Activity Centre,
500 Child's Drive, Milton

Thursday, October 15, 2009
6 to 9 p.m. (Presentation at 7 p.m.)
The Hall, Mold-Masters Sportsplex,
221 Guelph Street (Hwy #7),
Halton Hills

Tuesday, October 20, 2009
6 to 9 p.m. (Presentation at 7 p.m.)
St. Bernadette School,
1201 Heritage Way, Oakville

Wednesday, October 21, 2009
6 to 9 p.m. (Presentation at 7 p.m.)
St. John School, 653 Brant Street,
Burlington

Public Consultation Explained

Using ROPA 38 as an example, here's a quick summary of how public consultation generally works in Halton Region. Every consultation process is unique and can differ on points such as notification periods and number of public meetings.

What's In It For You?

Public consultation is the key to balanced, thoughtful and relevant public policy. Otherwise, governments wouldn't know if their policies mattered, if they made sense and if they had the right priorities.

How Does It Happen?

Public consultation on ROPA 38 in Halton Region follows four main steps.

- 1. Notice** – Telling you in advance through newspaper advertising when Halton's representatives would like to meet with you.
- 2. Reports** – Releasing reports to you before public consultation so that you can understand what's proposed.
- 3. Meetings** – Providing face-to-face meetings where you can talk with Council Members and planning committee, and policy staff. In general, public consultation is structured to allow for informal talk time, formal presentations, Q&A time and wrap up conversations with regional staff.
- 4. Results** – Reporting the results of public consultation to you. Regional staff write a report to Regional Council that shows the feedback received and makes recommendations for regional policy.

Who Comes?

Everyone from across the community. Residents, business owners, community groups, developers, media, Council members, Regional staff and expert advisors.

Want to Learn More?

Find Halton's 16 public consultation principles at www.halton.ca/about/public_consultation.htm

Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

Oct 7, 9:30 a.m. Regional Council Meeting
Oct. 12 Offices closed for Thanksgiving
Oct. 20, 9:30 a.m. Health & Social Services Cte
Oct. 21, 9:30 a.m. Planning & Public Works Cte
Oct. 21, 1:30 p.m. Administration & Finance Cte
Oct 28, 9:30 a.m. Regional Council Meeting

Meetings can be viewed at www.halton.ca

We welcome your feedback. Contact Access Halton at accesshalton@halton.ca
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