

# Committee won't support proposed growth plan amendments

By Julia Le  
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Growth should pay for itself, Ron Glenn told Halton Region's planning and public works committee recently.

During a presentation providing an overview of the provincial government's recent proposed amendments to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshow, 2006, Glenn said the plan lacks a clear strategy of how it will be executed.

"Growth needs to be fully funded and the infrastructure related to it needs to be fully funded," he told committee members. "We at the Regional level certainly have put our oars in the water and put our plans in place to fund infrastructure and master plans."

He added local municipalities have also done their part.

Under the proposed amendments, the growth plan — which aims at building stronger, prosperous communities by better managing growth in the region to 2031 — will be extended to 2041.

It also proposes to grow the population by

an additional 230,000 and jobs in Halton by 80,000 over the 10-year period from 2031 to 2041.

A related staff-prepared report about the growth plan criticizes the proposed amendments to the plan as not providing any policy direction on how its targets will be met.

Other concerns include population and employment forecasts that don't accurately reflect the make-up of Halton because they were based on 2006 census data rather than the more recent 2011 census data.

"The population is living longer, people are having more babies and the number of people per household is increasing," Glenn told committee members, adding that the number of working age people in the working class is actually shrinking.

"It's premature," he continued on about the amendments to the growth plan. "It's too soon to really know that the policies are even working, let alone extend the time horizon out on a growth assumption to continue forward."

Glenn's presentation was well received by committee members, who unanimously sup-

ported staff recommendations that stemmed from a related report.

It was approved by regional council recently with the endorsement of a submission made by the Halton Area Planning Partnership, which responds to the Ministry of Infrastructure's proposed amendments to the growth plan.

The Halton Area Planning Partnership is comprised of planning directors from each of Halton's municipalities, including Glenn.

Among the concerns listed noted earlier are suggestions that amendments be made when the Province does its next growth plan review and that municipalities be sheltered from time consuming and costly Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearings.

Halton Region's official plan, which was revised to conform with the Province's Places to Grow Act, is being challenged in 41 separate appeals at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Glenn said the province also needs to look at providing municipalities with stable, long-term funding to ensure Halton's growing communities have the healthcare, education and infrastructure they need in order to im-

plement the plan.

He noted the Development Charges Act created in 1997 needs to be updated so that municipalities have the tools to raise revenues for capital planning and projects related to accommodating growth.

During discussion councillors expressed their frustration with the grow plan, some calling it "madness" and "insane."

"What I'm seeing is a province that wants us to grow even though the rest of the province is declining, but is not giving us the tools to do the job in terms of development charges, infrastructure funding and also even just the legislative help in terms of OMB defense," said Milton Local and Regional Councillor Colin Best.

A copy of the report, which has been approved by council, will be sent to the Ministry of Infrastructure, area MPPs and local municipalities. Regional Chair Gary Carr will also advise the Premier on where the Region stands on the growth plan amendments issue.

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