

Report To:	Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council
From:	Bob Gray, Commissioner, Legislative and Planning Services and Corporate Counsel
Date:	July 7, 2021
Report No:	LPS51-21
Re:	Regional Official Plan Review: Work Plan Update and overview of Key Principles as the foundation for a draft Preferred Growth Concept

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Report No. LPS51-21 re: “Regional Official Plan Review: Work Plan Update and overview of Key Principles as the foundation for a draft Preferred Growth Concept” be received.
2. THAT staff be directed to implement the revised Work Plan for the completion of the Regional Official Plan Review as identified in Report No. LPS51-21.
3. THAT the Regional Clerk forward a copy of Report No. LPS51-21 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, the Town of Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation, and the Grand River Conservation Authority, for their information.

REPORT

Executive Summary

- In February 2021, through Report No. LPS18-21, Regional Council authorized the release of the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper as a basis for public consultation on four growth concepts as evaluated using the evaluation framework endorsed by Regional Council (see Attachment #1 for an overview of the Growth Concepts). That Report also recommended that the input received from the Local Municipalities, public agencies, and the public, be considered in the development of a draft Preferred Growth Concept to accommodate population and employment growth to 2051, for the consideration of Regional Council at the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

- In April 2021, Regional Council provided additional direction to staff to make available the following information, to form part of the public engagement program:
 - an additional growth concept that provides no new urban boundary expansion;
 - a comparative analysis of greenhouse gas emissions for the growth concepts; and
 - release of the White Paper on “Planning for Change: An Analysis of COVID-19’s Acceleration of Economic Trends in Halton Region”.

- To support public engagement on this supplemental information, the engagement period which was originally scheduled to conclude at the end of May 2021, was rescheduled to conclude on July 15, 2021.

- In February 2021, Regional Council by resolution requested the Province suspend the timetable for municipal conformity to the Growth Plan. On April 27, 2021, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing sent a letter to the Regional Chair confirming the Province’s expectations related to the completion of the Regional Official Plan Review. The letter confirms, among other things, that:
 - The deadline for completing conformity to the Provincial Growth Plan is July 1, 2022 and there will be no deadline extensions for any municipalities;
 - Municipalities must designate all land required to accommodate the population and employment growth forecasts contained in the Growth Plan to 2051; and
 - The Minister has powers under the *Places to Grow Act* to intervene if necessary.

- This Report is intended to do four things:
 1. Provide information that discusses matters raised in the April 27th letter from the Minister, including the powers of the Minister under the *Places to Grow Act* and an update on the Region’s efforts to advance housing supply consistent with Provincial objectives;
 2. Outline the necessary work plan activities and a proposed schedule to enable completion of the Regional Official Plan Review consistent with the Province’s expectations;
 3. Provide an update on engagement activities, including an initial summary of what we’ve heard as a result of consultation efforts to date;
 4. Provide an overview of the Key Principles which aim to provide the foundation of the draft Preferred Growth Concept.

Background

The current, approved Regional Official Plan provides comprehensive planning for growth and development to 2031. All upper- and single-tier municipalities that are subject to ‘A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019’ must plan to accommodate for population and employment growth projected to 2051.

Discussion

This Report is organized in providing Regional Council with information on four separate yet related matters:

1. Commentary on the April 27th letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, including the powers of the Minister under the *Places to Grow Act* and an update on the Region's efforts to advance housing supply consistent with Provincial objectives;
2. An outline of remaining work plan activities associated with the Regional Official Plan Review and a proposed schedule to enable completion of the Regional Official Plan Review consistent with the Province's expectations;
3. An update on engagement activities related to the Growth Concepts, including an initial summary of what we've heard as a result of consultation efforts to date;
4. An overview of Key Principles which could provide the foundation for the development of a draft Preferred Growth Concept.

Letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing dated April 27, 2021

On February 17, 2021, Regional Council unanimously approved a resolution requesting that the Province enable Halton Region to delay its final report on its Official Plan Review until proper, in person, informed consultation with the public can be conducted. The resolution also requested that the Province suspend the conformity deadline until the impacts of the pandemic on growth planning can be better understood and addressed as part of the land needs assessment framework.

A letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was received on April 27, 2021, which confirms the Province's expectations related to the completion of the Regional Official Plan Review. While the letter does not state that it is provided in response to Council's resolution, it does confirm, among other things, that:

- The deadline for completing conformity to the Provincial Growth Plan is July 1, 2022 and there will be no deadline extensions for any municipalities.
- Municipalities must designate all land required to accommodate the population and employment growth forecasts contained in the Growth Plan to 2051.
- The Minister has powers under the *Places to Grow Act* to intervene if necessary.

At the May 2021 Regional Council meeting, in response to the contents of the April 27th letter, Councillors raised questions about the specific nature of the conformity requirement, the powers of the Minister to intervene, the implications of not advancing the Official Plan Review within the timeframe specified, and the relationship between municipal official plans and the Province's objectives to advance housing supply and recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. These points are further elaborated on below:

1. Requirement for the Regional Official Plan to conform with the Provincial Growth Plan by July 1, 2022:

The Places to Grow Act, 2005, requires that municipalities make any amendments required to conform with the Provincial Growth Plan either before the third anniversary of the date on which the growth plan comes into effect (s.12(2)) or on or before a different date specified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (s.12(3)). The Minister has directed all upper- and single-tier municipalities that are subject to the Provincial Growth Plan to make the necessary amendments by July 1, 2022.

2. Powers of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to Intervene:

The Places to Grow Act, 2005, enables the Minister to address issues of non-conformity in Official Plans. For example, if, in the Minister's opinion, the official plan of a municipality does not conform to the Provincial Growth Plan, or if the municipality has not adopted an amendment conforming with the Provincial Growth Plan by the date specified the Minister may:

- a. advise the municipality of the particulars of the non-conformity; and
- b. invite the municipality or municipal planning authority to submit, within a specified time, proposals for the resolution of the non-conformity (s.13(1)).

The Minister may, by order, amend the official plan to resolve non-conformity if:

- a. the council or municipal planning authority fails to submit proposals to resolve the non-conformity within the specified time; or
- b. proposals are submitted but, after consultation with the Minister, the non-conformity cannot be resolved, and the Minister so notifies the council or municipal planning authority in writing (s.13(2)).

An order from the Minister issued under s.13(2) of the *Places to Grow Act* has the same effect as an amendment to the official plan that is adopted by the council of the municipality and is final and not subject to appeal (s.13(3)).

3. Implications of not advancing the Regional Official Plan Review:

Halton Region has a long-standing approach to coordinated, integrated and comprehensive planning for growth. This approach relies on the ability for Regional Council to carefully and comprehensively assess issues and alternative options for growth, development, intensification and protection of natural and cultural assets to determine how different options respond to key objectives in defining the public interest. It also allows the Region and local municipalities to properly plan for major growth areas and areas of intensification ahead of such growth being proposed, by accommodating such growth in its master plans and capital projects, recognizing that there will be demands on existing and planned infrastructure arising from such development.

There are implications for the Region and its municipalities if the Regional Official Plan Review is delayed. While the current Regional Official Plan addresses comprehensive planning for growth to 2031, planning for growth post-2031 requires several important steps in the planning continuum. These steps take time to implement and cannot

feasibly advance without the Region allocating growth through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and ultimately through an amendment to the Regional Official Plan. The following represents a sample of these important initiatives and implications:

- a. Best Planning Estimates (BPEs) of Population, Occupied Dwelling Units and Employment:** Following comprehensive updates to its Official Plan, the Region has prepared Best Planning Estimates of Population, Occupied Dwelling Units and Employment. The “Best Planning Estimates” are a planning tool used to identify where and when development is expected to take place across the Region. It breaks down the timing of anticipated growth within specific geographic areas known as Traffic Zones and Small Geographic Units (SGU’s) to assist the Region and the Local Municipalities in planning complete communities, including the establishment of the supply of housing, type of housing and jobs across the Region. The Best Planning Estimates also provide direction in determining the timely provision of both hard infrastructure (roads, water and wastewater) and community infrastructure (schools, community recreation etc.). The current BPEs were approved by Regional Council in 2011 for growth to 2031 and will need to be updated following the approval of the Regional Official Plan vision for growth post 2031, as they are an important input to many of the planning initiatives described below.
- b. Water and Wastewater and Transportation Master Plans:** The Region prepares master plans for water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure under Ontario’s Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process. The master plans address the timing and delivery of infrastructure projects to align with the phased growth prescribed by the Official Plan and the Best Planning Estimates. The upcoming Master Plans will require approved growth allocations through the Regional Official Plan and Best Planning Estimates, and cannot advance without this key information.
- c. Development Charges By-Law Updates:** The Region’s Development Charges (DC) By-Law is an important financial tool that ensures that the costs of new infrastructure required to support growth can be recovered from the development industry to the extent possible under the *Development Charges Act*. It supports the Region’s longstanding principle that growth must pay for growth. The infrastructure identified in the Master Plans are incorporated into the DC Study to determine the cost to develop in Halton. A delay in the preparation and approval of the Master Plans will impact the timing of future DC By-Law Updates. For example, without the BPEs and Master Plans in place, there is no ability for the DC By-law to recover costs for infrastructure that will be required for growth beyond 2031.
- d. Infrastructure Staging and Financing Plans:** In Halton, new growth within the Designated Greenfield Area can only advance once an Infrastructure Staging Plan and financing plan has been approved by Regional Council

through an Allocation Program. The Allocation Program is a unique financing and growth management tool used by Halton to ensure that the development industry is contributing its share of the cost of infrastructure and services required to support growth. The background studies for infrastructure investment are based on the growth directions and policies from the ROP. If there is a delay in approving the new ROP, there is a lack of direction as to where growth should be allocated to 2051, which may affect the Region's ability to properly plan for growth since ROPA 38 only provides approved direction to 2031.

- e. **Local Municipal Official Plan Updates:** Halton's local municipalities are at different stages of undertaking conformity exercises to ensure that Local Official Plans are in conformity with the Regional Official Plan. Further delays will influence the timing and outcomes of local Official Plan conformity exercises.
- f. **Area-Specific Plans for New Growth and Intensification Areas:** Planning for potential new growth and intensification areas requires the completion of several studies to inform area-specific plans or secondary plans. These exercises are important and take time to complete and must await the confirmation of growth allocations through the Regional Official Plan.
- g. **Other Local Municipal Plans for Community Services, Capital Infrastructure and Development Charges:** There are important community services and associated capital infrastructure investments that can only be appropriately defined, financed and implemented following the confirmation of growth allocations through the Regional Official Plan.

Additionally, updated Official Plans provide clarity and certainty in communicating a community's vision for growth. An updated Official Plan is most effective in articulating and defending the public interest through the development application review and approval process. Without an updated official plan, development proponents may be able to more easily demonstrate to the Ontario Land Tribunal how the current Regional Official Plan fails to conform to updated Provincial directives and result in a lack of cohesion if the Plan is not in conformity.

Given these implications, it is important that a clear timeframe be established for the completion of the Regional Official Plan Review. As part of this report, staff are proposing a work plan that advances key matters of Growth Plan conformity to respond to the July 2022 deadline. There are other matters that are not bound by the same statutory requirement that staff are proposing to stage to come forward at a later date. For example, mapping related to Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems, as well as Agricultural Systems policies will benefit from further discussions with the agricultural community and through this report staff are proposing that these aspects of change not be advanced with the Regional Official

Plan Amendment. More information on this is provided through the work plan below.

4. Relationship between Municipal Official Plans and Housing Supply and COVID-19 recovery:

The April 27, 2021 letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing states that updated official plans will play a critical role in helping more Ontarians find a home that meets their needs, as well as supporting our economic recovery from COVID-19. Regional staff agree that there are considerable advantages in having an updated Official Plan to enable the advancement of growth and development in line with defined expectations.

Halton Region supports Provincial objectives to advance housing supply. The Region's comments on the Province's Housing Supply Action Plan as endorsed by Council through Report No. LPS18-19, underscore our shared interest in ensuring that housing supply is not constrained. It further underscores the importance of having a collaborative and integrated approach to advancing essential infrastructure and community services that is required to support growth. For example, Regional Council has identified areas of investment in Provincial infrastructure (e.g. schools, transit, and hospitals, etc.) that must be advanced in order to support growth in Halton. These Provincial assets are integral to unlocking housing supply opportunities and need to be financed, planned, designed and commissioned seamlessly in time to support the needs of growth in new communities.

Through Report No. FN-46-19/PW-50-19/LPS112-19, Regional Council approved the 2020 Allocation Program that represents a financing plan to provide roughly \$1 Billion worth of water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure to support growth, development and new housing supply across the Region for the next 6-10 years. This investment in infrastructure underscores the Region's commitment to continue our long standing approach in managing growth in an environmentally, socially and fiscally sustainable manner.

Regional Official Plan Review Work Plan Schedule

Consistent with the direction from the Province, this Report proposes a work plan that will allow Council to complete the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and render a decision on an Amendment to the Regional Official Plan to conform with the Provincial Growth Plan by July 1, 2022. The Regional Official Plan Review must also conform to updates to the Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and Provincial Policy Statement, however it is only the Growth Plan which has a July 1, 2022 conformity deadline.

1. An Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure

The Province has confirmed that the Region can complete its municipal comprehensive review to achieve conformity with Provincial plans in phases, rather than as one overall amendment to the Regional Official Plan. Based on that confirmation, the Region is advancing Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 48, addressing a proposed new Regional Urban Structure, ahead of the overall Integrated Growth Management Strategy, which is the subject of Report No. LPS60-21 on this Council Agenda.

2. An Amendment implementing the Region's overall Integrated Growth Management Strategy

This amendment would implement the Region's Integrated Growth Management Strategy (based upon a Preferred Growth Concept) allocating population and employment growth to the Local Municipalities to 2051, and achieving conformity with all relevant policies of the Growth Plan, within the urban area. This amendment would also address housing, and other important policy matters with a close relationship to growth management, including any necessary updates to the Regional Natural Heritage System mapping within the urban area.

3. An Amendment implementing updates to the Rural/Agricultural System, Natural Heritage, Climate Change and other outstanding matters

There has been considerable dialogue with the agricultural community regarding how the Regional Official Plan can provide greater support for agriculture. The conversations with the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee, and the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture have been valuable in identifying and addressing agricultural issues but require more time to ensure a positive policy outcome.

In this regard, it is recommended that the required amendments to the Regional Official Plan addressing the rural and agricultural system, climate change, and natural heritage policies and mapping for areas outside of the urban area to 2051, be addressed in a separate amendment that follows the amendment implementing the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. This would allow for additional community engagement, and engagement with the Local Municipalities and other public agencies, prior to finalization and adoption.

Attachment #2 shows the proposed revised work plan timeframe for Council's consideration.

Engagement Activities and Initial Consultation Summary

An initial engagement approach for the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper was set out in LPS18-21 Regional Official Plan Review - Integrated Growth Management Strategy - Growth Concepts Discussion Paper. Based on input from Council at the Council Workshop on February 10th staff strengthened its public engagement approach

recognizing that the pandemic and the implementation of public health measures overall would not allow for any significant scale of in-person engagement and indicated that materials developed for public engagement will be improved to assist in effectively communicating the complex subject matter in its simplest terms. Emphasis was placed on electronic forms of communication using the internet and video conferencing technology. At the same time, provisions were made to provide information and engagement opportunities to people with limited or no internet.

The engagement program approach, its reach and activities are highlighted in the Figure titled “Growth Concepts Discussion Paper Engagement Summary – February 21 to June 21, 2021”. This Figure provides a summary of the engagement process and information on results in terms of numbers of people engaged.

The notification process was designed to reach as many residents and stakeholders as possible. This included notification by traditional media (newspapers) and postcards, as well as social media, email, and targeted cell phone ads. Staff provided email notifications to community associations and other community groups as widely as possible. Local municipalities also assisted by forwarding notices to their stakeholder lists.

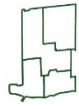
Information on the Growth Concepts aspect of the Regional Official Plan Review was provided on Halton.ca. This provided residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to review the Growth Concepts and prepare for engagement opportunities. There was also a simplified online questionnaire that allowed respondents to share their views. The questionnaire focused on what respondents thought was important in the choice of a Growth Concept and to indicate their preference for a particular option.

There have been six virtual Public Information Centres (PICs) held (one focused on each of Halton’s four Local Municipalities, one on North Aldershot and a Region wide session focusing on reporting back what we have heard). The PICs were well attended with 587 participants in total (excludes June 29th PIC). The four municipally oriented PICs were designed to provide information on the Growth Concepts and to allow participants to ask questions and/or express their views in either the general sessions or breakout rooms. Polling was used to allow participants to indicate their support for particular Growth

Growth Concepts Discussion Paper Engagement Summary

February 17 to June 21, 2021

Public Information Centres (PICs)



4
Local Area
Municipalities



5
Virtual Public
Information Centres



587
Participants

Designed to allow people to ask questions and express their views

How We Reached Out



Notices

- 4 emails to over 800 recipients
- Over 21,000 postcards sent to rural area



Social media



Online Questionnaire



Targeted cell phone ads



Newspaper advertisements



Website and Mapping Viewer

Submissions and Inquiries



141
Total*

66 Submissions **75** Inquiries

*Note: Total includes some submissions and inquiries related to ROPA 48

141
Submissions*
and inquiries

From **2**
Municipalities
outside of Halton

From **79**
Individuals

From **60**
Stakeholders &
Agencies

115
Policy
Oriented
& Site specific

26
Site Specific
only

Regional Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings



4
Halton Agricultural Advisory
Committee (HAAC)

4
Natural Heritage Advisory
Committee (NHAC)

1
Halton Developers Liaison
Committee (HDLC)

Additional Meetings

- Presentations to Councils of Local Municipalities
- **31** Meetings with business and community organizations as requested
- **8** Meetings with Individuals and small groups (online calendar bookings)
- Ongoing outreach to **Indigenous Communities**

1,055 responses to
Growth Concepts Questionnaire

Over **26,000** page views

- Including ROPR webpage, Growth Concepts webpage, and ROPA 48

Special Provisions for Rural Residents

- Over 21,000 informational postcards were sent to addresses in rural postal codes
- Paper copies of the Discussion Paper made available at designated locations
- Residents participate in meetings via telephone.

Concepts. Approximately, three quarters of our participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the Growth Concepts Public Information Centres.

Staff made presentations to Local Municipalities' Councils and held meetings with Regional Committees, business and community organizations to provide information and answer questions about Growth Concepts. Also, a new feature of this engagement process was to allow individuals or small groups to book time online to discuss the Growth Concepts with Regional planners.

Submission and inquiries could be submitted via email, letters or verbally. There have been 141 submissions and inquiries, 66 submissions and 75 inquiries as of June 21.

By way of comparison staff reviewed information on the engagement approach for the Growth Concepts Phase of Sustainable Halton (Phase 2) from 2008. From June to October 2008, Halton staff collected public feedback that resulted in 56 Total Comments and Reports. 5 Reports from local Municipalities. 3 Reports and Comments from Public Agencies. 32 Comments from Private Organizations. 16 Comments from the Public. The engagement approach and the results for the current ROPR were superior, by comparison.

Summary of "What We Have Heard"

Broadly speaking there was the highest level of support for Concept 3B (with support for 3A, particularly in the Questionnaire before 3B was added), with Concept 4 receiving the most support after that. Factors that were most important to respondents included preserving agricultural and natural heritage lands, climate change and greenhouse emissions. Housing supply and affordability were similarly identified as very important considerations.

Supporters of Concept 3B felt the concept was the best for protecting agricultural land and green space, responding to the climate emergency and supportive of intensification, densification and creating communities that allow people to live with a full range of amenities.

Supporters of Concept 4 felt it was more balanced in providing a larger range of housing options. Providing a full range of options to choose to live in from was a sentiment shared among many. It was expressed that the Region should consider balanced growth, and Concept 4 is the most balanced.

Additional information is provided in Attachment #3 to this report.

Halton Advisory and Liaison Committees

The Growth Concepts Discussion Paper has been discussed by Natural Heritage Advisory Committee (NHAC) and Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC). Both HAAC and NHAC have prepared comments that will be considered for approval, by the end of June for HAAC and July 14th for NHAC. In addition, the Growth Concepts

Discussion Paper was discussed at a meeting of Halton Developers Liaison Committee, but as a Liaison Committee, formally commenting on a Discussion Paper is not their role.

Local Municipalities

Ongoing consultation and the input of the Local Municipalities is a critical component of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. To date, three of the four local municipalities have prepared reports on the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper since it was released for public consultation in February 2021. These reports are provided as Attachment #4 to this report.

- Town of Oakville: March 9, 2021;
- City of Burlington: June 8, 2021;
- Town of Milton: June 21, 2021

The Town of Halton Hills held a Council Workshop on June 26, and is scheduled to report on July 6, 2021. The report will be provided to Council when received from the Town.

The comments of the Local Municipalities to date, are summarized below:

Town of Oakville

In general, the Town notes that throughout the Regional Official Plan Review process, Town staff has maintained that a Preferred Growth Concept that supports existing local urban structures, while minimizing the expansion of urban areas, will best support efficient use of existing infrastructure, including transportation infrastructure, addressing the climate change emergency and supporting community energy planning. The report indicates that the growth concept that does not involve urban expansion is the best growth management strategy to address the challenges Oakville will face, and will:

- reduce carbon emissions, prevent degradation of the environment and natural heritage system,
- protect prime agricultural lands that support food production,
- provide the best chance to alleviate traffic congestion, and,
- establish a built environment that facilitates healthy, active lifestyles and embraces an aging population.

With respect to population growth, the Town supports a shift to apartment –style housing as the primary way to accommodate growth, particularly focused in nodes and corridors, coupled with higher-order transit becoming the preferred method of transportation for a large number of people in Oakville to combat traffic congestion. This approach is viewed as addressing deficiencies in the current transportation network and housing affordability, as well as attracting more jobs to Oakville. The Town report notes that the future of employment in Oakville is in mixed-use strategic growth areas, supported by office employment.

The Town report also states that the extension of the planning horizon to 2051 by the Province has resulted in unnecessary pressure to convert agricultural land in the Region, given the amount of urban land in North Oakville and Milton that remains undeveloped. It is suggested that designation of additional urban land to 2051 is premature, and that the Region should wait until the existing urban land to 2031 is further developed, and then re-assess the need for additional urban land.

City of Burlington

The City report concludes that Concepts 3A or 3B most closely align with the objectives of the new Burlington Official Plan, Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan. The report notes that these growth concepts direct the most population and employment growth to Strategic Growth Areas in Burlington, which provides the most variety of housing options for all ages, and addresses climate change, generating the least greenhouse gas emissions per capita according to the comparative assessment prepared by the Region.

The report raises concerns with the land needs assessment work completed by the Region for the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper. In particular, the City feels the initial Land Needs Assessment memo relies on historical trends in housing mix in the Region, and underemphasizes the shift in the last 10 years to apartment construction, particularly in Burlington. The report states that Concept 3A or 3B would provide the most balanced (and affordable) mix of housing in Burlington, when considering the existing predominantly ground-related housing stock. The report also states that the Region's analysis concludes Concept 4 best addresses market demand for housing, but asks the question regarding how much weight should be given to a "market-based lens".

The City's report also notes some limitations, from the viewpoint of staff, in the evaluation of the Growth Concepts, including the transportation assessment with respect to the relationship between urban form/density and transit use, the need for more detailed fiscal impact analysis, and the need to determine what is the minimal amount of land that must remain in agricultural use to ensure the viability of the agricultural system.

Town of Milton

The Town report expressed support for a balanced approach to growth, which is characterized by the Town as growth accommodated through both intensification and new designated greenfield development. The report also recommended that Council endorse a Modified Growth Concept 4 ("Halton Balanced"), supported by a Land Needs Assessment, which conforms to the Growth Plan.

The Town has concerns with the methodology undertaken by the Region to assess the growth concepts, and the report states that an urban boundary expansion is critical for Milton in order to strategically manage growth pressures, and ensure proper use of land until 2051. It was emphasized that Milton cannot accept Concept 3B or any scenario that

does not expand its existing supply of employment land, as Milton can accommodate in-demand, large-scale warehousing and logistics, unlike neighbouring municipalities.

The Town provided its own Land Needs Assessment in support of a “Modified Concept 4” that recommends the inclusion of the remaining white belt lands in the Milton in the urban area. The report states that while the magnitude of population growth proposed to be directed to Milton in the growth concepts is considered appropriate, the proposed allocation of employment is considered to be too low, therefore an additional 20,000 jobs should be allocated to Milton to ensure the people/jobs ratio is closer to 2:1 to maintain balance.

In general, the Town notes that the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology must be used to determine land needs to 2051, and deviation from this methodology would result in non-conformity with the Growth Plan. It is noted that scenarios based on the assumption that larger households will be accommodated in apartments is unrealistic, and does not conform to the Growth Plan requirement to provide a market-based supply of housing to meet projected needs to the extent possible. It is argued that going beyond the minimum intensification and density targets of the Growth Plan in a manner that does not increase the market-based supply of housing does not conform to the Growth Plan.

With respect to employment, it is noted that the Region should be planning for sufficient employment land to ensure a balance between people and jobs, including opportunities for land-extensive uses with lower employment densities. The guidance of the Provincial Land Needs Methodology with respect to adjusting the land budget to account for constrained land or land that will not develop by 2051 due to landowner choice, as well as market factors, is also noted.

Defining a Preferred Growth Concept

The Province has established a standard methodology for assessing land needs to implement the Growth Plan, which must be used by the Region to assess the quantity of land required to accommodate growth to the 2051 planning horizon. A Land Needs Assessment must be prepared and submitted to the Province to provide the rationale for any additional land proposed under the Preferred Growth Concept recommended by the Region (Growth Plan Section 2.2.1.5). As part of the evaluation of the Growth Concepts, the Region produced a Land Needs Assessment and Municipal Allocation report, which provides information and analysis to facilitate the comparative evaluation of the Growth Concepts, consistent with the Provincial LNA Methodology, and which will be updated by a formal Land Needs Assessment in support of the draft Preferred Growth Concept.

This Land Needs Assessment must also adhere to all other relevant policies of the Growth Plan including:

- A settlement boundary expansion may only occur where it is demonstrated that, based on the minimum intensification and density targets in the Growth Plan, sufficient opportunities to accommodate forecasted growth to 2051 are not available through intensification and in the Designated Greenfield Area within the Region or the local municipality;
- A minimum of 50 percent of all residential development occurring annually in the Region must be within the Delineated Built-up Area, and growth is to be focused in strategic growth areas. The intensification targets are minimum standards and municipalities are encouraged to go beyond these minimum targets, where appropriate.

The Land Needs Assessment (LNA) Methodology notes the emphasis of the Growth Plan on *intensification first* and optimizing existing urban land supply, and sets out the requirements that must be completed as part of the municipal comprehensive review (MCR) to determine the total quantity of land needed to accommodate forecasted growth. The methodology provides the key components to be completed to ensure sufficient land is available to: accommodate all market segments; avoid housing shortages; consider market demand; accommodate all employment types, including those that are evolving; and, plan for all infrastructure needed to meet the objectives of complete communities.

The Growth Plan forecasts are to be used by the Region for establishing a market-based supply of housing. It is noted that while it may be necessary to adjust the housing projection in the LNA to meet the Growth Plan targets, providing a market-based supply of housing, while conforming to the Plan, is an objective. The methodology specifies that the Region must designate all land required to 2051, to provide sufficient land to accommodate all market segments to avoid shortages that would drive up housing and employment land costs.

The LNA Methodology outlines that when determining the need for additional Community Area land, conformity with the intensification and density targets of the Growth Plan must be achieved, which may require the adjustment of the mix of housing types, while ensuring the provision of a market-based supply of housing to the extent possible.

The LNA Methodology states that municipalities should ensure that employment lands (i.e. Employment Area) are provided in sufficient quantity to meet overall employment demand, and that they include attributes important to businesses, including:

- servicing;
- visibility, access to highways, proximity to other major goods movement facilities, as well as public transit access;
- a range of sizes of available sites to meet market choice, including vacancy factors for lands that may not develop by 2051; a sufficient supply of large parcels to accommodate land extensive uses; and strategic sites to attract investment that may otherwise locate outside Ontario;
- proximity to sensitive uses (i.e. land use compatibility).

Key Principles as the foundation for the Preferred Growth Concept

As noted above, the input received from the public can be organized under the following key themes:

- Preservation of agricultural land through the minimization of urban boundary expansion to accommodate population and employment growth;
- Addressing the challenge of climate change through growth management in a way that minimizes greenhouse gas emissions;
- Creating complete communities, which are walkable and provide public greenspace;
- Shifting the accommodation of population growth to more compact, higher density housing forms directed to mixed use, transit-supportive strategic growth areas, minimizing the need for settlement boundary expansions;
- Providing a broad range of housing choice to existing and future residents;
- Providing a supply of housing that ensures the availability of housing which is affordable to existing and future residents;
- Shifting the accommodation of employment growth to more compact, higher density forms (i.e. Major Office Employment) directed to mixed use, transit-supportive areas.

The Growth Concepts Discussion Paper (February 2021) outlines a set of key considerations or questions that provide a framework for the development of a Preferred Growth Concept, focused around the themes of growth management, infrastructure, fiscal impact assessment, agriculture, mineral aggregate resources, climate change, natural heritage systems and healthy watersheds, and multi-modal transportation, transit-supportive densities and goods movement. Building upon these considerations, and recognizing the extensive public input received throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process to date, as well as input from Local Municipal Councils, Region advisory committees, and representatives of the development industry, this report outlines a set of **Key Principles** which staff will use as the foundation for a balanced approach to the accommodation of growth to 2051.

The Preferred Growth Concept must be based on a significant shift to more compact, mixed use urban form, and the advancement of critical objectives such as meeting the challenge of climate change and maximizing the protection of our agricultural land base. The Preferred Growth Concept must also represent an achievable plan that takes into consideration the housing market, choice and affordability, while minimizing risk in the financing and construction of infrastructure to service the growth. The Key Principles are identified below, and elaborated on in Attachment #5 to this report:

1. Confirming and supporting a Regional Urban Structure
2. Setting an Ambitious and Achievable Intensification Target

3. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change
4. Establishing a Broad Range and Mix of Housing
5. Providing a Complete Spectrum of Employment Opportunities
6. Advancing Strategic Employment Land Conversions
7. Setting Bold yet Achievable Community Area & Employment Area Density Targets
8. Establishing Strong Development Phasing Policies
9. Ensuring Growth Proceeds without negative Fiscal Impacts
10. Maximizing Agricultural Land Protection
11. Further Enhancing the Natural Heritage System

Next Steps

Upon Council's direction, staff will implement the Revised ROPR Work Plan as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

The current approved budget for T8021D (Regional Official Plan Update) includes sufficient funding to facilitate the Regional Official Plan Review.

Respectfully submitted,



Curt Benson
Director, Planning Services and Chief
Planning Official



Bob Gray
Commissioner, Legislative and Planning
Services and Corporate Counsel

Approved by



Jane MacCaskill
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report,
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- Attachments:
- Attachment #1 – Overview of Growth Concepts
 - Attachment #2 – Revised ROPR Work Plan Timeline
 - Attachment #3 – Summary of Public Engagement
 - Attachment #4 – Local Municipal Reports on the Growth Concepts
 - Attachment #5 – Key Principles for the Preferred Growth Concept