



TOWN OF CALEDON

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Policy Section

Report 2004-72

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Heather Konefat, Director of Planning and Development
Meeting: September 21, 2004
SUBJECT: PLACES TO GROW: A GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE.

RECOMMENDATION **Requires Action** **For Information Only**

That the Council for The Corporation of the Town of Caledon:

1. Adopt Planning and Development Report 2004-72, Places to Grow: A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
2. Direct that Planning and Development Report 2004-72 be forwarded to the Ministries of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Municipal Affairs, the Region of Peel, the Conservation Authorities and the Niagara Escarpment Commission as the Town of Caledon's preliminary comments on the Provincial Government's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
3. Direct Town Staff to continue to monitor matters associated with the Provincial Government's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and to report back to Council, as necessary.

BACKGROUND

The Provincial Government has proceeded with several initiatives to support its goal of "stronger, better communities". These initiatives have included measures aimed at the establishing a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe, at reforming the land use planning process in the Province, at enhancing source water protection in the Province and at establishing a growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Town has already provided comments to the Province on the first three of these initiatives. With respect to the fourth, the Province issued a discussion paper on July 12, 2004 entitled "Places to Grow: A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe ("the Growth Plan").

The Growth Plan defines the Greater Golden Horseshoe as consisting of the Greater Toronto Area (Toronto, Peel, York, Halton, Durham) as well as Niagara, Haldimand, Brant, Hamilton, Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin, Simcoe, Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough and Northumberland. The Growth Plan indicates that by 2031 Ontario will grow by more than four million people and that most of these people will settle in the Greater Golden

Horseshoe. The Plan says that the Greater Golden Horseshoe is already one of the fastest-growing regions in North America and that it is the economic engine of Ontario and Canada. The Growth Plan is aimed at ensuring that growth for the next 30 years can be accommodated in a way that will ensure that everyone has a place to live, work and play. The Plan proposes to do this through creative solutions in three key areas:

- Where and how we should grow;
- What critical infrastructure we need to support growth; and
- What needs to be protected as growth occurs.

In proposing where we should grow the Growth Plan says that identifying priority urban centers, strengthening the transportation linkages among them and ensuring more compact development in urban areas is key. In commenting on infrastructure, the Plan acknowledges that the provision of public infrastructure has not kept pace with recent growth and, accordingly, puts considerable emphasis on identifying the critical infrastructure that must be provided jointly by all levels of government in order to accommodate even more growth in the future. The Plan is intended to be a vehicle for co-ordinated decision-making and prioritized infrastructure investments and indicates that it will be integrated with a long-term 10 year infrastructure plan for the Province. In terms of what needs to be protected as growth occurs, the Plan identifies greenlands, the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, natural systems agricultural lands, cultural resources, natural resources, air and water, as all requiring protection.

This report comments on the discussion paper ("the Growth Plan") and addresses issues of relevance to the Town of Caledon. The deadline for providing comments is September 24, 2004. This report should be read in conjunction with the Town's reports on the other Provincial planning initiatives.

DISCUSSION

Where and How to Grow

The Growth Plan suggests that there is sufficient land available in current urban boundaries to accommodate most of the 4 million people who will settle in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in the next 30 years even assuming current growth patterns. The Plan says that by using land in a more efficient manner, pressure to expand urban boundaries will be controlled and more protection will be afforded to prime agricultural lands and greenlands. The Plan also says that using land more efficiently and developing primarily in urban areas will enhance business and investment attractiveness of existing communities, support key economic and employment centers and enhance economic competitiveness. Accordingly, the Plan proposes five main objectives to shape where and how growth should occur. These objectives are interrelated and consist of:

- encouraging intensification and compact development;
- concentrating new growth in priority urban centres and emerging urban centres;

- assessing the need for growth in future growth areas;
- promoting economic strength by, among other things, linking transportation and other infrastructure investments to growth objectives; and
- fostering the vitality of small town and rural communities.

Comments

In its various comments on the other Provincial planning initiatives, the Town has indicated that it shares the Province's concerns for protecting environmental areas and natural systems, for protecting farmland and for containing urban sprawl. The Town pointed to its environmental policies, its newly adopted agricultural and rural policies and to its growth management policies as evidence of Caledon's concerns. However, the Town has also repeatedly emphasized the important contribution that local community self determination has to make toward the goal of building strong communities. The Town has noted that there is a tension between Provincial leadership and local community self determination and that a balance must be achieved between these two dimensions. Too much Provincial intervention detracts from the goal of achieving strong communities because it does not allow these communities to sufficiently influence their shape, size, form and functioning. In this vein, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe needs to make provision for the Town to implement its growth management policies which include most notably, the Town's tri-nodal growth strategy, and the Town's Village Study approach to determining community appropriate, environmentally sustainable growth for its villages.

The emphasis in the Growth Plan on concentrating growth in priority urban centres and emerging urban centres will generally help Caledon sustain its moderate growth approach to growth management by keeping primary pressure for growth focused on the urban centres. Brampton and Mississauga are both identified as priority urban centres by the Growth Plan.

