



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

DATE: October 25, 2023

MEMO NO.: PD-2023-006

SUBJECT: ROPA 49 – Province Winding Back Changes to Official Plans

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Council with an update regarding recent announcements by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and how those relate to the Regional Official Plan Review (ROPA 49).

BACKGROUND:

- The Region of Halton was required by Provincial legislation to bring its Official Plan into conformity with various Provincial Plans including *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* by July 1, 2022.
- The Growth Plan required the Region to allocate a total population of 1.1 million and 500,000 jobs by 2051 among the four local municipalities (City of Burlington, Town of Oakville, Town of Milton, and Town of Halton Hills).
- As part of the Official Plan Review, the Region prepared five growth concepts showing how growth could be potentially accommodated throughout the Region to the 2051 planning horizon.
- The Region sought input from various stakeholders on the growth concepts including the local municipalities. That input was to be used by the Region in preparing the Preferred Growth Concept that was to form the basis for the updated Regional Official Plan.
- The Town held a Council Workshop and received public delegations on June 21, 2021 regarding the Regional growth concepts. A presentation was delivered by SGL Planning & Design Ltd. and Watson and Associates Inc. to provide additional context on the growth concepts and the potential implications for the Town. A copy of the presentation is available [here](#).

- On July 6, 2021 a Special Town Council Meeting was held regarding the Regional Official Plan Review where report PD-2021-0045 was presented by staff. After many hours of presentations, public delegations and discussion, the meeting was recessed and postponed until July 13, 2021. The Minutes from the two day Special Council Meeting are available [here](#).
- Report [PD-2021-0045](#) recommended that the Town continue to advance a three-pronged growth strategy to the 2051 planning horizon focusing on intensification within the Georgetown and Acton Built Up Areas (BUA) with a focus on key strategic growth areas (such as the Georgetown GO Station/Mill Street Corridor, Downtown Georgetown, the Civic Centre District, the Guelph Street Corridor and Downtown Acton/Acton GO); compact residential and mixed-use development within Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA); and development within designated Employment Areas.
- The staff report also recommended general support for Halton Region's Growth Concept #2 (70 % Densification; Limited Greenfield Expansion), which proposed:
 - a minimum of 50% of all new housing to be located within the existing BUA
 - all new DGA would be planned for a density of 65 persons and jobs per ha
 - additional 20% densification between 2031-2051 (70% total)
 - Region-wide total of 106,700 apartments
 - Region-wide total of 68,000 ground-related units
 - Total estimated Region wide Community Area DGA of 730 ha
 - Halton Hills estimated share of 330 ha (approximately 1 Vision Georgetown)
 - Total estimated Region wide Employment Area DGA of 1,100 ha
 - Halton Hills estimated share of 500 ha
- The staff report specifically recommended a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area, similar in scale to that approved through the Sustainable Halton process (ROPA 38 and OPA 10), of approximately 400 hectares to accommodate compact residential and mixed-use development once the existing DGA are substantially built out in the mid to late 2030s along with providing opportunities for the proposed redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital. The report also recommended 450-500 hectares of additional employment land and prioritized the Premier Gateway as the location for any additional lands.
- After receiving the presentations, public delegations and deliberations on July 6 and July 13, 2021, Council unanimously endorsed a revised resolution ([Resolution No. 2021-0150](#)) supporting:
 - the three-pronged growth strategy as presented by staff;
 - the provision of approximately 350 gross hectares of additional employment lands (net of the Natural Heritage System) with prioritization of the Premier Gateway Employment Area for the location of the additional employment lands;
 - a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area of approximately 350 gross hectares (net of the Natural Heritage System) to accommodate

- compact residential and mixed use development in the mid to late 2030s, along with providing opportunities for the proposed redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital; and
- that any phasing provisions did not preclude the early redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital and any ancillary uses.
 - From July 2021 to February 2022, Regional staff and their consultants worked on the preparation of a Draft Preferred Growth Concept, which met the requirements of the Provincial Growth Plan and Land Needs Assessment and incorporated many of the recommendations and future growth areas as supported by the Town.
 - Workshops regarding the Draft Preferred Growth Concept were held by the Region on November 17, 2021 and February 9, 2021. The workshops provided an overview of the evaluated Growth Concepts, a summary of the public engagement process and the feedback received from the public, Advisory Committees and Local Municipalities.
 - On February 16, 2022, Regional Council adopted a motion that directed staff to instead prepare a Regional Official Plan Amendment that presented a Modified Preferred Growth Concept which would freeze any urban boundary expansions to 2041 directing all population and employment growth to the existing urban boundaries, and postponing consideration of 2041-2051 growth until a separate ROPA process either prior to, or in parallel with, the next statutory five-year official plan review.
 - On June 15, 2022, ROPA 49 was adopted by Regional Council, incorporating the modified growth concept as requested, freezing the urban boundaries to 2041. ROPA 49 was then sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval.
 - On November 4, 2022, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved ROPA 49 with 45 modifications. Key to those modifications included the expansion of the urban boundaries within both the Town of Halton Hills and Town of Milton. The urban boundary expansion in Halton Hills, particularly as it pertains to Georgetown was significantly larger than what was endorsed by Town Council.
 - As described by the Region, “The Minister’s decision maintains Regional Council’s vision for Halton’s Urban Structure where a significant share of the growth in Halton will occur as adopted by Regional Council, but alters the Amendment to include expanding the Regional Urban Boundary with additional new lands to accommodate population and employment growth to 2051.”¹
 - On October 23, 2023, Minister Calandra held a press conference wherein he advised the public that he intends to introduce legislation that will reverse the decisions for Official Plans in multiple municipalities, including the Region of Halton.

¹ See ‘Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49 – Notice of Adoption’ webpage: [https://www.halton.ca/The-Region/Regional-Planning/Regional-Official-Plan-\(ROP\)-\(1\)/Halton-s-Regional-Official-Plan-Review-\(ROPR\)/Draft-Regional-Official-Plan-Amendment-49](https://www.halton.ca/The-Region/Regional-Planning/Regional-Official-Plan-(ROP)-(1)/Halton-s-Regional-Official-Plan-Review-(ROPR)/Draft-Regional-Official-Plan-Amendment-49)

- The press release (available [here](#)), states that this decision “...includes winding back changes to urban boundaries”.
- The Minister also noted that given municipalities have recently agreed to their housing targets or made their housing pledges, they are being asked to provide comments to ministry staff within a 45 day period as it relates to these changes and proposed legislation.
- Given the housing targets are to be achieved by 2031, in the context of Halton Hills, the decision to wind back the changes to urban boundaries should not have any impact on the Town’s ability to achieve the 9,500 housing unit target.
- Given Minister Calandra’s announcement, staff are currently working on developing next steps in order to provide comments to ministry staff within the 45 day comment window. Once next steps have been identified, staff will report back to Council with recommendations as appropriate.

Reviewed and approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer