

December 19, 2007

Chairman Carr and Members of the Council,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Kurt Koster, chair of BurlingtonGreen.

This is a pivotal time in the history of Halton Region. We have to establish a management plan for growth that will encompass the next 3 decades. This will profoundly impact the natural environment, and the lives of the current and future residents Halton region.

Sustainable Halton is based on the growth figures developed by Hemson Consulting and shown in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

A number of principle assumptions are built into the Hemson forecast model. Some of these assumptions are:

- A positive long-term outlook for Canada, Ontario and the Greater Golden Horseshoe economy.
- A continued concentration of economic and population growth in large urban areas.
- A dynamic and diverse Greater Golden Horseshoe economy with a strong manufacturing base.
- Migration will continue to be the primary generator of population growth.

There are two glaring shortcomings in these assumptions.

- There is no consideration of the effect of Climate Change on the Greater Golden Horseshoe's capacity for population growth and.
- Critically important is the fact that no Environmental Footprint Analysis including a Carrying Capacity of the GGH was done, before arriving at a population forecast.

I urge you to read the annual report prepared by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Gordon Miller. Some of the main concerns he expressed regarding the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan are:

- Sustainability must become the key overriding principle in guiding efforts to accommodate the human population increases projected for Southern Ontario.
- An important concept or tool for evaluating the sustainability of individual communities is the ecological footprint, where footprint is defined as "...the land (and water) area that would be required to support a defined human population and material standard indefinitely."

- Making sustainability the priority goal of planning efforts forces consideration of both where it is feasible for development and expansion to occur and how much additional growth a given community's ecosystem is able to support.
- Failure to consider basic questions of 'Where to grow?' and 'How much to grow?' is the fundamental problem with many provincial planning initiatives in Southern Ontario. Provincial planning efforts do not employ an ecosystem sustainability perspective to evaluate which communities have the carrying capacity available to accommodate population increases.

I will conclude by recommending that the Region "take a step back and evaluate whether Sustainable Halton will achieve the intended goals of ecosystem protection and the creation of a truly sustainable urban community in Southern Ontario". We recommend that the Region launch an Environmental Footprint Analysis including a "Carrying Capacity Study" as soon as possible in order to have a truly Sustainable Plan not a just Growth Plan.

BurlingtonGreen is willing to assist in any way it can. Your decisions today will have far-reaching irrevocable impacts. We have one chance - let's work together to get it done right.

Thank you for your attention.

Kurt Koster  
BurlingtonGreen