



January 10, 2022

Re. Region of Halton's Draft Preferred Growth Concept

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Burlington Councilors,

I appreciate your consideration of BurlingtonGreen's input regarding the City Planning Department report [PL-06-22: Submission on Region of Halton's Draft Preferred Growth Concept and Draft Land Needs](#)

Given the escalating climate crises and Halton's increasing reliance on local food security, the stakes have never been higher, and the implications more far-reaching when it comes to decision-making for growth. Urban sprawl worsens our climate crises by creating congestion, increasing air and climate pollution and destroying irreplaceable wetlands, woodlands and farmland.

Municipalities have an essential role and impact in regards to the escalating climate crises. And as expressed by Dr. Dianne Saxe (one of Canada's most respected climate lawyer/ environmental lawyers), we are at a point where every planning decision matters and 'to make things better, the first step is to stop making them worse'. A climate lens is required for every decision, and **stopping sprawl** is a critical action municipalities must take if we are to have a fighting chance to create more resilient communities and realize livable communities and a sustainable future.

The good news is Halton can support growth without suburban sprawl while meeting the Province's growth requirements.

By establishing firm urban boundaries **across Halton** and advancing plans that realize complete communities with mixed use, gentle density, affordable housing, walkable neighbourhoods and inclusive transportation options, a better, equitable quality of life and healthier environment will be available for generations to come.

And the economic costs of urban sprawl are an important factor as well. The City of Ottawa found low density housing cost \$465 per person, while building within existing urban boundaries created a savings of \$606 per person.



(Source: Land Use - Ontario's Oil Sands, Dianne Saxe. Saxefacts.com, 2019)

Canadian urban planner, Jennifer Keesmaat, recently stated:

“Don’t be fooled when advocates of ‘affordability’ argue for highways and sprawl. A suburban household costs the city \$3,462 per year, while an urban household comes in at less than half that, \$1,416. Fiscally viable cities and regions are compact and dense.”

In regards to report [PL-06-22](#), consistent with [public engagement findings](#), and [Citizen Advisory Committee responses](#), it was reassuring to read that Burlington Planning staff recognize that concepts 3A/3B (noting 3B supports **No** Greenfield Expansion), “best align with the high-level objectives of the City of Burlington as identified through the City’s new Official Plan, Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan” and noted that planning must “integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth...”

The ‘measured urban boundary expansion’ of Halton’s proposed Preferred Growth Concept is not a viable option given the escalating climate and biodiversity crises.

A vote from each of you on February 9th at the upcoming Halton Regional Council meeting, that **rejects** the PGC (Preferred Growth Concept) with urban sprawl and the loss of 5000+ acres of farmland and greenspace, will speak volumes in demonstrating to your constituents that you recognize growth anywhere in Halton directly impacts the residents of Burlington, and that you are committed to the climate emergency you unanimously declared.

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And respectful of the complexities of the issue and the July 1, 2022 conformity deadline, these factors should not rush or compromise the critical decision-making at play, given the magnitude of the growth plan implications.

In the report, Burlington Planning staff identified the need to learn of more detailed Greenhouse Gas Emissions technical work, as part of the information supporting the preferred growth concept, and also identified a substantial list of critical information that remains outstanding to support the PGC as listed on page 23 of the report:

“As was noted earlier, staff await critical information to support the ultimate PGC including:

- A wide range of more detailed technical information;
- A set of Regional Official Plan Review-wide policy directions;
- The public release and discussion of a ROPA to implement the findings of the IGMS and associated Policy directions;
- and Summarizing engagement feedback and how it influenced the preparation of the PGC.”

And BurlingtonGreen contends that the absence of the above mentioned critical information **in addition** to the outstanding agricultural and Natural Heritage System and Climate Change work (not scheduled until Q1 2023), further substantiates the importance of not voting in support of the Regional staff’s high stakes PGC recommendation on February 9th.

Finally, recognizing this Council’s demonstrated commitment to timely and meaningful community engagement, we expect you will share our concerns pertaining to the Region’s proposed Public Open House and Statutory Public Meeting for ROPA 49 to take place in March **after** a growth option has been voted upon in February.

Thank you for your consideration of this input. BurlingtonGreen and our many followers look forward to witnessing your unanimous support rejecting the expansion of urban boundaries in Halton, and your commitment to the protection of irreplaceable local farmland and greenspace.

Respectfully,



Amy Schnurr
Executive Director
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association