

**The Regional Municipality of Halton**

**Submission to the Minister of Finance**

**2019 Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation**

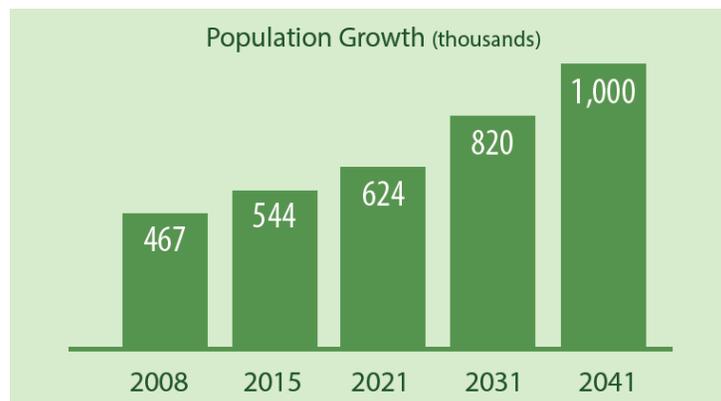
**February 8, 2019**



## Introduction

Halton Region is home to 570,000 residents in four communities— Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. Halton with its Local Municipalities is an effective two-tier government recognized for its strong financial position, safe communities, natural environment, progressive approach to urban development and reliable services. