



February 15, 2022

Re: February 16th Council resolution on Preferred Growth

Dear Chair Carr and Members of Halton Region Council

“Our society will be defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy.” John Sawhill

Before you all lies the opportunity to chart a path forward that protects much needed irreplaceable farmland while creating a low-carbon future for Halton residents that includes resilient, equitable, healthy and sustainable communities. This can be achieved by ensuring the Region’s growth plan accommodates all growth within current boundaries until 2051 (and beyond).

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.

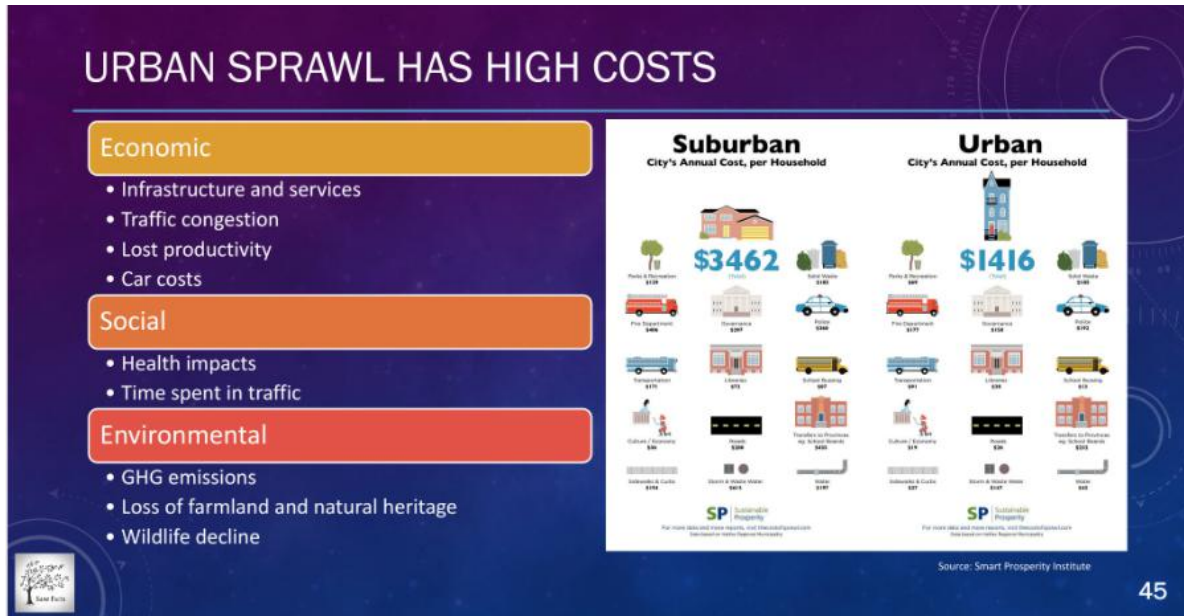
Municipalities have an essential role and impact in regards to the escalating climate crises. And as expressed by Dr. Dianne Saxe (one of Canada’s most respected climate/ environmental lawyers), we are at a point where every planning decision matters and ‘to make things better, the first step is to stop 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.

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(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.”

Consistent with [public engagement findings](#), and [Citizen Advisory Committee responses](#), it was reassuring to read in a January 2022 report that Burlington Planning staff recognize that accommodating growth within the urban boundaries “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 further 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 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 are committed to the climate emergency you all declared, and to supporting a quality of life for generations yet to come.

BurlingtonGreen supports the Motion amendments proposed by Councilors Fogal and Best, and we look forward to witnessing the essential follow through in the months ahead that ensures Halton's growth plan accommodates growth within its current Settlement Area Boundary until 2051.

Thank you for your consideration of this input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Schnurr".

Amy Schnurr
Executive Director
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association