

GASPED

GASP Education Committee
Update & Resources

How should Halton Region Grow?

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STOP SPRAWL HALTON

Regional Council votes on **February 9th**

In this issue of GASP ED, we share some of the great presentations available on the Stop Sprawl Halton website - <https://www.stopsprawlhalton.org>

Get involved today! Contact your regional councillor!

Tell your councillor!

Save Our Farms 5000 acres ✓

  [StopSprawlHalton.org](https://www.stopsprawlhalton.org)

What's at stake with Halton Region's growth planning decision on Feb. 9?

1. It will determine future sustainability of the Region in terms of municipal taxes, revenues and the amount of available affordable housing in Halton.
2. It will lock in the level of greenhouse gas emissions in Halton for the next 30 years and beyond.
3. It will threaten the amount of farmland we have in Halton - see page 8 for the many services provided by farmland. It's important to maintain all of our creeks in the water shed and our permeable farmland. These are flood management assets that address the threat of climate change. The decision will determine our level of food security for the next century.

Marina Huissoon, Milton architect and President, CFUW Milton

We want a sustainable future in Halton Region.

Support the option with the least amount of boundary expansion.

24 Regional Councillors are listening to what we want to happen.

Society is facing the real threat of climate change and global warming.

Our fossil-fuel heavy suburban lifestyle is unsustainable and has to change.

Canada has committed to be Net-Zero by 2050

The Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which became law on June 29, 2021, shows Canada's commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Why should we care about our greenhouse gas emissions? Because greenhouse gas emissions are the main cause of climate change.

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe said in a November 2021 webinar:

"Climate change is a not just a climate issue. It's also a health, poverty, refugee crisis and national security issue.

If we don't fix it, it will fix us. The planet will survive of course but humans, plants and animals may not. We can't survive without water, clean air to breathe, food to eat and infrastructure. All these elements are threatened by climate change which "loads the weather dice" against us.

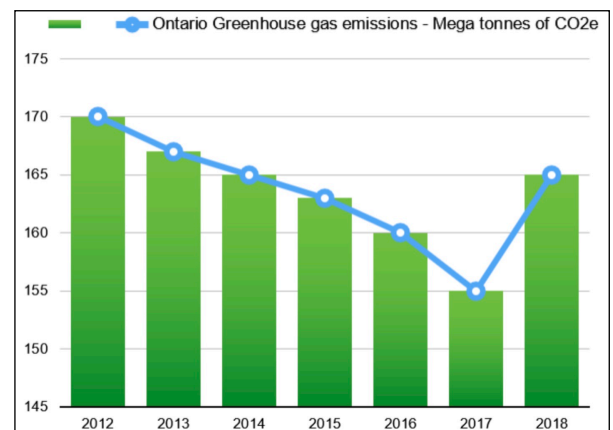
Climate change made the 2021 heat waves out west **150 times more likely**. Climate change acts as a **threat multiplier**. It takes existing problems and makes it worse."

Climate change makes the atmospheric rivers more intense because warmer air holds more water vapour. Even in Ontario, we experienced three "500 year" floods over a short period.

In September 2019, Halton Regional Council unanimously approved a notice of motion to join municipalities across Canada in declaring a climate emergency. The motion deepens Halton's commitment to protecting and improving the resilience of the economy, environment and community. All growth decisions should be viewed through the lens of future impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Why are greenhouse emissions in Ontario rising?

GHG emissions have risen in Ontario - see graph. We are up against a well planned attack on environmental protection and climate action in Ontario. The planning act was changed to promote sprawl. Halton Region has a role in resisting this relentless attack on the environment. Witnessing the recent and ongoing impacts of climate change in the world makes it clear that the only option is to make drastic cuts in GHG emissions as soon as possible.



Source: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2020/04/21/ontarios-greenhouse-gas-emissions-going-instead/>

The high cost of sprawl

Dr. Dianne Saxe is one of Canada's most respected environmental lawyers, with a Clean50 award, a Ph.D. in Law, a Law Society Medal and many other awards. She outlined the high costs of sprawl and shared alternative ways to grow at the recent Stop Sprawl Halton event.

1. Economic Cost of Sprawl:

Infrastructure and service expense.