The Growth Plan also shows that a portion of Caledon, conceptually indicated as a shaded area along the entire south border of Caledon with Brampton, as a future growth area. This identification is appropriate and will allow Caledon to proceed with its Bolton Community Plan and Mayfield West Community Development Plan processes. However, consideration should be given to illustrating this identification in a different way than through the use of the shading across Caledon's entire south boundary. This shading may inadvertently contribute to pressure for urban sprawl rather than development in accordance with Caledon's tri-nodal growth strategy. In addition, and consistent with the concern expressed above that communities must be permitted to influence their shape, size, form and functioning, the criteria which will be used to evaluate urban boundary expansions in future growth areas should be expanded to include consideration of the social impact of growth and of community capacity to support growth.

One of the other criteria proposed by the Growth Plan to evaluate urban boundary expansions in future growth areas is that "the municipality has planned to accommodate a minimum of 40 per cent of the projected growth through intensification". This number

appears to be arbitrary and the extent to which it is realistic will vary from community to community. In addition, there is again frequently a tension between providing for intensification and preserving and enhancing "the cultural heritage of existing communities and their neighbourhoods, and of maintaining "the quality of life" of communities and neighbourhoods. The Growth Plan defines intensification as follows: "the term generally refers to larger scale development or redevelopment within existing urbanized areas that has the effect of increasing the density within an area". This is a broad definition that, compared to the definition of intensification in the proposed new Provincial Policy Statement ("proposed PPS"), provides a greater degree of flexibility to municipalities which will help municipalities meet this criteria. The definition of intensification in the proposed PPS should therefore be changed accordingly. However, even then, there may not be enough flexibility provided to municipalities to meet the 40% criteria. Accordingly, this criteria should be regarded as a goal to strive toward rather than an objective that must be met each and every time. The extent to which the goal can actually be achieved can be determined at the community level through assessment/discussion with regional partners and the Province.

Notwithstanding the need for municipalities to be able to exercise flexibility in achieving intensification, intensification should not lead to the redesignation of employment lands.

The measures identified to foster the viability and vitality of small town and rural communities are generally supportable. This is especially true of the measure which says that, although most provincial infrastructure investment will occur in urban centres, provincial infrastructure strategies for rural communities will also include the need to maintain and renew existing infrastructure and build new infrastructure critical to the viability and vitality of rural communities. Another such measure calls for encouraging sufficient population and employment growth within existing rural settlement boundaries to sustain and promote local economies and community services. This is again, generally, a good measure for small town and rural communities, but would be improved if municipalities were provided with the flexibility to contemplate minor boundary expansions to such communities in accordance with an approach like the Town's Village Study process. The Village Study process provides for community appropriate and environmentally sustainable growth by integrating the participation of the Town, the Region and the Conservation Authority and by integrating community planning, servicing considerations and environmental considerations. Minor boundary expansions of rural communities like the Town's villages may be desirable in some circumstances, for instance, in achieving thresholds that would prevent the closure of schools, or in enabling solutions to health and environmental problems caused by existing development on private sewage and water services.

Infrastructure to Support Growth

The Growth Plan identifies four broad measures that will contribute to a better identification and provision of infrastructure to accommodate growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe as follows:

- optimizing the use of existing infrastructure;

- identifying strategic infrastructure investments to support urban growth while protecting the environment; and identifying how to pay for infrastructure investments;
- establishing a more integrated transportation network; and
- co-ordinating long-term provincial infrastructure plans in partnership with the municipal and federal governments and other partners

Comments

In the context of the Growth Plan's intent to establish a more integrated transportation network, the Plan indicates that transit to serve the increasingly compact form, mixed use and higher densities of priority and emerging urban centres will be the first priority for investment. The Town can, again, generally indicate its support for this transit first approach.

The Growth Plan, however, does also identify the need for future roads, which it calls future economic corridors. The Plan uses the term economic corridors because these roads will also function as infrastructure corridors. As an aside, the economic corridors might better be called road or infrastructure corridors since calling them economic corridors seems to invite the scattered development and sprawl along these corridors that the Growth Plan specifically says should not occur.

More importantly, the Growth Plan says that the extension of the 427 is not a priority. The need for the 427 has been repeatedly established in a variety of reports and studies. It was because of this established need that the environmental assessment for the extension had been commenced. In addition, the Town's just completed Caledon Transportation Needs Study, documented the importance of the extension of the 427 in terms of helping the Town deal with its transportation problems, in particular the problems caused by the large volume of through commuting. Accordingly, the Province should be urged to reconsider its position, identify the 427 as a priority, and proceed with the environmental assessment for the extension.

On the other hand, the Growth Plan also calls for the potential construction of a road corridor connecting the GTA with the Guelph/Kitchener/Waterloo area. Although the Growth Plan seems to assign even less priority to this corridor than it does to the 427, the Town should go on record as it has in the past as questioning the need for this corridor. Representatives of MTO had in 2003 indicated to Caledon Town Council that a needs assessment would have to proceed any serious consideration of this so called "phantom 413" and promised Caledon representation on a technical advisory committee that would be associated with this needs assessment. Council indicated that all other alternatives to building another major road through prime agricultural lands and across the Niagara Escarpment should be considered including more emphasis on transit, adding additional lanes to existing highways like the 401 and/or Highway 9 and fundamentally changing people's commuting behaviors through transportation demand management measures. The Growth Plan does support all of these alternatives in principle and it may be that the

success of the Growth Plan may be demonstrated if the need for a new major east west road corridor can be avoided.

Protecting What is Valuable

At various points in the Growth Plan natural systems, greenlands, the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, agricultural lands, cultural resources, natural resources, water and air are all identified as what needs to be protected in implementing the Growth Plan.

Comments

While the Town can be generally supportive of the Growth Plan's identification of what needs to be protected in planning for growth, the Growth Plan suffers from inconsistency and unevenness in advocating protection needs and in identifying how protection will occur. Similarly, while water, natural heritage and greenspace systems, the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, agricultural resources, and mineral aggregate resources are all dealt with in some detail by the protection section of the plan, air quality, forests, fisheries, and cultural heritage resources are either not mentioned at all or are only given cursory mention. This inconsistency and unevenness must be addressed as the Growth Plan evolves.

As the Town has already indicated in its comments on the proposed PPS, while source water protection is important, it is sufficiently dealt with by new policies in the proposed PPS and does not require separate complex legislation and implementation mechanisms. The proposed PPS in combination with the other legislation and legislative tools mentioned in the Growth Plan as protecting water resources, is sufficient. If the work on source water protection does identify "gaps" in protection, municipalities should be mandated to deal with them with technical support from the Ministry of the Environment and the Conservation Authorities.

The Growth Plan does acknowledge the separate Provincial initiative to establish a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. For the Town's comments on the Greenbelt, reference should be made to Caledon Planning and Development Report 2004-48 as amended.

With respect to the Growth Plan's identification of the need to protect both agricultural resources and mineral aggregate resources reference should be made to Caledon Planning and Development Report 2004-57.

FINANCIAL

There are no direct financial consequences associated with the adoption of this report.

COMMUNITY WORK PLAN

A number of projects in the Community Work Plan (e.g. Mayfield West Community Development Plan, Bolton Community Plan) may be affected by the policies that eventually make up the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

POLICIES/LEGISLATION

Not Applicable

CONSULTATIONS

Senior Management Team

ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable

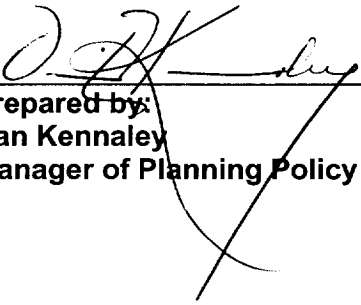
CONCLUSION

The Town would like to emphasize that while it shares the Province's desire to achieve strong communities and generally supports the approach to planning for growth proposed by the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan there is an increasing tension between Provincial intervention in the land use planning process and community autonomy. Strong communities only result when those communities can significantly influence their size, shape, form and functioning. Communities like Caledon who have, for instance, taken a moderate approach to growth should be permitted to do so.

Other key recommendations of this report for the Growth Plan are as follows:

- a) Consideration should be given to illustrating the south portion as a future growth area in a different manner which better reflects Caledon's tri-nodal growth strategy and which is less likely to inadvertently encourage urban sprawl;
- b) The definition of intensification in the proposed PPS should be changed so that it is the same as contained in the growth plan;
- c) The criteria use to evaluate urban boundary expansions in future growth areas should be expanded to also include consideration of the social impact of growth and of community capacity to support growth;
- d) The requirement for expanding urban boundaries in future growth areas that municipalities must plan for 40% of the projected population to be accommodated through intensification is too inflexible and should, therefore, be regarded as a goal to be strived toward rather than an objective that must be met each time. In addition, intensification should not mean the redesignation of employment lands;
- e) Municipalities should be permitted to contemplate minor settlement boundary expansions to rural communities in accordance with approaches like Caledon's Village Study process which provides for community appropriate and environmentally sustainable growth. The Province and other levels of government should be prepared to contribute to providing infrastructure where such minor settlement boundary expansions are justified;

- f) Consideration should be given to changing the term economic corridor to road corridor or infrastructure corridor. The term economic corridor invites the scattered development and sprawl along these corridors that the Growth Plan specifically says should not occur;
- g) The extension of the 427 will help the Town deal with its transportation problems, in particular the problem of a large volume of through-commuting. Accordingly, the Province is urged to reconsider its position, make the 427 a priority, and proceed with the environmental assessment for the extension;
- h) All other alternatives to building the GTA/Guelph/Kitchener/Waterloo east-west road corridor should be considered first before building another major road through prime agricultural lands and across the Niagara Escarpment. These alternatives should include more emphasis on transit, adding lanes to existing highways like the 401 and Highway 9, and transportation demand management; and
- i) The Growth Plan needs to address the inconsistency and unevenness with which things that need to be protected are dealt with in the Growth Plan. Air quality, forests, fisheries and cultural heritage resources are given only cursory mention.



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