

Sustainable Halton Phase 3 Consultation Open Houses and Workshops Summary of Questions, Answers, and Discussion

OPEN HOUSES

Open House # 1: Milton – April 21, 2009, Milton Sports Centre

There were 115 people in attendance including Regional Councillor Colin Best and Local Councillor Wendy Schau.

There are 1,100 ha worth of employment lands in the concepts, but some people are saying that we need more. How firm is the 1,100 ha? Can we rely on that not to change?

- 1,100 ha of employment lands is defensible.
- Orlando has taken the position that we need more land because the last two years have been fabulous for logistics.

Local Councils have been asked to take a position on the preferred option – have they done that yet?

- Councils have not taken positions yet.

Is the Region rushing into designating lands to 2031?

- We are careful about designating land – we are only designating as much as we need. The proof of that is a reduced land budget.
- We have to meet the Places to Grow targets.

High density housing does not work in Toronto – look at the crime rates. Why are we increasing density in Halton?

- There isn't really any empirical proof that high density results in poorer outcomes for residents – it's really more about socio-economic status.

How can the Region make decisions about where growth will go without a fiscal impact analysis?

- High-level analysis has been conducted for the concepts.
- Detailed fiscal impact analyses for the preferred option will be prepared later in the year.

The project is going at a fast pace. The timing of decisions required for 2031 may no longer be relevant.

- The pace is dictated by the requirements of the Growth Plan.
- Through the 5-year official plan review, there would be opportunities to revisit the Plan's policies.

What criteria will be used to measure human health?

- This will come at later stages, through implementation stages of O.P.s, including zoning by-laws and secondary plans.

ROPA 37 goes to Council on June 3, a decision on the preferred growth option will be made on June 24 – is this realistic?

- We have to work towards this in view of the Province's June 16, 2009 conformity deadline, and the ROPA 25 South and Southwest Georgetown Landowners' settlements agreements as well.

Open House #2: Burlington – April 28, 2009, Rotary Youth Centre, 560 Guelph Line

There were 46 people in attendance including Mayor Cam Jackson, & Regional Councillors Jack Dennison and Peter Thoem.

In all three concepts the NHS is consistent. Is that the enhanced NHS?

- Yes.

Are there any studies that show the impact on taxes?

- We looked at infrastructure costs for the three concepts, and there was only about a 10-15% difference between them.
- We haven't explored the impact on Development Charges or taxes yet, but that work is currently underway.
- Council's position is that new development must be financially sustainable.

What is the cheapest concept?

- Concept 1

Has the Province responded to Chair Carr's worries about infrastructure?

- We are still working with the Province to address hospitals and schools.
- The fiscal impact analysis will include Provincial infrastructure.

From the timelines, the deadlines look very tight. It seems like the Region is being forced to make decisions without having all of the information.

- We are still in control – we have to plan for growth.

Why aren't we focussing on the James Snow Parkway as a transit corridor?

- Transit must be the cornerstone of this plan and Metrolinx is looking at regional transit.

On one side we want intensification, but employment lands are in North Milton, so people have to commute. Why put development further north when you could put it further south?

- In the late 1990s, Milton was added to the urban area to facilitate growth, because Oakville and Burlington couldn't handle the growth to 2021.

- The challenge for us is that we have to add even more people now and this includes land for employment.
- The intent is to foster live-work communities.

Have you looked at the job to population ratio for the new growth areas?

- Yes. If you look at the Growth Plan targets, you will see that there is one job for every two people. That's the ratio for a complete community.
- The local municipalities have different ratios right now, but over time the ratios will approach 0.5.

Wouldn't we be better off if we provided Georgetown's water instead of having Peel provide it?

- Yes, and that's why we're exploring Halton-provided lake-based servicing first.

The idea of intensification is good, but I have an issue with the NHS. Most of the area is in the Greenbelt, which protects agriculture. I want agriculture to remain. It appears as though the NHS is a tool to control boundaries for future growth. The white areas are prime agriculture, but the green areas also have prime agriculture. Are the white areas up for development?

- The white areas are up for development every time there is an OP Review (every 5 years).
- The NHS has been identified as the bare bones of what is needed to protect Halton's natural areas if all of the white areas are developed.
- People can still farm within the NHS.

Are you saying that the NHS isn't permanent?

- Every five years we review the Plan, so it's up to the Council at the time. The Greenbelt is permanent.