Traffic congestion

- 75% of Ontarians live in car-dependent suburbs. Ontario residents experience the worst congestion in North America.

Lost productivity due to lost time spent in daily commute

Car maintenance

2. Social Cost

Health impacts - bad for human health

- Damages air quality
- Increases stress, long hours commuting, car crashes, forced immobility

- Makes walking and cycling dangerous

3. Environmental Cost

- GHG emissions - Planning decisions that promote sprawl have a huge lasting carbon footprint
- Loss of farmland and natural heritage
- Wildlife decline
- Destroys wetlands, woodlands and farmland which help us adapt to climate change

Other Growth Options

According to Dianne Saxe, the solution is to **grow in, not out** (pg 7). We can increase densities within built areas with the missing middle housing mix - mid-rise buildings and townhouses.

Sprawl necessitates and then locks in private vehicles usage.

Sprawl undermines existing ongoing public transit investment.

Sprawl is a one-time decision by a city to permanently make efforts to address the climate emergency more difficult.

Why are land use plans important? They influence everything!

Land use decisions impact the Region's fiscal health, taxes, GHG emissions, climate change adaptability, food security, housing affordability, walkability, traffic congestion, energy use & MORE!

As Yuill Hebert, a low carbon community expert, has said:

There is no effective response to climate change that does not involve local governments.

The most powerful mechanism is land use planning because it can lock in a lot of emissions for decades to come.

Opportunity to Show Leadership

"With jurisdiction over buildings, transportation, waste and land-use planning, municipalities have influence over approximately **50 per cent of Canada's emissions**. They are more nimble and closer to the ground than higher levels of government, enabling them to act quickly in a crisis and engage directly with residents. **We need to pay more attention to the potential of municipalities in drastically cutting emissions while promoting more equitable outcomes for all.**" *Laura Schnurr, director of community*

The province's approach to land use planning and lands needs assessment is the assumption that everything is business as usual. We are in a climate emergency and big changes are required! Everything will be in flux throughout this century. We need to adapt to smart growth,

intensified communities! We are wiser now - sprawling, energy consuming single family homes are no longer sustainable or affordable! Let's answer the challenge of our times with smart planning for reduced GHG emissions.

"Society is facing the real threat of climate change and global warming. Our fossil-fuel heavy suburban lifestyle is unsustainable and has to change. If we don't adapt, we are exacerbating the GHG emissions problem. What is it that people don't understand?"

Marina Huissoon, Architect. Milton

Reasons to vote for a firm urban boundary

Evidence shows that there is enough land already approved for continued urban growth in Halton and that the provincial government's push to convert farmland into suburban sprawl is a land-grab that will largely benefit developers and raise your taxes. We need affordable housing close to services and better public transportation. Moreover suburban sprawl does not pay for itself.

Why suburban sprawl does not pay for itself.

Excerpts of a presentation given by Susan Lloyd Swail, MES RPP. Susan is a Registered Professional Planner, researcher, smart growth consultant at Lloyd Swail Consulting. @plansmarter

Halton Region created Option 3 which requires no Greenfield land to be allocated and more accurately reflects current housing needs. It is **more fiscally responsible**.

All tax payers subsidize suburban growth. Compact growth is better for the environment and generally reduces overall municipal costs and taxes. By growing wisely, we reduce municipal debt burden from low density development. Redeveloping on existing land upgrades our aging infrastructure instead of continually extending pipes and roads to service Greenfield development as required with sprawl.

More than 80% of existing housing stock in the GTA is single family homes (SFH's). Between 2031 and 2051, baby boomers will sell their houses. 700,000 homes will become available for resale. There is no long term shortage of SFH's in the GTA.

In 2020, 70% of housing units under construction were town homes and apartments. That is what's needed now. There is **greater demand for smaller and more affordable housing options**. The revised growth plan set out by the Ontario government uses historic trends to predict future needs. It **fails to consider today's housing realities**. We don't need to build more unaffordable SFH's.

How does lack of affordable housing affect the community?

- Increases household debt
- Mental health issues due to financial stress
- People move further away from their work and have long commutes which is also stressful.

Growth forecasts should reflect today's housing realities. Looking back to plan ahead makes no sense in the midst of a climate emergency, changing demographics as the baby boomers downsize, increased need for climate change mitigation, food insecurity and reduced GHG emissions. We need to factor in the demand for more affordable housing and smaller housing options. We need to review best practices in creating low carbon, walkable, compact communities.

Continued on page 6.

Opportunities to Plan Differently in Halton Region

(Presentation by Susan Lloyd Swail - continued from page 5)

Make better use of under-utilized land by adding housing units in existing urban areas. Add units by redeveloping strip malls and single storey buildings. We should discuss low-rise, mid-rise, and high rise options at the region. We can look at basement apartments and garden suites.

Compact communities offer many benefits:

Looking at urban design best practices in other cities, compact communities offer:

- walkability and fiscal sustainability
- With more housing, shops and services in an area, **property tax revenues are increased.**
- With more people/km, municipal costs are reduced.

Walkable communities can be built anywhere with political will and citizen

support. We can build better amid a climate emergency. As we plan for the next 30 years we need to :

- limit sprawl in Halton to reduce the loss of farmland, an important carbon sink and food source, and
- rethink how our communities can be more livable for everyone by creating affordable housing and making better transit and active transportation connections.

Housing Stats in Halton Region – trend more affordable housing needed

\$409,500 –maximum affordable purchase price

2020 starts = 70.3% townhomes or apartments but only 610 new units met affordable housing target

Rental stock is stagnate at around 16,800 units, highest monthly rent \$1583 in GTA-2+ bedroom most demand- lowest vacancy rate –Milton

- Market demand high for apartments and townhomes- propensity of land needs has changed
- Single family homes are too expensive for many people
- Higher density housing is generally more affordable
- More rental housing is needed for families

New Affordable Housing Sales in Halton by Type

	<= \$409,500 (Affordable Threshold)		> \$409,500	
	Units	%	Units	%
Apartment	513	87.7%	350	19.9%
Townhouse	72	12.3%	860	48.8%
Semi-detached	0	0.0%	56	3.2%
Single	0	0.0%	496	28.1%
All Units	585		1,762	
Average Price	\$337,481		\$745,341	

Source: Calculated from MPAC sales data, 2020

12 2020 State of Housing Report

What type of housing is needed?

- Between 2041-2051 Baby boomers housing will be on the market –mainly single-family homes (SFH)- it is estimated over 700,000 SFH in the GTHA will become available for resale- more SFH's coming to market.
- Only apartments and a few townhouses meet the definition of affordable housing in Halton

Build a Better Halton Region to 2051

Update the Land Needs Assessment (LNA) using **current** housing mix.

Await 2021 Census data before finalizing the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR)

Ask Council to support Option 3 - no boundary expansion

WE NEED TO GROW IN, NOT OUT

- Higher densities
- Shorter distances
- Mixed uses
- Walkable / bikeable



Dianne Saxe

MISSING MIDDLE					
The type of development that can support transit in new and established suburban neighbourhoods is "gentle density" in the form of midrise commercial buildings and condos with street level retail, stacked townhouses and row houses					
					
HIGH RISE	MID-RISE	STACKED TOWNHOUSE	TOWNHOUSE	SEMI DETACHED	DETACHED
STOREYS	12+	5-11 Storeys	3-4	1-3	1-3
AVERAGE NEW PRICE	\$562,403	\$520,400	\$896,589	\$845,951	\$1,783,417
AVERAGE # PEOPLE PER UNIT	2.03	2.32	2.32	3.12	3.19

Source: Ryerson City Building Institute. Note: average prices for the GTHA region as of July 2016

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Nature is the most under-evaluated public good

What is our natural heritage worth? What is the monetary value of nature? Developers see nature as land to exploit for profit. Environmentalists see the incredible service that nature provides for us and appreciate that **what we do to nature, we do to ourselves.**

Source: <https://www.gasp4change.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GASP-ED-Newsletter-Spring-2021-reduced.pdf>

Nancy Comber, Chair Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee outlined the value of farmland in an expert panel discussion. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvB1blyLx7A>

Nancy Comber outlines reasons to protect farmland:

1. **Water Cycling** - purification, retention, flood mitigation
2. **Air Quality** - oxygen production, carbon sequestration, climate regulation
This reason alone should convince Halton residents to vote for a firm urban boundary. Climate change is a clear and present danger.
3. Nutrient cycling
4. Pollination Services
5. Wildlife habitat and biodiversity
6. Soil erosion control
7. Recreational spaces and scenic views - mental health has become a key issue during these pandemics
8. Food Security - Class 1 Farmland is highly productive
9. Farmland supports the economy in three ways:
 - Employment
 - Food, fibre and fuel
 - Entertainment - horse racing in Halton

Rethink food security issues in the future urges Jane Fogal, Halton Hills Town Councillor

Do Halton Region planners and councillors really want to destroy tens of thousands of acres of prime agricultural land when only 5% of all the land in Canada is good for growing food?

We are living in a time when supply chains are showing their vulnerability. Our fruits and vegetable come from places that are experiencing terrible droughts. How long before the price of that food will make us rethink food security?

“Farmland preservation is vital to ensure the next generation has a strong, reliable food supply.

Urban sprawl is threatening the viability and sustainability of farmland in Ontario.”

Ontario Federation of Agriculture

The need to preserve Class 1 Farmland in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Excerpts of a presentation by Margaret Walton, a Registered Professional Planner with 30 years of experience and expertise in agricultural land use.

If you quantify all the resources involved in the agricultural sector in the GTA, it is the major economic driver in Ontario and we need to protect it!

Only 5% of the Canadian land mass is made up of prime land. **Only 0.5% of prime land is Class 1. The Greater Golden Horseshoe is endowed with this very limited resource.**

The rich soils of the Golden Horseshoe provide the most productive growing area of Canada. The unique physical land features, combined with high quality soils and moderate climate, have given the area a wealth of agricultural and economic opportunities.

What makes the soil Class 1?

- Rich soils of former lake bed
- Moderating influence of Lake Ontario
- Micro-climate created by the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine
- Long history of strong agricultural production

Over 200 different commodities are grown in the Golden Horseshoe.

Economic growth should not be at the expense of a balanced ecosystem

When you factor in all the businesses involved in food production, the agri-food system is the biggest economic cluster in the Ontario economy. The agri-food industry is safe, progressive, naturally based, and essential to our survival. There is a significant cluster in Halton.

We should not sacrifice this cluster in Halton to accommodate growth.

There has been a steady erosion in the land base over the past 30 years. In Peel, York and Durham, thousands of acres have been urbanized.

The Greenbelt is NOT an agricultural reserve - it is an environmental reserve. We need to take a systems approach to preserve large contiguous plots of farmland. We need to rethink the way we manage growth. Farmers need certainty over the long term and need to know their land will be protected for future generations. **Farmland is a limited non-renewable resource.**

Lynda Lukasik outlined steps to prepare for Halton Region Vote - Feb. 9

Lynda Lukasik is a co-founder and the executive director of Environment Hamilton. Lynda has a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Waterloo. Her key messages are outlined below. To watch the full video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAhf-bmBDp0>

Lynda thanked the activists who enabled **Stop Sprawl Hamilton** to convince Hamilton residents and councillors to vote for a **firm urban boundary**.

She said: "We are in this together. We are mobilizing to build a climate-resilient inclusive future for everyone in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area."

Six ways to urge Halton Regional Councillors to Save Farmland

1. Find support from other groups to build a collective voice.
2. Use social media to spread the word.
3. Take to the streets with banners and ensure lawn signs are visible everywhere.
4. Find councillor champions and work with them to make change happen around the council table.
5. Raise funds.

6. Demonstrate sprawl isn't the only way to go. We have other options:

- Complete urban neighbourhoods
- Gentle density in low density neighbourhoods
- Middle density along major arterial roads
- Higher density near major transit station areas

We need to save our farms and protect our food security. Many Canadians today do not understand where their food comes from. The fact that Canada is a world leader in agriculture, producing safe food and using environmentally sound techniques, is not common knowledge.

If you are worried about climate change, or food security, or congestion or the vibrancy of your community, consider checking into what your council is planning for the future. It's not too late for education to begin. You can start learning at [StopSprawlHalton](#) and [Yours To Protect](#)

Take action to say Ontario is not for sale.

<https://oakvillenews.org/opinion/hamilton-stops-urban-sprawl-will-halton-follow/>

Canadians don't want more urban sprawl

Letters to the Editor, G&M. Jan 12, 2022

Re: There May Be An Answer To The Housing Crisis (Jan. 10):

*Often, sprawl costs more than real estate taxes provide; highways to support it mean **public transit won't be built**, an important factor in combatting global warming and providing low-income, citywide accessibility; immigrants necessarily settling at a city's perimeter are poorly served by essential services; agricultural land is not expandable.*

Applying planning and design ingenuity to the increase in density around city cores and sub-cores has the potential of improving the quality of life for all income groups, while addressing the issues listed above. This is 2022, not 1922.

A.J. Diamond Toronto

We have a decade to cut our greenhouse gas emissions in half to have any chance at preventing catastrophic climate change. How on Earth can that be achieved if we continue to pave over carbon-sequestering grasslands, wetlands and forests to build car-dependent communities.

Ian Lipton Candidate, Green Party of Ontario, Toronto-St. Paul's

Given many workers' recently acquired freedom from the tyranny of office work, why not leave Ontario's Greenbelt, farms and essential, irreplaceable natural areas alone and let smaller towns grow?

Why not intensify these places to make it possible for residents to walk, cycle or even take a short drive to the grocery store, coffee shop or hockey rink? It doesn't have to be a choice between public transit and private vehicles.

There are other solutions to the housing crisis than a dystopian vision of endless, soulless suburban subdivisions linked by pollution-spewing highways.

Liz Addison Toronto

We should be changing the paradigm of single-family homes to high-quality densification. Leaders in Paris, Barcelona, London and Portland, Ore., are all working toward the vision of smart 15-minute cities without the need for sprawl. That's fresh thinking.

Louise Montague New Tecumseth, Ont.

Flawed provincial process could see Halton farmland paved

Building more single family homes on prime farmland will not solve the affordability issue. A mix of housing designs & options emphasizing the missing middle within existing urban boundaries will.

<https://rabble.ca/environment/flawed-provincial-process-could-see-halton-farmland-paved/>

On Jan. 18, Oakville Council unanimously voted to submit harsh criticisms of the proposal to extend Halton's Settlement Area Boundary. But this is not a win.

Milton Council voted later that same evening, 7 – 2, in favour of the Town staff recommendations which added even more land to the proposed urban area where the 401 and 407 will eventually intersect with the proposed highway 413. Milton Councillor Colin Best voted against accepting staff recommendations. His well researched presentation pointed out flaws in the process:

Growth rate imposed by province is too high

The province has imposed a growth rate of two per cent per year compounded annually on Halton Region. That growth is scheduled for 2021 until 2051. However, Statistics Canada census data proves over the past 70 years Ontario's growth has been less than two per cent per year – with the exception of 1991. Increases consistently averaged 1.5 per cent per year or less.

Expansion onto prime farmland is not needed

Milton's year end building report for 2021 also shows expansion onto prime farmland is not needed. Staff projected yearly applications of 1,500 units but the actual number was 1,183 or 72 per cent of that projection.

Applications for 834 apartment units, 254 townhouse units and 71 single family dwellings

were filed by year-end 2021. These numbers are a clear indication of the direction in which housing demand is moving.

#3 - Employment lands approved years ago have not yet been completed.

Best points out that sufficient employment lands have also already been allocated. A prime example is the 401 industrial park, approved 40 years ago, that has not been completed. There is also a lot of land fronting onto the 401 that has not even been applied for yet.

#4 - Final data from 2021 Census is not yet available

Best added: "We do not yet have the final data from the 2021 Census to review and incorporate in this new Official Plan.

Phil Pothen, Ontario Environmental Program Manager with Environmental Defence said: "The truth is that we made a huge mistake – over the past 50 or 60 years, frankly – by building neighborhoods at densities that are too low and layouts too indirect to support frequent reliable transit or shops, secondary schools and amenities within easy walking or cycling distance.

More land is not the answer - we need three-story multi-plex, semi-detached, and town homes on single family home lots. Pothen is optimistic that municipalities and regions will do the right thing,"