



October 30, 2020

Dear Chair Carr, Halton Mayors, Members of Regional Council and Halton Region Staff,

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the inextricable connections between human health, equitable and just communities, a resilient economy and the current climate and biodiversity crises. Governments must recognize and act on this understanding by researching, reporting and making decisions with an integrated or ‘ecosystem’ approach, in order to provide a liveable, equitable and sustainable future for all. Additionally, Halton Region must consistently be accountable for their Climate Emergency Declaration and their commitment to the residents of Halton Region.

While BurlingtonGreen recognizes the inextricable connections between the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability, our specific area of focus pertains to the health of the environment, and while all Regional Official Plan (ROP) Discussion Papers are of importance, and interconnect, at this time we have chosen to provide comment specific to the [Climate Change Discussion Paper](#). Climate change is the most significant and defining issue of our time ‘..with municipalities directly influencing roughly half of Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions.’¹ Thus, there exists both a tremendous responsibility and opportunity to prioritize action on climate as the driving policy framework for the Regional Official Plan going forward.

BurlingtonGreen offers the following high-level recommendations:

- The overall ROP vision should focus on sustainable and equitable growth, in light of the climate and biodiversity crisis, systemic racism, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This supports the Region’s Climate Emergency Declaration, Natural Heritage & Land Use Planning, your work on human health, diversity and equity issues, and the opportunity presented by COVID-19 to “build back better” by creating new jobs in the green sector.
- The Climate Change discussion paper should act as the guiding document for the ROP review and inform the other Discussion papers and more importantly, determine the policy directions of the region’s 4 municipal Official Plans. It is recommended that the Region include a carbon reduction target in the Official Plan

¹ [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#)

and direct Halton municipalities to do the same in their respective Official Plans(dovetailing municipal Climate Action Plans).

- The ROP will guide land use and growth in Halton for years to come. Traditional planning approaches are not enough to address the current climate and biodiversity crises. Bold, climate and environmental protection driven policies are needed to shift the region's suburban communities to complete communities that are transit oriented, pedestrian friendly and carbon neutral. It is important to prioritize land use policies that achieve these targets at the regional level, and that these policies be reflected in municipal official plans.
- Public engagement: due to the technical nature and the number of discussion papers and surveys available for comments, in order to invite broader and more meaningful community engagement, we recommend that staff from each Halton municipality review the ROP Discussion papers via their 'own' Strategic and Official Plans and Climate Emergency lens, to then prepare user-friendly overviews with recommendations, inviting the community to review and provide input. Sharing with the community how the ROP will potentially shape the landscape and policy decision-making within their own communities as well as within the Region as a whole, is likely to result in more informed, effective engagement, and an improved cohesive and inclusive process.

In summary, BurlingtonGreen urges Halton Regional Council to assess the OPR process holistically recognizing the four concurrent crises, and driven by and with accountability to the declared Climate Emergencies in Halton.

Respectfully,

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