

Halton Official Plan Review Consultations: A Non-Profit Perspective

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A United Way
Member Agency

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The current *Official Plan* for the Regional Municipality of Halton, commonly referred to as the Regional Plan, was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1995. It describes its purpose as:

..to give clear direction as to how physical development should take place in Halton to meet the current and future needs of its people. It is also intended to reflect their collective aims and aspirations, as to the character of the landscape and the quality of life to be preserved and fostered within Halton. Finally, the Plan clarifies and assists in the delivery of Regional services and responsibilities as set out in *The Regional Municipality of Halton Act*.

This Plan outlines a long term vision for Halton's physical form and community character. To pursue that vision, it sets forth goals and objectives, describes an urban structure for accommodating growth, states the policies to be followed, and outlines the means for implementing the policies within its property tax base and other financial resources. (Halton Regional Municipality, 1995, A1,1)

The Regional Municipality of Halton is currently undergoing the statutory five-year review of its *Official Plan* as set out in *The Planning Act*. A key component of the review process is a *Consultation Plan*. The purpose of the *Consultation Plan* is to provide opportunity for public discussion and agency consultation on the *Official Plan*. Regional staff have prepared the *Directions Report* to provide an opportunity for community information and feedback on the framework and direction for the new *Official Plan*.

The *Directions Report* suggests a new framework for planning polices for the new *Official Plan* and recommends 15 directions for change. These 15 directions include affordable housing, the countryside, greenlands, environmental quality and mobility. The underlying framework of the *Directions Report* is a smart growth policy that includes the recommendation of a Smart Growth Index to gauge new development.

Halton Social Planning Council

The primary purpose of the Council is to build and strengthen the community of Halton. It focuses on the social impact of larger social, economic, political and cultural forces on individuals, families and the broad community. The Council is an intermediate organization that provides a research and development function that serves Halton's voluntary sector, municipal and regional government and local grass roots organizations concerned with the well-being of people in the community. The Council helps to improve the effectiveness of the voluntary sector and facilitates its development through research, needs identification, education and training. It helps shape the civic foundation of care and support in our community.

Purpose of This Report

The Council believes the Official Plan sets the stage for social and economic development and, as such, affects the many activities of the voluntary sector. Therefore, the Council has participated in the review process in two ways. Firstly, we have prepared a report, *Embracing Smart Growth – Which Path?*, which offers the Council's observations on the proposed changes to the *Official Plan*. Second, we convened two community consultations in the Region to provide community non-profit agencies the opportunity for input and discussion on *The Directions Report*. This report *Halton Official Plan Review Consultations –A Non-Profit Perspective*, presents the findings of those two consultations.

The Council hosted one consultation in Burlington on October 8, 2002 and another in Georgetown on November 5, 2002. Each consultation was based on a format recommended by the Regional Municipality of Halton. This included a presentation by Regional Staff on the *Directions Report* followed by group discussion using the *Halton Official Plan Review Group Discussion Worksheet*. Although the *Worksheet*

identified particular areas for discussion, the deliberations evolved differently at each workshop, guided by participant's concerns and interests.

Although there are differences between the two consultations, the participant's comments addressed the following themes:

- the factors that made Halton a desirable place to live,
- the issues that represent challenges in terms of preserving quality of life,
- and recommendations for action.

The Council shares these comments with the belief that they will contribute to the development of a Halton *Official Plan* that is responsive to community.

BURLINGTON COMMUNITY GROUP/AGENCY CONSULTATION

The following sections present the comments from the Burlington Consultation.

Factors that make Halton a desirable community to live

1. Good Reputation –clean, safe, wealthy
2. Safety
3. Proximity to recreational and cultural facilities
4. Geography –location to rural areas and lake
5. Proximity to economic activity

Issues that represent challenges

- Affordable housing –need lower cost and assisted housing
- Transportation –public transit and gridlock -as well as inter-community – toll roads are not the answer
- Adequate human services - based on per capita –services for women, children, youth, seniors
- Diversity –with respect to inclusion
- Health care –should be publicly funded and accessible
- Preservation of land –for healthy food production
- Poverty
- Education –need training and skills development
- Recreation –needs to be accessible recreation programs
- Visionary leadership
- Reduce ecological footprint –reduce consumption patterns
- Economic diversity –too much reliance on one industry –needs human services/affordable housing for this to happen

Recommended Actions

For Federal and Provincial Government

- Define government responsibilities -boundaries of government are unclear –with downloading responsibility is missing –different levels of government argue about who is responsible for what –need to clarify roles
- More public responsibility and a stronger role in the provision of public services including health, hospitals, water testing, education
- Increase taxation for social investment

