



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Keith Hamilton – Planner, Policy

DATE: July 13, 2020

REPORT NO.: PD-2020-0030

RE: Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology – Halton Area Planning Partnership Joint Submission

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2020-0030, dated July 13, 2020, regarding the Halton Area Planning Partnership (HAPP) Joint Submission on the Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the comments contained in the Joint Submission attached as Schedule One to this report, to be submitted to the Province in advance of the commenting deadline of July 31, 2020;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Region of Halton, the Local Municipalities of Burlington, Milton and Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the Province's Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Methodology; and,
- Provide an overview of the Halton Area Planning Partnership's comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on the proposed amendment.

BACKGROUND:

1.0 Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan

On June 16, 2020 the Province posted its proposed amendment to the Growth Plan on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) website (<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1680>) for public review. The deadline for comments is set for July 31, providing a 45 day window for all those interested. The key objective of the amendment is for the Growth Plan to better align with the 'More Home, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan' by:

- Providing updated population and employment forecasts that extend the planning horizon to 2051; and,
- Recommending policy updates to increase housing supply, create jobs and better align with infrastructure planning.

1.1 Proposed Changes under Growth Plan Amendment 1

Proposed changes to the Growth Plan under the proposed amendment came in the form of modified policy text, updated population and employment forecasts, and policies revised to align with recent changes to other Provincial plans. Key changes that were flagged by HAPP throughout the HAPP Joint Submission process include:

- **Growth forecasts:** A proposed new Schedule 3 to the Growth Plan will include population and employment forecasts to 2051, with previously published 2031 and 2041 numbers unchanged. The forecasts are presented in three scenarios. The 'Reference' scenario, which forecasts a Halton population of 1,100,000 and 500,000 jobs by 2051, is presented as the most likely scenario, with slightly different High and Low scenarios also included (see Table 1 below). Additionally, two options for the forecast scenarios are also presented as 'Mock A' (which include existing 2031 and 2041 targets), and 'Mock B' (which reference the 2051 forecasts only). The intent of the 'Mock B' scenario is to provide one long-term forecast for population and employment, leaving municipalities with greater flexibility to phase it in accordingly.

Table 1: Halton Region Population and Employment Forecasts for Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan

Scenario	Population			Employment		
	2031	2041	2051	2031	2041	2051
Reference	820,000	1,000,000	1,100,000	390,000	470,000	500,000
High	820,000	1,000,000	1,160,000	390,000	470,000	520,000
Low	820,000	1,000,000	1,060,000	390,000	470,000	480,000

- **Mineral aggregate operations:** Amendment 1 proposes to remove the prohibition (in Section 4.2.8.2) on new mineral aggregate operations, wayside pits and quarries from habitats of endangered species and threatened species within the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan. This section of the Growth Plan would still prohibit aggregate operations in significant wetlands and woodlands.
- **Engagement with Indigenous communities:** Policies added and modified in Section 5.2.3 of the Plan would require municipalities to engage and coordinate with Indigenous communities on the implementation of the plan within their boundaries. This represents strengthened policy language as compared to what currently exists in this section, which encourages dialogue with Indigenous communities.
- **Alignment with the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement:** In order to achieve consistency with the recently updated PPS, changes have been proposed under this amendment to add and modify existing definitions included in the Growth Plan.

2.0 Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology

In conjunction with Proposed Growth Plan Amendment 1, the Proposed Land Needs Assessment (LNA) Methodology was released in a separate ERO posting (<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1679>) on June 16th, with the same comment period. Under Growth Plan Section 2.2.1.5, the Province is required to establish this methodology which, in turn, is to be used by upper-tier municipalities to establish how much land they require to meet population and employment forecasts as set out in the Plan. The Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology would replace what was released in 2018 as part of the 2017 Growth Plan.

Completed as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review, the Land Needs Assessment will determine the land required by the municipality to:

- Accommodate community and employment land needs;
- Accommodate servicing and infrastructure expansion for all community needs; and,
- Determine whether settlement area boundary expansion is needed to accommodate forecasted growth under the Growth Plan.