Is there an option to say no to the Growth Plan?

- We have to accept the Places to Grow population and employment numbers. At the end of the day, the Province has to accept growth based on immigration level set by Federal policy.
- In the 20 years before Places to Grow, municipalities did their own planning, which resulted in sprawl, so the Province got into the game of planning growth.
- Now we have to plan at much higher densities because of Places to Grow.

I think the Growth Plan isn't aggressive enough – we're still building the old way – we're still doing the same thing. Development doesn't pay for itself – old people are being taxed out of their homes! What are we doing to protect people?

- Your comment relates to more than just land development, though there are a few land development issues in there. Development Charges can only go so far – there are issues with the Act – you can only recognise the service levels of the previous ten years, so you can't increase Development Charges to have better transit infrastructure, for example.
- On the land development side, Council has always had a policy that development must be financially sustainable.
- The City gets more bang for their buck from apartments because they are easier to service (one pick-up, less frontage etc).

Have Council and senior staff developed a food supply strategy? Will we be able to feed ourselves 150 years from now?

- 50 or 60 years ago, we didn't have cheap oil. We are benefiting from low food prices now as a result of cheap oil.
- Unless we have demand for local food, it will be difficult to protect prime agricultural land. Demand for local food might increase if there is a rise in oil prices.
- The Province and Federal Governments need to work on this.
- In Phase 1 we had a paper on food security.

Would it make more sense economically to provide a pipe to service 40,000 people in Georgetown?

- The cost of the additional pipe is marginal when you look at the entire system.

Open House #3: Oakville - April 29, 2009, Halton Regional Centre, Auditorium, 1151 Bronte Road

There were 43 people in attendance including Regional Councillors Allan Elgar and Tom Adams.

Greenfields will be mostly low density for awhile. We are allowing too much land to become low density. Couldn't we add more measures to prevent this?

- If we didn't have a Growth Plan, we would be using twice as much land. We are trying to save as much land as possible.
- Market demand will be telling over the next little while to see if people choose high density housing.

The NHS will negatively affect my farming operation!

- The NHS isn't meant to affect agricultural operations.

Why is there so much land in the NHS?

- We are moving away from a features-based approach to a systems-based one.
- We need to protect the areas surrounding the features, so that the features thrive.

Are we doing anything to recognize food protection?

- We would like to achieve food security.
- Price drives local demand, so that makes local food less appealing.
- Food security is a broad social issue – Halton can do its part, but we need support from the federal and provincial governments.

Do you have a food security person on staff?

- Kim Perrotta and Gena Ali are addressing this.

We need to make this an advocacy issue – it's an issue of national security. We should also establish a round table to look at these issues.

Places to Grow densities are minimums. Why can't we go higher? The amount of land that we're losing is a concern.

- All of the lands in the Primary Study Area are prime agricultural – so it's a trade-off.

I expected to see a vast increase in medium density housing.

- The newer greenfields will have medium density, even though that doesn't show in the Region-wide numbers.

I'm an existing resident near the Milton campground – we would like water services, and what's happening with the James Snow Parkway?

- The reason that you have not received water yet is due to the pattern of development.
- We only provide urban services in the urban boundary.
- The James Snow Parkway extension is shown as a dashed line because it is not part of the current capital program (to 2021).

How are we going to have clean air with more growth and infrastructure?

- This is challenging as the MOE sets standards on land use guidelines and such, but they may not be adequate.
- The Region has been monitoring air quality and air modelling.

Will the growth in Georgetown be based on well water?

- No

I'm concerned about the acrimony between aggregate extraction operations and surrounding uses. The Region should buy the land now so there aren't people around it to complain.

- This is an uphill battle with the Province as they want aggregates available at low cost, close to market.
- We will have an aggregate resource map in the OP, and we'll have a clear plan about how much aggregate extraction we'll need in the long term.
- We have to change the way the aggregate industry works and are looking at rehabilitation and groundwater protection.

Don't natural features trump aggregates?

- No. The Province's position is that aggregates must be close to their markets.

Will ROPA 37 include phasing?

- No – ROPA 37 will not contain any maps or phasing. New urban areas will be identified in ROPA 38.

Halton Hills – April 30, 2009, Mold-Masters Sportsplex, The Hall, 221 Guelph Street

There were 82 people in attendance including Mayor Bonnette, Regional Councillors Clark Sommerville, Jane Fogal and Colin Best, and Local Councillors David Kentner, and Bob Inglis.

The plan is insufficient because it doesn't address peak oil. Hamilton addressed it, why not Halton?

- We have reports in Phase I that address this.
- We need federal and provincial investments, so it's good that Metrolinx is looking at transit.

When input was requested from farmers, the process was well done, and the expert was good at listening and adjusting. That wasn't the case with the NHS – I am disappointed with the process. Listen to HAAC more regarding NHS input. In my opinion, not HAAC's, it is a draconian measure against farmers. Will you make sure you consult with HAAC in early May?

- Yes.

Does lake-based servicing include septic?

- Yes

Isn't there already an expansion planned for the treatment plan?

- That expansion is required today, before 2021.

Will the groundwater system be dumped?

- That's not the plan. We've drilled holes and we're assessing how safe our system is now in terms of supply. We have to determine that first.

Do we have a choice about lake-based servicing for 20,000 or 40,000 people in Georgetown?

- We're looking into lake-based servicing because we don't know if the groundwater systems would be able to handle these levels of growth – we will know that by year end.

Will the OP have the power to prevent more growth?

- Growth is directed to urban areas, and the urban boundary cannot be expanded without doing a comprehensive official plan review.

It seems like ROPA 37 makes the decision before ROPA 38.

- ROPA 37 is intended to fulfill the requirements the Growth Plan.

Does ROPA 37 include Places to Grow policies? If so, which ones? When are we putting firm lines on the ground?

- ROPA 37 covers the Places to Grow policies verbatim, and would allow Oakville and Burlington to proceed with intensification. There will be more detail in ROPA 38.
- Council decision on our land use plan in June will result in firm lines on the map through ROPA 38.

Does Council have to decide on lake-based servicing by June?

- Yes. Trying to service 20,000 people on groundwater servicing is a bit of a stretch.

Will any of this come out of taxpayers pockets?

- Council has the position that new development should not be borne by existing taxpayers.
- Council tries their best to make developers pay for growth.

If you choose the preferred concept, you're increasing traffic. What's the plan for that?

- Once we know the detailed boundary, we'll identify how many lanes we'll need on the roads. You shouldn't have stop and go traffic – it will be congested, but you'll still be moving. The details will come out in the Transportation Master Plan.

How come there are two population growth numbers?

- One is the growth to 2031, the other is the build-out population.

We don't support lake-based servicing in Halton Hills because we could conserve water and still grow. What's the per capita water use that you are looking at? Will we know in June?

- We need to know what kind of community Georgetown would be.
- We start by looking at what is currently happening, then we look at new development.

The Region has done badly on water conservation. And your committees are poorly run.

- Duly noted.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop #1: Oakville – May 2, 2009, Abbey Park High School Auditorium, 1455 Glen Abbey Gate

There were 24 people in attendance.

1. Roundtable Discussion on Growth

Growth Priorities:

- How does it all go together – what's the priority?
- How do conflicts get reconciled?
- We should not be just planning for the least expensive option.
- There is no infrastructure plan for strategic employment lands indicated on the maps.
- Growth isn't going to stop at 2031.
- Milton Education Village is too far removed from the GO Station.

Servicing:

- The Region should over-size pipes for the future.
- The percentage of growth available after 2031.
- Halton needs a long-term servicing plan

Financial Implications:

- Financing development is important since employment is funded by Halton and residential is funded by developers.
- Who would pay extra development charges to live in apartments?

Development Charges:

- Development charges in Halton are too hefty and the Region should look at over-sizing. It doesn't make sense to build water and wastewater infrastructure for 20,000 people in Georgetown. Infrastructure should be built for more people and the pipes should be over-sized instead of twinned.
- Development charges should support intensification and not penalise it.
- There already is an infrastructure deficit in Halton Region. Why build infrastructure for new residents, and ignore existing residents?
- Development charges do not cover the cost of infrastructure.

Housing:

- Need to model different housing mixes.

Transportation:

- The impact of the preferred option on transportation.
- Transportation deficiencies in Milton.
- Timing of Master Plan road widenings
- Service levels do not keep pace with growth.
- Two-way train service is needed.
- East-west and North-south regional connections should be provided.

Air Quality:

- An important consideration for growth.

2. Roundtable Discussion on the Concepts and Options

Agriculture:

- The agricultural community is worried about land values shifting and not being able to use their land in the same way as they are accustomed to.

Growth Priorities:

- Provide opportunities for all four municipalities to grow.
- Fill up the south before going further north.
- Milton wants to maintain their employment to population ratio, and urban separators.
- In Milton, strategic employment lands should be moved north to No. 5 Sideroad.

Servicing:

- The timing of servicing to Georgetown
- People don't want growth at all, people want to conserve water, people prefer the taste of groundwater.

Transportation:

- To have good live-work arrangements you need good transportation.

Workshop # 2 - Milton – May 7, 2009, Country Heritage Park, Gambrel Barn, 8560 Tremaine Road

There were 30 people in attendance.

1. Roundtable Discussion on Growth

Density:

- High density residential and low density employment
- Look at market demand for both residential and employment.
- The two different numbers for population and units refers to 2031 and the other refers to build-out.
- Striking a balance between employment market and policies is important.
- On the residential side, we're not going much denser than what's being done at the moment. The hard part is getting to the 40% intensification.

Natural Heritage System:

- Keep the NHS out of the rural area, as uncertainty for farmers is being created.

- Serves to restrict farmers activities.
- Refinements to the NHS will come through the development process – sub-watershed studies required for secondary plans.
- The report does not suggest compensation or incentives, but, instead focuses on punishing the landowners.
- Concern over public accessibility in the NHS.
- Concern over the permitted uses in the NHS.

Agriculture:

- The Region should protect farmland.
- Agricultural operations should continue without restrictions.
- A whole package of tools needed to support farmers and the industry.
- Drainage improvements need to be made.

Aggregates:

- Too much shale is being protected.

Transportation:

- A North-South road from Oakville to Halton Hills is needed
- There are high level lane deficiencies.
- Metrolinx has a plan to increase transit
- The Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study is ongoing.
- The 9th Line and the Niagara Mid-Peninsula Highway needs to be looked at.
- We need transit to make it work.
- Need to look at growth within the context of peak oil.

Servicing:

- Georgetown should remain on groundwater.
- Servicing from Peel is being investigated.
- Water usage in the context of aging populations and the trend toward living alone.
- Design criteria has an affect on water usage.
- Halton Hills did an infill study, and there's significant infill between 2016 and 2031. This requires servicing.
- Lake-based servicing is needed after 2021.
- Need to be smart about sizing – oversizing should be an option.

2. Roundtable Discussion on the Concepts and Options

Growth:

- 40,000 people in Halton Hills may be more economically viable.
- It's not all about the infrastructure – there are many other things to consider.
- Need to look at South Milton, especially with regard to the GO Station.
- The amount of employment lands needs to increase.
- The Options take place on agricultural land. All growth could be accommodated in Halton without going onto agricultural land.

- 40% intensification is too low, as the remaining 60% would be on prime agricultural land.
- Does not make sense that Milton Education Village is so far removed from Milton GO Station.

Transportation:

- The road network does not support current growth levels and this would only worsen with new growth. Road infrastructure should be in place before new growth can be accommodated.
- Transit can take the pressure off the road system, but, it needs to be competitive.
- There should be plans for major north-south and east-west transportation

Housing:

- Developers should produce housing that people could actually live in.
- Developers could intensify development if infrastructure is in place. How this infrastructure is paid for is important.
- The Region should have policies to encourage rental housing. The official plan needs stronger language to prevent developers from changing the designation.

Servicing:

- Lake-based servicing up Trafalgar
- Put the new reservoir next to the existing one.
- A lot of issues need to be resolved to get Peel servicing.
- Regardless of the Option chosen, the Region should over-size pipes as growth would not stop at 2031. The Region has a history of not planning for the future.
- Option 3 is too high for Halton Hills.
- The Region should not over-size pipes.
- Extending services to Georgetown should take the assimilative capacity into account.
- Existing residents should not pay for new development.

Air Quality and Health:

- The proposal for the north side of Derry Road is residential. There are possible health and air quality issues with this land use given its proximity to the rail line and highway. It would be better if this area was industrial. The residential land use could be relocated to the south.

Hydro Utilities:

- Hydro utilities should be involved in the development planning stages, as they need a 2/3-year head-start to build infrastructure and bring on supply.

Energy Perspective:

- Region needs to look at the implications of peak oil vis-à-vis food supply and Halton's agricultural resources for the Sustainable Halton exercise. A truly long-range plan for the Region necessitates this.
- Residential land needs to be adjacent to agricultural land in the post peak oil era.