For Regional Government

- More interaction with municipalities on all planning issues to achieve more consensus on issues
- The Region should hire some alternative consultants to present alternative options that are new or different to the traditional types of planning
- Stop chanting provincial policy that is detrimental to our Halton residents, for example, Ontario Works, the National Child Tax Benefit

For Citizens

- Need to develop new mechanisms for citizen participation in planning decisions
- Citizens themselves have to be responsible – citizens need to become more educated re issues in community

For Private Sector

- Businesses can say “We need to have our employees needs met” – businesses need to be more responsible for social needs not just economic
- Businesses need to provide as well as demand more services that their employees need to work and live in the community

Other Actions

For Affordable Housing

- Make affordable housing a requirement of any new housing development –use heavy penalties for not complying
- Reuse old or closed school buildings or businesses for affordable housing –we need to look at alternative uses for existing facilities -infilling

For Social Services

- Increase taxation for social investment – not just responsibility on property tax
- We need to develop a human services plan as part of an official plan. Planning for human services should be given equal importance to economic development by government

For Transit

- Planning for transit should not be evaluated on cost –but rather people
- We need leadership in Halton to establish a better transit system -we need a transit plan for this. The transit systems need to connect better between communities in our region
- Should plan for transit before other development –can't put railway tracks in after houses have been built
- Transit plan should reduce 'the great divide' between the northern and southern communities in Halton –this should be a basic -we should be able to travel within our own community

For Sustainable Development

- Development needs to be based on human scale –we need a human development index in conjunction with a smart growth index
- The plan needs to support sustainable agricultural development – we need to support local organic farmers -the Region could even start by providing organic food in their own cafeteria

For Diversity

- Inclusion of ethno specific cultures –representation of diversity in planning process and official plan

Groups/Agencies Invited

Halton Town Hall Group
Halton Coalition for Social Justice
Halton Anti Poverty Coalition
Halton Violence Prevention
Committee
Halton Housing Insecurity
Committee
Inter Church Council – Burlington
Churches
Burlington Counselling and Family
Services
Cassatta Youth Centre
Coalition for Persons with Disabilities
EC Drury School for the Deaf
Elizabeth Fry Society
Halton Adolescent Support
Halton District School Board
Halton Catholic District School Board
Halton Helping Hands
Halton Multicultural Council
Halton Support Services.

Halton Womens Place
Learning Disabilities Assoc.
Literacy Council of Burlington
Nelson Youth Centre
Oaklands Regional Centre
River Oaks Recreation Centre
S.E.N.A.C.A.
Salvation Army Burlington
SAM Program
Sheridan College
Sir John Colborne Centre
STRIDE
Summit House
Teletouch
Trafalgar Seniors Homes
Transitions for Youth
V.O.N.
AON Alzheimer Services
The Womens Centre

Groups/Agencies Represented

Halton Town Hall Group
Elizabeth Fry Society Peel Halton
Halton Women's Place
Interfaith Development Education
and Awareness (IDEA) Burlington

Halton Anti Poverty Coalition
Halton Coalition for Social Justice
Halton Regional Municipality
Halton Social Planning Council

HALTON HILLS COMMUNITY GROUP/AGENCY CONSULTATION

The following sections present the comments from the Georgetown Consultation.

Factors that make Halton a desirable community to live

1. Greenspace – defined community boundaries – urban/rural
2. Safety – compared to Toronto it is very desirable
3. Well educated established workforce – appeals to businesses
4. Not as highly populated as other areas e.g. Mississauga, Brampton
5. 401/QEW access to transportation routes – 407 and Go train for commuters
6. Proximity to Toronto – cultural events

Issues that represent challenges

- Transportation congestion and public transit inadequate particularly north/south
- Shortage of assisted housing and affordable housing - the gap between supply/need is greater for assisted than for affordable – people have to leave own community – waiting list 3-5 years
- Using population numbers as determinants for establishing services - creates N/S divide. Applies to all services and the location generally excludes north – particularly social services, transportation
- Milton is sometimes seen as in North Halton - but still not accessible to Halton Hills residents
- Preserving green space and farms - no profit in farming leads to selling to developers
- Good mix of housing types rather than traditional large single detached type – need a mix and higher density – better balance
- Low income groups excluded from house market – need mid range of housing prices

- Transportation – additional transit services not just traditional Lakeshore corridor route – lots of residents work outside Halton Hills and have to commute

