

DATE: October 29, 2002

TO: Chairman and Members of the Planning and Development Committee

FROM: Thomas S. Mokrzycki, Commissioner of Planning and Building

SUBJECT: **Halton Region "Directions Report - The Greening of Halton - Smart Growth, Smart Choices"**
MEETING DATE: November 18, 2002

ORIGIN: Planning and Building Department

COMMENTS: This report is part of the ongoing program to update City Council on the significant planning initiatives in adjacent municipalities.

On September 18, 2002, Halton Region Council received the "Directions Report" titled "The Greening of Halton - Smart Growth, Smart Choices". The report is part of the Region's Official Plan Review program which commenced in 2001 and is anticipated to be completed by September 2003. Halton Region is shown on Exhibit I.

The Directions Report focuses on refinement to the following key policy areas:

- Delivering smart growth within the urban boundary;
- Achieving affordable housing;
- Supporting and promoting agriculture;
- Enhancing the Region's Greenlands;

- Improving environmental quality; and
- Improving mobility through public transit.

The Directions report is supported by twelve technical papers which cover the policy areas in greater detail. The purposes of the report are to: provide background to the Official Plan Review; highlight current planning-related issues with possible Official Plan solutions; and, to generate public discussion and input into the Plan Review. The recommendations will be considered by Halton Region Council after the public consultation process.

The report states that Halton is a desirable place to live due to its mix of city and country lifestyle. This attractiveness, however, can be a double-edged sword because as more people and businesses choose to locate in the community, it will become increasingly more difficult to balance this urban/rural mix and provide the infrastructure to service the new growth.

Based on the 2001 census, Halton Region was home to 386,000 people or about 7% of the GTA's 5.2 million people. In the next thirty years, it is anticipated that Halton will increase its share of the GTA population to 9% which represents a 79% increase in growth to 690,000, whereas, the GTA will experience a 42% increase in growth to realize a population of 7.5 million people. In addition to the normal factors which contribute to growth such as natural increase, migration from one region to another and immigration, the Directions Report notes that Mississauga - "Halton's major competitor in attracting growth, will be running out of greenfields in the next decade or two".

The recommendations are aimed at accommodating this growth while still maintaining the quality of life in Halton Region.

One of the key directions is no adjustments to the urban boundaries through this Official Plan Review. These will be deferred until the next five-year review. The Region has determined that it has an adequate supply of land for residential and employment uses until 2021.

The Region of Halton is also proposing policies to make it more onerous to "down zone sites" or convert them from employment uses to residential uses by requiring an overall amendment to the secondary plan for these types of down zonings.

In keeping with current planning issues, the Directions Report addresses both Smart Growth and Healthy Communities. It states that while the term "Smart Growth" was conceived in the United States, the concept is well entrenched in Canada and is the equivalent of "good planning" and the principles are contained in one form or another in contemporary Official Plans in Ontario. However, the report notes that municipalities are having difficulties implementing the Smart Growth policies. The Directions Report is proposing a Smart Growth Index (SGI), whereby, planning applications would be assessed against a set of Smart Growth Indicators and assigned a score. Because it is still being tested by the Region, the concept of a Smart Growth Index, is proposed as a measurement tool rather than as a regulatory tool at this time. Halton staff will report back to Regional Council in one year's time after the adoption of the plan on the success of the indicator.

Complementing the concept of Smart Growth are the principles of Healthy Communities. Although the existing plan is based on the Healthy Community model, the Directions Report is proposing that performance measurements be used in decision-making. While the SGI would look at individual applications, the Region is also proposing that it carry out a Community Health Assessment (CHA) as part of secondary plans, major planning applications or public projects with an estimated cost of \$2 million or more to

look at how the proposal will affect the health of the community.

The review is also looking at updating a number of Environmental Policies in order to bring them into conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement. As a result of their work to identify and protect Significant Woodlands, updating of ESA boundaries and by introducing the concept of adjacent lands, the Region is identifying 50% more area as greenlands to be protected. The Significant Woodlands will be placed in a new Greenlands B category within the Official Plan.

The Directions Report is supportive of the principles of the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is proposing that the Region set targets to reduce overall emissions generated from the Region's corporate functions and activities and implement measures to achieve these targets. The report notes that the largest sources of poor air quality in Halton originate outside of Halton. The response proposed in the report is to support the provincial and federal governments in the adoption of the Kyoto protocol. This is a good step, but pressure should be maintained on both the province and the federal government to improve regulations on fuels, vehicle emissions and industrial and generating station emissions and to work for stricter regulations in the U.S. This may best be done by establishing an Air Quality committee similar to the proposed Green Projects Advisory Committee.

To address water resources, the Region is proposing a number of additional policies:

- to introduce Wellhead Protection Zones and regulating land uses within these zones to ensure that municipal water supply is not impacted by development;

- to define and implement sustainable limits for water-taking in Halton;
- to monitor the overall health of watercourses; and
- to promote regeneration of natural areas within 100 m (330 ft.) of a watercourse.

The establishment of Wellhead Protection Zones and defining and enforcing water-taking from the aquifers are steps towards implementing some of the Walkerton recommendations. However, there are other issues such as surface water quality and quantity, baseflow in watercourses, soil and watercourse erosion, and discharges from treatment plants and industries which would be addressed through comprehensive watershed planning, as per the Walkerton recommendations.

As a final recommendation, to implement many of the environmental policies, the Region is proposing to establish a "Green Fund" which would be used to secure environmentally significant lands, to fund Green Projects and for investment in improvements in Regional Waterfront Parks.

The Directions Report builds on a housing study completed by the Region in 2001. The report is proposing new definitions for Assisted Housing (rent-geared-to-income) and Affordable Housing (modestly priced market). It also proposed that the Official Plan recognize the Region as the provider and manager of assisted housing including assessing need on an annual basis and setting targets to meet the need and delivering programs.

Halton is not proposing any expansions to its urban boundaries at this time. While holding its current mix of urban and rural land, the Region is preparing policies to keep the agricultural areas viable for the next two decades. In addition to land use policies to protect the rural areas from urban development, the Region is

also proposing policies to market its farm products. Also, in order to allow farmers to supplement their farm income, the Region is proposing to expand on-farm business operations for farms 20 ha (50 ac.) or larger, subject to conditions. Criteria will be put in place to ensure that the on-farm business is in keeping with the rural character, and will not require urban services. This is to discourage businesses that would normally locate in urban areas from locating on farms.

Also, in effort to preserve its rural landscape, the Region is proposing to invoke a sunset clause for farm retirement lots and to require any new golf course proposals to only be permitted by way of amendment to the Official Plan.

The final area of policy direction deals with transit. The Region of Halton is proposing policies that take a "Transit First" approach including:

- standardized high level of service for local transit;
- introduce new transit services at the first occupancy of new development; and
- developing municipal guidelines to promote transit supportive land uses along corridors and at nodes on the inter-regional transit network.

Halton is finalizing its Inter-Regional Transit Opportunities Strategy. Representatives from Mississauga Transportation and Works have been briefed by their staff and their consultant and have provided some input into their study. Once it goes to Halton Regional Council, it will be distributed to various agencies, including Mississauga for review and comment.

Impacts on Mississauga

The overall philosophy of the Directions Report is consistent with the Goals and Objectives of Mississauga's Official Plan. The improvements to the Greenland system will directly help protect the Joshua Creek ESA located in the Southdown District as its headwaters are located in Halton Region. Many of the other recommend policy directions would compliment efforts being made in Mississauga especially for air quality and transit.

The proposed policies to make it more onerous to convert lands from employment to residential uses should provide more certainty for those lands in the Southdown District where encroachment from residential uses would cause compatibility concerns for existing industrial uses.

When Halton Region completes its Transit Strategy, Mississauga will be in position to evaluate its findings and recommendations.

In 2002, the City purchased lands within the Town of Milton on the west side of Ninth Line. With the addition of the Significant Woodlands within the Greenlands area, one of the woodlots the City purchased will be subject to the Greenlands B policies of the Halton Region Official Plan as shown in Exhibit II. The policies are designed to protect the flora and fauna although the following uses are permitted: existing agricultural operations, existing uses, single detached dwellings, non-intensive recreation uses, transportation and utility facilities, home occupations and watershed management and flood and erosion control projects carried out or supervised by a public agency. These policies are consistent with Mississauga's Environmental policies.

CONCLUSION:

The Directions Report was released to facilitate public input into the five-year Official Plan Review in Halton Region. As the Review moves forward, staff will monitor the proposed policies and report to City Council. None of the proposals discussed in the report would have an unfavourable impact on Mississauga.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report titled "Halton Region "Directions Report - The Greening of Halton - Smart Growth, Smart Choices"", dated October 29, 2002 from the Commissioner of Planning and Building be received for information.

*Original Signed By:*_____

Thomas S. Mokrzycki

Commissioner of Planning and Building