

**Letter to an Oakville resident by Burlington Ward 5 and Halton Regional Councillor Paul Sharman**

Re: Halton Region's Preferred Growth Concept

You may know already, but allow me to tell you a little about myself. I am the Burlington Councillor who strenuously and successfully argued that climate change mitigation should be added to the City of Burlington's 2015, 25-year, strategic plan. That plan continues to act as a guiding vision for the community. As a teen ager I spent my summers working on a number of farms near where my family lived. I drive an electric vehicle that was used when I purchased it and I ride a pedal bicycle many km's every week when the weather warms up. I installed a tankless water heater and a heat pump in my house along with new windows, doors and insulation. I do not eat red meat, preferring vegetables. Between us, my partner and I have 4 children and 7 grandchildren about whose future we care passionately. Finally, I have served 11 years on the Burlington Sustainable Development Committee. All the matters that concern you with respect to sustainability also concern me.

In summary, I am highly informed and care deeply about the future of our community. My purpose is to make a contribution to the best of my ability.

Burlington's rural/agricultural and heritage land is dominated by Niagara Escarpment and other heritage attributes, which have been protected by the Region and Burlington Councils from development for decades. Burlington has essentially depleted its developable green field land. That said, employment land is being converted to accommodate growth.

My representation of the citizens of Burlington includes acknowledgement of their opposition to "over intensification", which I agree has had a heavy orientation to downtown. That was the concern of 46% voters in the 2018 election. That said, most of those people do not live downtown and are generally concerned about what they consider to be excessive population growth, road congestion and not wanting to live in a highly densified community.

The Region's IGMS allocation leaves Burlington the recipient of residual population that is not allocated/accepted by other Halton lower tier municipalities. I appreciate that City staff have indicated Burlington can accommodate larger numbers of residents, but Council has not been provided any detailed analysis of location or building types required to accommodate such growth. According to a rough estimate by Mr. Benson, 15,500 new residents will require 45 x 30 storey buildings. Because Burlington is already built out, the Hemson Consulting report of early 2021 estimated that 90% of the increase in Burlington's population growth will have to be housed in mid to high rise buildings. 70,200 new residents under the preferred growth concept equates to 63,180 new apartment residents in 183 x 30 storey buildings using Mr. Benson's math. If the preferred growth concept is not approved, Burlington's allocation will increase to 85,700, then 90% or 77,130 would likely have to live in apartments. That means Burlington will need to accommodate, perhaps 228 x 30 storey towers. That is a rather daunting vision, equating to, perhaps, 5 times + the equivalent of Mississauga's Square One neighbour hood, but in smaller spaces.

All of that said, my over-arching concern is whether or not there is a high probability that a) 450,000 more people will become residents of Halton in the next 30 years b) what the probability is that in the following 50 years another 750,000 will arrive at the same rate.

In truth, I believe that all plans, by definition, are wrong and it is tough to reach finite conclusions. Therefore, we have to make broad assumptions on probabilities. My sense is that Halton will, based on history, receive more than 450,000 new residents between now and 2051 and it will not end there.

That leads to the question that weighs heavily on my mind: on balance between all the hard choices to be made, if municipalities fail to make the decisions that represent the best long-term outcomes for the future, then the probability of bad outcomes escalate. An example of a bad outcome is reflected in conversations I had yesterday with 2 young Burlington university graduates who both live in their parent's homes. Neither sees any hope for them to ever own their own home locally because of incredible price increases and lack of supply. Perhaps 100,000 of Halton's current young residents are in the same boat with them. Housing is critical to everyone. Without sufficient housing, countries get massive inequality, social injustice and social unrest. Canada is already getting there.

While I do not want to see expansion of urban boundaries, I do want a balanced and fully informed set of decisions to be made by Council. Decisions of the past allowed 80% of current Halton residents who are older than, about, 35 to have had a chance to achieve high quality housing. Those of us who are in the much older age group of Halton home owners live in relative luxury by the standards of many people in Canada and around the world. What comes next if we don't consider all the factors?

The decisions we make today will affect the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of future Halton residents. Many will not have it as good as we have. I agree we should understand the technicalities of Region staff recommendation to 45% intensification within existing urban boundaries. It will help us make a better-informed decision. Council's in Halton Hills and Milton are in the best position to make their own informed decisions about how their communities should develop in future and I look forward to hearing from them on February 9<sup>th</sup>.

I have chosen to not comment "about the impact of single dwelling expansion in outlying municipal centres on climate change" because it was addressed in the Region Director of Planning's recent FAQ:

"While Concept 3A/3B was evaluated as the concept that generates the least amount of community GHG emissions, as part of its evaluation it did not score well in addressing many other important community planning and housing objectives, some of which are identified in the response to Question #1 above." See here <https://local-news.ca/2022/01/17/controversial-halton-2051-regional-plan-heading-towards-completion/>

It is not clear what the impact of the preferred concept will be on food security. I gather that mostly produce from 80% of that land is grain and seed, which are generally not consumed locally. I asked for that information and only received relatively general data. There is more

discussion to be had about agriculture, I agree. If you have any accurate data it will be appreciated.

Thanks for taking the time to read my response. I look forward to having a more complete dialogue on February 9<sup>th</sup> with my colleagues on Region Council. There are so many things to be considered. Wish us luck.

In addition, to give you a sense of the components and complexity of the decision we are asked to decide on, you will find the reports for Feb 9<sup>th</sup> here: <https://edmweb.halton.ca/OnBaseAgendaOnline/Meetings/ViewMeeting?id=4287&doctype=1>  
Please click on the lines within the agenda to see the reports that will appear listed on the left side. By reading the actual information provided to members of Council, rather than reading another persons interpretation you will sense the how challenging the decision making process is.

I will be pleased to discuss this with you, should you wish.

Best wishes  
Paul

Paul Sharman  
City & Regional Councillor  
Ward 5