Main Issues and Recommended Actions

Housing – Root Causes

- Affordability
- Lack of funding – downloading to local level
- Lack of knowledge - not aware of need - awareness has grown but not enough
- People concerned about impact of low income on housing, their own homes –property values

Housing – Recommended Actions

- People need to see importance of affordable housing - need to see benefit to community as a whole
- Clear roles of federal and provincial responsibility and funding
- Private sector incentives insufficient - only 67 units last year – but not just social housing or \$350,000 homes need mix
- New definitions ok but Smart Growth Index does not differentiate between affordable and assisted housing – application needs to be given more weight
- Enforcing plans/policy – not always done with developers –only housing “provision for” in plan
- People should be able to live in their community through their whole life cycle - need mix
- Need to reinforce the importance of affordable housing and appropriate housing
- Community should get involved -talk to their elected officials/councillors
- Letters to the editor/get involved in community groups

- Planners need to emphasize importance of life cycle issue to community particularly evident when seniors/young people/families having to leave their own community

Transportation – Root Causes

- Reliance on cars
- Inter regional planning for transportation doesn't exist
- Long range planning for infrastructure (at transit level of service) is inadequate and commitment of revenue
- Transit for disabled non existent – just GO which is East West
- Huge population growth
- New development in Georgetown but no connections - people have to drive everywhere in Georgetown
- Planning for residential development only no mix of other services sometimes built last or not at all so have to drive into town

Transportation – Recommended Actions

- Need to expand roadways wider
- Planning should not just be for roads - need planning for public transit
- Need incentives for public transit use
- Transit services need to be ahead of residential plans- just like sewers or water usage
- Number should not be basis for transit service
- Parking is an issue at transit and Go bus routes need to be improved for Go - Bus/Go connections needed to be in line
- Government funding is needed -keeping funds designated to the priority of public transit infrastructure
- Planning/studies happening need dollars to implement

- Need to show benefit of use to community– high school issues is a good example – new high school on outskirts of town but no buses – it would help your own kids and family
- Better connections between go and buses and rates should not be a deterrent
- Push/pressure politicians for priority of transit particularly with new development

Greenspace – Root Causes

- Property value and speculation pressure, particular with population growth/development
- Deal to maintain farm and make profit
- Farms are being phased out
- Attracting new younger farmer is difficult

Greenspace – Recommended Actions

- Pass regulations making it difficult to develop green lands and stronger enforcement of rules
- Follow through and adherence to visions – water quality issue
- Maintain community boundaries with green space around urban centres and communities
- Community needs to talk/educate politicians – speak up
- Public needs to be vigilant on watching what is happening to rest of green lands
- Support our local farmers – farmers markets and pick your own farms
- Prioritize most important green space
- Educating each other is important - impact of loss of green space -once it's gone – it's gone for good
- Quality of life vs. taxes is an education of people

Groups/Agencies Invited

Activan	Halton Hills Community Support and Information
Adapt	Halton Hills Homelessness Taskforce
Allendale	Halton Hills Planning Department
Alzheimer's Society for Halton	Halton Hills Recreation and Parks
Arthritis Society Peel Halton	Halton Recovery House
Assoc. of Ontario Health	Halton Housing Insecurity Committee
Bennett Health Care Centre	Halton Multicultural Council
Canadian Mental Health Assoc	Halton Region Museum
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Halton Regional Police Services
Childfind Ontario	Halton Violence Prevention Council
Community Living North Halton	Inter-Church Council
Distress Centre of Halton	Literacy Guild North Halton
Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital	Milton Affordable Housing Coalition
Georgetown Bread Basket	Milton Dept. of Community services
Georgetown District Senior Centre	Ontario March of Dimes
Grace Anglican Church	Salvation Army, Family Services, Acton
Halton Hills Public Library	Salvation Army, Family Services, Milton
Halton Anti-Poverty Coalition	Salvation Army, Georgetown
Halton Catholic District School Board	St. Andrews United Church
Halton Catholic School Board: Adult Learning Centre.	St. Vincent De Paul, Georgetown
Halton Children's Aid Society	Town Hall Group
Halton Coalition for Social Justice	United Way of Halton Hills
Halton Community Legal Services	Willow Park Ecology Centre
Halton District School Board	YMCA Brampton
Halton Food Security Committee	
Halton Helping Hands	

Groups/Agencies Represented

Halton Community Legal Services
Halton Multicultural Council
Halton Regional Municipality
Halton Social Planning Council
Milton Affordable Housing Coalition
United Way of Halton Hills