

## REPORT

**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members of the Planning, Public Works and Transportation Committee

**REPORT FROM:** Bronwyn Parker – Manager of Planning Policy

**DATE:** October 18, 2019

**REPORT NO.:** PLS-2019-0053

**RE:** Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones

### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PLS-2019-0053 regarding proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the staff recommendation to expand Provincially Significant Employment Zone number 18 into the Town of Halton Hills' existing Future Strategic Employment Areas be endorsed;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town Clerk forward a copy of Report PLS-2019-0053 to the Honourable Caroline Mulroney Minister of Transportation and the Honourable Steve Clark Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Halton Area MPPs, Region of Halton, the City of Burlington, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville for their information.

### BACKGROUND:

The concept of Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs) is new to the Province of Ontario. First identified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in January 2019, these 29 provincial employment areas were selected and a new policy framework considered for protecting employment areas that are believed to be critical to the region's economy.

### COMMENTS:

Throughout 2019, a number of changes have been proposed to various provincial policies and legislation, including significant changes to the land use planning system in Ontario.

On January 15, 2019 the Minister issued a preliminary map of 29 proposed provincially significant employment zones along with other proposals related to Amendment No. 1 to the 2017 Growth Plan. The proposal was open for comment over a 45 day window, which closed as of February 28, 2019. The Ministry held regional roundtables and meetings with stakeholders during the consultation period, to which Halton Hills Planning and Economic Development staff were in attendance.

While no zones were removed or added to the originally proposed 29 PSEZs, they have been revised from the original map released in January, 2019. The Ministry has clarified that the revisions were based merely on addressing factual errors in the mapping and were focused on municipal feedback received. The changes consisted of technical adjustments to parcel boundaries where provincial and municipal mapping were not aligned.

Through staff report PLS-2019-0016, comments were provided regarding the original PSEZs recommending that all of Halton Hills' Premier Gateway Employment Area lands (both north and south of Steeles Avenue) be included within the PSEZs. These modifications were accepted by the Province and all of the currently designated Premier Gateway Employment Area lands within the Town have been incorporated into the revised mapping.

The Ministry has stated that they will continue to review requests for updates to the mapping based on requests for reconsideration of lands within and outside of existing provincial significant employment zones, as well as requests to add new zones.

In a letter dated May 15, 2019, Minister Clark provided additional clarification regarding Provincially Significant Employment Zones, identifying that municipal requests for reconsideration regarding identification of lands within the PSEZs may be submitted along with supporting planning information and a Council endorsed letter identifying the rationale for the proposed change(s) to the PSEZ mapping. While a deadline date for providing such reconsideration requests was not identified, Town staff are recommending modifications to the mapping through this staff report.

It should be noted that through the various roundtable meetings attended by staff, there has been discussion regarding a "Phase 3" component of the process. Provincial staff have explained that this "Phase 3" work will involve discussions regarding the potential land uses which will be taking place in the near future. This will allow more time for refinements to be made and more strategic discussions as to the precise implementation, purpose, etc. of the PSEZs.

## Future Strategic Employment Areas

The Regional Official Plan (ROPA 38) identifies what are called Future Strategic Employment Areas (FSEAs). These areas include lands that have been considered for having long term potential for employment land development; however they are not a designated land use; rather they represent a constraint to development as per the policies of ROPA 38.

The proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones include a substantial amount of the lands identified as Future Strategic Employment Area within the Town of Milton. The FSEA lands within the Town of Halton Hills however were not included within the proposed PSEZs.

As is discussed in reports PLS-2019-0044 and PLS-2019-0074 (also before Committee on October 29, 2019), the Town's Future Strategic Employment Area lands are impacted by the recently refined GTA West Corridor Focussed Analysis Area (FAA) and Technically Preferred Route (TPR). Appendix 1 to this report shows the Town's Future Strategic Employment Area lands as well as the extent of the area impacted by the refined GTA West Corridor.

Comments provided by the Town regarding the originally proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones were incorporated into report PLS-2019-0016. The report requested that as a result of the extent of Future Strategic Employment Area lands that were included within PSEZs along the 407ETR corridor in Milton, that FSEAs should either be excluded from PSEZs altogether or alternatively, that the Town's FSEAs along Highway 401, the 407ETR and proposed GTA West Corridor be included within the Provincially Significant Employment Zones.

In an effort to ensure the Town of Halton Hills' employment areas are considered part of a regional economic development strategy and help drive job growth and prosperity across the region, staff are recommending that PSEZ number 18 be expanded in keeping with the proposed limits found on Appendix 2 to this report.

The Town's Premier Gateway employment area enjoys a strategic location in the GTA. Expanding the area represents good planning given the convenient access to Highways 401 and 407ETR, proximity to major shipping hubs, and easy access to the GTA and US markets.

Halton Hills' economic prosperity is heavily dependent on the timely and efficient development of this employment area. Approximately 90% of future employment growth projected for Halton Hills is anticipated to occur in the Premier Gateway. Continued investment and job growth in the Gateway will make a considerable contribution to Halton Hills' economy and by extension support economic growth across the GTA and beyond.

The Premier Gateway is already home to millions of square feet of industrial and commercial development, occupied by numerous companies, including Kraft-Heinz, Hayward Gordon, Bradford-White, Gino's Pizza, Toronto Premium Outlets and many others. Vacancy rates are very low. Demand for space is significantly outpacing supply.

As outlined in the recent background report for the Employment Lands Needs Study, Halton Hills' long-term economic prosperity requires additional employment lands. Including the Town's Future Strategic Employment Lands in the Provincially Significant Employment Zone (PSEZ) will help ensure that these lands are recognized, used and protected for employment uses over the long-term.

It is anticipated that a PSEZ designation will assist with the alignment of future provincial infrastructure and marketing investments which will direct employment uses into these zones. Because of their prime location in the GTA, having PSEZ in Halton Hills will generate sustained benefits for the GTA and broader provincial economy. Excluding Halton Hills from PSEZ designation would be significant economic opportunity lost.

#### **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Strategic Plan sets out a broad vision for the community contained in nine strategic directions. Expansion of the Provincially Significant Employment Zones into the Town of Halton Hills relates to the following Strategic Directions:

##### **A. Foster a Healthy Community:**

- To maintain and enhance a healthy community that provides a clean environment and a range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.

##### **C. Foster a Prosperous Economy:**

- To maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the Town through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for economic development.

##### **G. Achieve Sustainable Growth:**

- To ensure that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well-planned community that meets the needs of its residents and businesses.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

**CONSULTATION:**

Staff from Economic Development, Transportation and Public Works, Development Review and the CAO's Office have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The concept of Provincially Significant Employment Zones has been proposed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Ministry held regional roundtables and meetings with stakeholders during the consultation period, to which Halton Hills Planning and Economic Development staff were in attendance.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the Economic Prosperity and Social Well-Being pillars of Sustainability and in summary, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is: Good.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

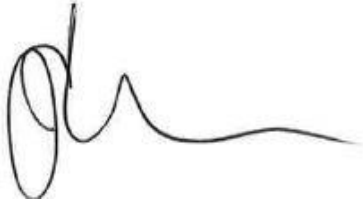
It is recommended that a copy of this report will be forwarded to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Halton Area MPPs, Region of Halton, the City of Burlington, the Town of Milton and the Town of Oakville for their information.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Town's Premier Gateway employment area enjoys a strategic location in the Greater Toronto Area. Expanding the area represents good planning given the convenient access to Highways 401 and 407ETR, proximity to major shopping hubs, and easy access to the GTA and US markets.

In an effort to ensure the Town of Halton Hills' employment areas are considered part of a regional economic development strategy and help drive job growth and prosperity across the region, it is recommended that Provincially Significant Employment Zone number 18 be expanded in keeping with the proposed limits found on Appendix 2 to this report.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Linhardt', written in a cursive style.

**John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brent Marshall', written in a cursive style.

**Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer**