

**Ministry of  
Municipal Affairs  
and Housing**

Municipal Services Office  
Central Region  
777 Bay St 2nd Flr  
Toronto ON M5G 2E5  
Phone: (416) 585-6226  
Fax: (416) 585-6882  
Toll-Free: 1-800-668-0230

**Ministère des  
Affaires municipales  
et du Logement**

Bureau des services aux municipalités  
région du Centre  
777, rue Bay 2<sup>e</sup> étage  
Toronto ON M5G 2E5  
Téléphone: (416) 585-6226  
Télécopieur: (416) 585-6882  
Sans frais: 1-800-668-0230



20 February 2003

Mr. Ho Wong  
Planning and Public Works  
Manager, Long Range Planning  
The Regional Municipality of Halton  
1151 Bronte Road  
Oakville, Ontario  
L6M 3L1

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MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS  
PUBLIC WORKS

Dear Mr. Wong:

**Re: Directions Report - Official Plan Review  
MAH File: 24 DP 0207 03002**

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This is our comment on the Region of Halton's *Directions Report - The Greening of Halton: Smart Growth and Smart Choices*. It follows the discussions between Provincial staff (from the ministries of Natural Resources, Environment, Food and Agriculture, Transportation, Citizenship and Culture), and Halton Region staff held on February 10, 2003. Presentations made by Halton staff at the meeting were clear and informative. We benefited a comprehensive perspective from Halton's staff presentations otherwise not gained if each reviewing Provincial Ministries undertook the analysis alone. Since the meeting, each Provincial representative at the meeting has sent me written comments below which I have summarized. Generally, there is unanimous commendation with the progressive land use planning approach Halton staff is recommending to its Council. Other parts of the comments I received go outside the scope of the *Directions Report* and touches on other areas of the Provincial Policy Statement not included in the *Directions Report*.

The purpose of the *Directions Report* is to provide a framework for Halton Region's Official Plan Review. It builds on the foundation of the existing 1995 Official Plan and focusses on refining the following policy areas:

- delivering Smart Growth
- achieving affordable housing
- supporting and promoting agriculture
- enhancing Greenlands
- improving environmental quality, and
- improving mobility through public transit.

At this time, Halton Region staff is consulting the wider public and stakeholder groups for input and comments not only on the *Directions Report* but also with the Twelve Technical Background Papers that support the *Directions Report* .

### **Delivering Smart Growth**

Generally, existing Halton Official Plan goals and objectives are Smart Growth oriented. The steps toward developing a system of measuring development plans or planning applications, described in the *Directions Report*, promote the achievement of Smart Growth. The desired goal is to avoid urban sprawl and encourage communities that are sustainable and connected with the infrastructure and social fabric. This is in keeping with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

### **Achieving Affordable Housing**

The connection between the Region's proposed Smart Growth Index and the delivery of affordable housing including a full range of housing types, supports the Housing policies of the PPS. Because Halton Region's urban boundary will not change for this Official Plan review, there is greater opportunity for residential intensification and production of affordable housing. Regarding assisted housing, Halton Region has taken leadership with the transfer of the administrative responsibility. As such, it appears from the *Directions Report* that the Region will be taking an active role (with assistance from senior level of governments) the delivery of assisted housing.

### **Supporting and Promoting Agriculture**

Halton Region continues to consult fully with the agricultural and rural communities including agricultural organizations, farm groups, and rural landowners. It is recognized that much work has been done and it is expected that the Region's consultation will continue as the details of new agricultural policies are developed.

The PPS, indicates that prime agricultural areas will be protected for agriculture and permitted uses in these areas are limited to agricultural uses, secondary uses, and agricultural related uses. Proposed new secondary and agriculture-related uses should be compatible with, and not hinder agricultural operations. The proposed policy directions for on farm business adds to the current permitted uses in the current Official Plan. This is of concern if proposed policies will allow uses beyond agriculture, secondary uses, and agricultural-related uses as defined in the PPS.

### **Enhancing Greenlands**

The direction in which woodlands policy is moving is commendable. Developing selection

criteria and identifying significant woodlands in Halton is consistent with the PPS. Significant woodlands should be identified in the Official Plan on a Schedule with appropriate and supporting policies. Also, identifying significant natural resources in the Official Plan increases the transparency of future land use planning decisions.

It was discussed at the meeting that there are no initiatives to review existing policies regarding the protection of threatened and endangered species, significant wildlife, and fish habitat. It is suggested that existing policies be reviewed to have regard for the PPS. The PPS presents a strong policy position regarding the protection of significant portions of the habitats of threatened and endangered species. Also, it places considerable value on significant wildlife habitat and fish habitat, requiring studies to be undertaken when development is proposed within, or adjacent to, natural areas.

### **Improving Environmental Quality**

Current Official Plan contains policies on the maintenance, protection, and enhancement of groundwater and surface water quality. Halton plans to build on these policies by carrying out the recommendations from its *Aquifer Management Plan* including Wellhead Protection and a monitoring technique in BioMap. The *Directions Report* contemplates Wellhead Protection Zones as an overlay on the Regional Structure Map along with a list of prohibited land uses. Regarding the BioMap, it is a useful tool in monitoring the health of the watercourses in the Region of Halton. These are in keeping with the PPS.

The relationship between Air Quality and land use is complex but Halton is prudent in adopting the principle of “Thinking globally and acting locally.” In the *Directions Report*, the proposed policy changes are categorized into three groups: those related to Smart Growth, those that the Region as a corporation should implement and set an example, and those that are innovative ideas requiring ongoing research and evaluation. In the current PPS, there is no specific policy on Air, however, the recommended policy directions of affecting air quality through Smart Growth initiatives, transportation and compact urban land form policies touches on the general principles of protecting the environment and public health.

### **Improving Mobility Through Public Transit**

The recognition of the relationship between proper land use planning and the Transit First Policy described in the *Directions Report* is a positive move toward implementing Smart Growth. Official Plan policies that support a high-service level local transit system, continuous improvements on the GO Transit system, and new GTA/Hamilton inter-regional rapid transit networks will serve well in implementing Provincial objectives such as integration of inter-regional transit and municipal transit initiatives along 400 series highways.

**Other policy consideration not mentioned in the *Directions Report*.**

There are other areas of the PPS not included in the *Directions Report*. These were raised during the February 10, 2003 meeting. They are: aggregates resources, stormwater management, and contaminated sites policies. They maybe other policy areas in the Regional Official Plan that the Province are interested in reviewing such as Official Plan policy A3B5 requiring area municipalities prior to or as part of the secondary plan process, to carry out subwatershed studies.

By copy of this letter, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Ministries of Natural Resources, Environment, Food and Agriculture, Transportation, Citizenship and Culture who contributed in providing comments on the *Directions Report - The Greening of Halton: Smart Growth and Smart Choices*.

If you have any questions, call me at (416) 585-6053.



Rizaldo Padilla  
Municipal Planning Advisor

- cc. T. Fancy, Ministry of Natural Resources  
R. Morrison, Ministry of Environment  
H. Doyle, Ministry of Transportation  
C. Neumann, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
M. Horne, Ministry of Citizenship and Culture