2.1 Key Components of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology

Two major components make up the LNA under the Growth Plan; Community Area Land Needs and Employment Area Land Needs:

- **Community Area Land Needs Assessment:** This component focuses on the projected housing needs for the municipality based on the long-term population forecast. It also considers land needs for population-related and office jobs traditionally located in community core areas. In addition to population forecasts, a housing needs analysis, allocation and supply inventory, and community area jobs analysis are also required to develop this component.
- **Employment Area Land Needs Assessment:** This component focuses on how much land is needed to accommodate forecasted employment growth in employment area and community area jobs. Employment forecasts, employment needs analysis, and employment allocation analysis are required to develop this component.

3.0 Hemson Report - Growth Forecasts for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2051

Growth forecasts presented as part of Growth Plan Amendment 1 are based on a study and subsequent report in 2020 by Hemson Consulting. For reference, this report is available as part of the proposed amendment, referred to as the [Hemson Report](#).

The report first outlines economic, social and demographic conditions and assumptions since 2012 that are a basis for the forecasts presented in the proposed amendment. The report then outlines the methodology and assumptions used to develop the population and employment numbers that make up the 2051 forecasts for GGH municipalities. Driving factors in the development of long-term population and employment forecasts include:

- Natural increase and net migration;
- Trends in household composition;
- Housing forecasts based on need;
- Participation and unemployment rates;
- Net in and out-commuting by municipality; and,
- The distribution of population-related, major office, employment land and rural employment among GGH municipalities.

Forecasts in this report show the Greater Golden Horseshoe growing to a population of nearly 15 million by 2051, with over 7 million jobs. This is driven largely by municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (GTAH), which includes the Region of Halton. By 2051 this area is expected to grow to over 11 million people and contain over 5 million jobs, representing approximately 75 per cent of the total population and employment of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

3.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Forecasts

While the Hemson report was being completed at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was updated to include some analysis on what implications this may have on long-term growth in the GGH.

In terms of immediate impacts on growth forecasting, Hemson (see page 5 of report) notes the report took into account the following:

- An assumed reduction in the forecasted short-term population growth in the GGH by approximately 110,000; and,
- An assumed 15 per cent decline in employment growth for the GGH in Q2 of 2020.

The report notes that these impacts are minor, and that overall growth is assumed to return to pre-pandemic expectations within 3 years. It is noted that longer term impacts of COVID-19 could impact growth forecasts in the future depending on the longevity and severity of the pandemic. This is described in greater detail on page 20 of the report.

COMMENTS:

1.0 Summary of Key Points

The HAPP Joint Submission on Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Methodology is attached to this report as Schedule One. This Submission was endorsed by Regional Council on July 15. Key points made in this submission are organized into nine (9) categories:

- **Extension of the planning horizon to 2051:** This item is generally supported by HAPP. The submission does note the extension of the horizon will impact the current development of growth concepts under Halton Region's ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review. It is also noted that a longer horizon will put more emphasis on clear policies in municipal Official Plans addressing development phasing in an extended timeframe.
- **Selection of a Growth Forecast from the Reference, High and Low Scenarios:** HAPP supports the use of the 'Reference' forecast (1.1 million population and 500,000 jobs) to 2051. The Joint Statement also advocates for the 'Mock B' scenario (using 2051 forecasts only) to update Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan.
- **Potential for Schedule 3 forecasts can be substituted with higher forecasts:** This change is supported by HAPP as long as intensification efforts and efforts to reduce the need for settlement boundary expansion are not impacted.

- **Proposed New Land Needs Assessment Methodology:** HAPP generally supports this as a simplified version, focused on achieving accurate land needs assessment for upper-tier municipalities. It is noted in the Joint Submission that ‘market demand’ should be one consideration, among many others, when implementing the Growth Plan. With respect to Employment Land Needs Assessment Methodology, HAPP is also recommending that this process be revised to better identify new employment types reflecting local needs.
- **New Mineral Aggregate Operations and Endangered Species Habitat:** HAPP does not support this policy change as it is proposed. It is suggested, however, that if the change is to be carried forward, it be modified to better align with PPS policies, where justification is, at minimum, required before proceeding with an aggregate operation.
- **Employment land conversions in Provincially Significant Employment Zones, where located in Major Transit Station Areas:** HAPP supported this change in principal. Town staff did not comment on this proposed change during the development of the Joint Statement as proposed MTSAs in Georgetown and Acton do not contain Provincially Significant Employment Zones.
- **Strengthening of requirements for Indigenous Engagement:** HAPP supports this change as it stands, but continues to advocate for a clear Provincial guideline on engagement with Indigenous communities.
- **Changes to achieve consistency with the PPS:** HAPP supports these changes in principal but also notes the need to update other definitions present in the Growth Plan to better align with the PPS (e.g. additional residential units, Built heritage resource).
- **Growth Plan Conformity Date:** HAPP supports continuing with the current Growth Plan conformity date of July 1, 2022. This will allow Halton Region to complete its Municipal Comprehensive Review, and subsequently the area municipalities to complete Growth Plan and Regional Official Plan conformity exercises in a timely manner.

