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(Halton Hills)

DATE: July 16, 2002

TO: Chairman and Members of the Planning and Development Committee

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

SUBJECT: **Halton Hills Rural Area Study - Discussion Paper**
MEETING DATE: August 6, 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 June 19, 2002, the Town of Halton Hills circulated a discussion paper titled "Halton Hills Rural Area Study". This discussion paper is part of the Town's Official Plan Review program which commenced in January 2000 and is anticipated to be completed June 2003. The location of Halton Hills is shown on Exhibit I.

The Halton Hills Rural Area Study addresses four main policy areas:

- delineation of prime agricultural areas and rural areas;
- role and function of rural areas;
- boundaries of the Rural Clusters; and
- role and function of the Hornby/401 employment corridor.

The policies for the rural area in the Halton Hills Official Plan date back to 1985 and are being examined as part of a comprehensive Official Plan review. The town is attempting to bring their policies into conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Region of Halton Official Plan. The discussion paper does not propose specific policies at this time. Rather, it examines the issues facing the rural and agricultural areas of Halton Hills including:

- the state of agriculture in the Region and the Town, including an examination of the range of agricultural operations and their benefits; and
- the continued operation of farms and the pressures faced by farmers such as rapid urbanization, farmers' income, pressure for golf courses, the changing nature of farms holdings with respect to both farm consolidation and fragmentation land stewardship, and taxation.

The discussion paper notes the rural areas of the Town are currently under stress given its proximity to the Greater Toronto Area. Therefore, it is proposing that there should be policies in the Official Plan which protect prime agricultural areas and allow for some limited secondary uses such as fruit stands, butcher shops, farm machinery repairs and veterinary services.

Another issue addressed in study is the future of the Town's rural clusters. These are pockets of development where there are a minimum of six residential units and two more active nonresidential units. There are 14 such areas identified in Halton Hills. Rural clusters allow some development to support the rural community that would not otherwise be permitted in rural areas and may include small commercial uses, agriculturally related industrial uses, institutional uses and open space uses. The study is recommending that firm boundaries be established for these clusters. The only exception to this is Hornby. Because of its

proximity to the employment lands in Milton, there is some pressure to expand this area and take advantage of the servicing that might be available in Milton. Landowners may want Hornby recognized as an urban area if services are extended to the area. The discussion paper presented a number of options for the area but did not make a specific recommendation, which would be dealt with as part of the Official Plan Review. Any change to its status would also require an amendment to the Regional Official Plan.

The report does not address protection of natural areas within rural areas. Staff from Halton Hills have stated that there will be a separate Discussion Paper on this issue released later this summer.

The policy direction proposed in the discussion paper is consistent with the Province's Smart Growth philosophy. Provided that the philosophy of the discussion paper is incorporated in the proposed Official Plan policies and the Town is successful in implementing the policies, Mississauga would not object to the approach of Halton Hills to its rural area.

CONCLUSION:

The Town of Halton Hills is working on a program to bring its Official Plan in line with the Province's Smart Growth initiatives, and in conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Region of Halton Official Plan. The "Discussion Paper - Halton Hills Rural Area Study", is just one component of the plan review program. The direction in this study will have to be considered along with other Discussion Papers that address other planning issues for the Town and then detailed Official Plan policies developed. Mississauga will have an opportunity to comment on these other components of the Official Plan review

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report titled "Halton Hills Rural Area Study - Discussion Paper", dated July 16, 2001 from the Commissioner of Planning and Building be received for information.

Thomas S. Mokrzycki
Commissioner of Planning and Building