

## REPORT

**REPORT TO:** Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

**REPORT FROM:** John Linhardt, Commissioner, Planning and Sustainability  
Damian Szybalski, Manager of Economic Development,  
Innovation and Culture

**DATE:** April 20, 2018

**REPORT NO.:** ADMIN-2018-0017

**RE:** Overview and Implications of the Province's "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring" Policy Proposal

### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2018-0017, dated April 20, 2018, regarding the province's "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring" policy proposal, and potential implications on the Town of Halton Hills, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the Province be informed that the Town of Halton Hills supports the potential Greenbelt expansion within the outer ring of the study area as defined by the Province;

AND FURTHER THAT the Province be requested not to expand the study area for Greenbelt expansion to include the whitebelt lands within the inner ring, nor grow the Greenbelt by incorporating any whitebelt lands located within the Town of Halton Hills as doing so would significantly restrict and undermine the Town of Halton Hills' ability to carry out local community planning, growth management and economic development initiatives, and be premature in light of the recently initiated Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR);

AND FURTHER THAT the Province be informed that the Town of Halton Hills' Council does not support the Region of Halton motion that was passed on February 21, 2018 requesting an extension of the Greenbelt study area to include the whitebelt lands;

AND FURTHER THAT, in keeping with the requirements of the Greenbelt Act (2005), the Province consult with the Town of Halton Hills, public and other stakeholders, on any proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plan and its boundary, including any potential addition of the whitebelt lands into the Greenbelt, prior to any such changes being made;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report and associated recommendation be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Economic Development and Growth, Halton Region, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Building Industry and Land Development Association, Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Environmental Defense, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, Ontario Greenbelt Association, Ontario Nature, Earth Roots, Eco Spark and Save the Oak Rides Moraine (STORM).

## **BACKGROUND:**

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the potential impacts of the Province's "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring" policy proposal, as well as the recently passed motion at Halton Region related to this matter.

On December 7, 2017, the Province posted the "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring" policy proposal on the Environmental Registry for a 90 day comment period, ending March 7, 2018.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs was seeking input on a study area for a potential Greenbelt expansion to protect water resources in the outer ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Appendix 1). The study area is based on locations that have a high concentration of important water features that are under pressure from current or forecasted urban development. The consultation sought input on the (i) Province's approach to identifying important water features; (ii) the process followed for mapping the study area; and (iii) other factors that should be considered for mapping a proposed Greenbelt boundary (e.g. accommodating growth).

The study area for potential future Greenbelt expansion is made up of seven features and areas focused in Waterloo Region, Brant County, Wellington County, Dufferin County and Simcoe County. Importantly, the study area does not include Halton Region. The study area is not to be interpreted as a proposed Greenbelt boundary. The consultation did not include determining a proposed Greenbelt boundary. Consideration of the study area builds on the recently completed Coordinated Land Use Planning Review. The latter led to updates of the Growth Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan (released in May 2017). The importance of protecting water resources and the expansion of the Greenbelt to achieve this was a key recommendation of the Advisory Panel for the Review.

A map of the study area for the potential expansion of the Greenbelt is attached as Appendix 1. More information is available at: [www.ontario.ca/greenbelt](http://www.ontario.ca/greenbelt)

In February 2018, Halton Region's Planning and Public Works Committee considered report LPS20-18 (dated February 14, 2018) regarding "Protecting Water for Future Generations and Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring". Among other things, the report noted that "Halton Region is not planning on providing comments on this initiative given its geographic location... This initiative does not apply to Halton Region." The report also noted that while the Greenbelt Plan allows for the consideration of municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt, such requests must be accompanied by a Council resolution which is based on consultation with key stakeholders, indigenous groups, municipalities and the public.

On February 21, 2018, Halton Region Council passed a motion urging the Province to extend the study area for Greenbelt expansion to include the whitebelt lands (lands located between the existing Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside boundary and Halton's settlement area boundaries) within the inner ring (Appendix 2). The motion also called on the Province to incorporate appropriate whitebelt lands within the inner ring to protect freshwater and natural heritage features. The motion noted that the current study area for Greenbelt expansion had omitted the whitebelt lands (lands outside of the Greenbelt and urban settlement areas) and that these lands are subject to development pressures. As outlined below, due to significant concerns with the motion, the Region's motion was not supported by representatives of Town Council. In a letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne, dated March 5, 2018, Mayor Bonnette expressed the Town's concerns with the Region's motion and requested that the whitebelt area not be considered for any potential Greenbelt expansion (Appendix 3).

Halton Region has begun the next Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) to evaluate current Official Plan policies, meet current provincial policies, and achieve Regional Council and community goals. Among other matters, the review will include an in-depth study of growth management, and urban, rural, agricultural and natural heritage systems. A comprehensive Public Engagement Strategy is to be implemented. The project is to be completed by spring 2020. Regarding urban systems and growth management, the ROPR will consider ways of accommodating 220,000 additional residents and 80,000 jobs between 2031 and 2041.

## **COMMENTS:**

Implications for the Town of Halton Hills

Although the Town supports a potential Greenbelt expansion within the original study area (outer ring), as defined by the Province, the Town does not support the Regional motion requesting the inclusion of whitebelt lands within the inner ring, as doing so would have significant negative impacts on the Town, including:

(i) Lack of Public Engagement

Public engagement is a key priority for Town Council. Recognizing this, a citizen taskforce was established to create the Public Engagement Charter highlighting the Town's commitment to community engagement. Halton Region's motion and any potential decision to expand the Greenbelt into the whitebelt area does not conform to the Town's Public Engagement Charter as no resident engagement, nor appropriate notification, has occurred.

(ii) Premature Request

The Region's motion is premature as it preempts the Region's own Municipal Comprehensive Review which will include a growth management strategy up to 2041. Expanding the Greenbelt into the whitebelt lands would place significant limitations, undermine the direction of the recently initiated Halton Region Official Plan Review Process, by altering the review's potential outcomes and do so in the absence of public engagement and the requisite studies, including demographic and economic factors. The ability to expand urban boundaries if necessary to accommodate future growth and economic development opportunities would be severely restricted by precluding a large area for potential future development.

(ii) Undermine Municipal Growth Management

Although it is too early to determine the amount of population and employment growth that will be allocated to Halton Hills, including the whitebelt lands in any Greenbelt expansion would severely restrict the Town's long-term planning options and development patterns for any future population and employment beyond 2031, thereby undermining Halton Hills' financial and economic health. As part of Town Council's Strategic Plan process which identifies Council's priorities for the current term and drives subsequent departmental business plans and workplans, Council confirmed planning for growth on the basis of a moderate scale and pace of growth.

(iv) Economic Prosperity

The Premier Gateway, generally located between Steeles Avenue and Highway 401 and in proximity to the 401/407 interchange along the Town's southern boundary, is Halton Hills' strategic employment area, offering easy access to major markets. The Premier Gateway continues to attract significant investment in new industrial and commercial development, including about \$230 million in private sector investment within the past 12-16 months. These investments are generating employment and contributing to economic prosperity, benefiting Halton Hills as well as the broader GTA.

The Town is also commencing an Employment Land Needs Study to determine if any additional employment lands to 2041 are required in order to support the Town's assessment base and generate local employment. Results of this study will be incorporated into Halton Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review. In addition, with

the view to protect lands for future employment, the Town's and Halton Region's Official Plans identify "Future Strategic Employment Areas" which would be adversely impacted if the whitebelt were included in the Greenbelt.

(v) Duplication

Lands within the whitebelt are already protected from development and subject to more restrictive planning policies. Adding these lands to the Greenbelt would add an unnecessary additional layer of policy complexity.

**RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Strategic Plan sets out Council's strategic priorities for the current term. The potential expansion of the Greenbelt into the whitebelt lands would have significant implications on several Council priorities, which need to be assessed through detailed planning and public engagement, including:

- **Municipal Service Delivery:** Effective, efficient and economical delivery of the Town's existing services.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Determine the fiscal impacts of potential future growth to 2041.
- **Planning for Growth:** Actively participate in the Regional Official Plan review on the basis of a moderate scale and pace of growth to 2041 for Halton Hills.
- **Communications:** Continue to provide timely, transparent communications with residents and businesses owners.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

An in-depth financial and economic analysis is required to assess and fully understand the short and long-term financial and economic development impacts associated with any potential inclusion of the whitebelt lands in the Greenbelt. These impacts have not been considered in passing the Regional motion.

**CONSULTATION:**

This report has been prepared jointly between the Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division and the Planning and Sustainability Department

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

There has been no public engagement by the Town or Halton Region respecting expansion of the Greenbelt within Halton Hills.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports all four pillars of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Excellent.

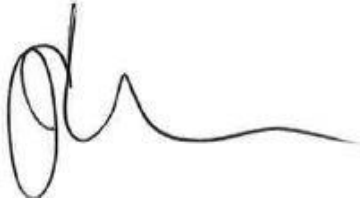
**COMMUNICATIONS:**

A copy of this report and associated recommendation will be forwarded to key stakeholders as per the recommendation of this report, including to the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Economic Development and Growth, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce and Halton Region.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Town supports provincial efforts to protect water resources. However, any potential expansion of the Greenbelt into the whitebelt lands within the Town of Halton Hills will have significant adverse impacts on the Town's ability to determine long-term planning and economic development opportunities for these lands. Precluding development within these lands at this time by placing them within the Greenbelt is premature in light of the recently initiated ROPR process as it would cause a fundamental change in the consideration of where any future growth could be allocated to Halton Hills, and if any such growth could be allocated to the Town.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Linhardt', written in a cursive style.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Damian Szybalski', written in a cursive style.

Damian Szybalski, Manager of Economic Development, Innovation & Culture

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brent Marshall', written in a cursive style.

Brent Marshall, CAO