2.0 Input from Town Staff

Town staff met with other members of HAPP in late June, where it was agreed that a Joint Submission should be put together and submitted to the Province ahead of the July 31 deadline. Comment from Town staff on the Proposed Amendment and Land Needs Assessment Methodology focused on:

- **Removal of protections for endangered species in the Growth Plan for new mineral aggregate operations:** Town staff noted this proposed policy change should be reconsidered given the potential for endangered species habitat to be located outside of significant wetlands and woodlands. These concerns were largely reflected in the comments included in the Joint Submission.
- **Engagement with Indigenous communities:** As in past Joint Submissions (i.e. PPS Review), Town staff continue to be supportive of the Provincial efforts to include stronger policy language for Indigenous community engagement. For this submission, staff noted that a Provincial guideline is still not in place for what constitutes meaningful engagement. This concern was included in the comments included in the Joint Submission.
- **New Land Needs Assessment Methodology:** Overall, Town staff supports the proposed LNA methodology, particularly where it recognizes the need for local flexibility in considering alternate assumptions about population and employment growth. Additionally, Town staff supports the encouragement of dialogue between upper and lower-tier municipalities in the implementation of such methodology. Lastly, staff supports that the proposed methodology considers factors such as complete communities, minimum intensification and designated greenfield area targets, in addition to local market conditions.
- **Support for Mock B scenario:** Town staff expressed support for the Mock B scenario (Schedule 3 showing 2051 forecasts only) with a clear objective of steady and predictable phasing in growth, accompanied by seamless servicing and allocation. This was largely reflected in the comments included in the Joint Submission.

3.0 Next Steps

The Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Methodology consultation period closes on July 31, after which both will be finalized and released. It is recommended that staff be directed to report back to Council on the outcome of this process and when the Amendment is expected to take effect.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report relates directly to the implementation of the entire Town Strategic Plan, but in particular Strategic Direction I: Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government, the Goal to provide strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services, and the following Strategic Objectives:

- I.6 To participate fully in Region-wide initiatives to protect and promote the Town's objectives.
- I.7 To foster a greater understanding of the Town's roles and responsibilities and relationships with other orders of government.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

CONSULTATION:

The Halton Area Planning Partnership consisting of the Region of Halton, the four Local Municipalities, Credit Valley Conservation, Conservation Halton, and Grand River Conservation Authority participated in the preparation of the Joint Submission that is the subject of this report.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

No public engagement was undertaken for this report.

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 relationship between this report and the Strategy is summarized below:

The recommendations outlined in this report are linked to the Economic, Environmental and Social Pillars of Sustainability. In summary, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is good.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A copy of this report will be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Region of Halton, the Local Municipalities of Burlington, Milton and Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

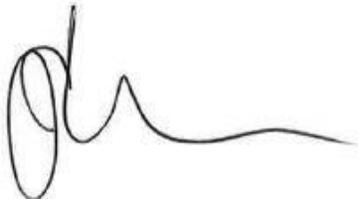
CONCLUSION:

This report has provided an overview of the contents of the Halton Area Planning Partnership Joint Submission on the Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Proposed Land Needs Methodology. It is recommended that Council endorse the comments contained in this report, and support the Joint Submission as endorsed by Regional Council on July 15, 2020.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bronwyn Parker". The script is cursive and somewhat fluid.

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to be "John Linhardt". The signature is very stylized and cursive.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Development

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Marshall". The signature is cursive and clearly legible.

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer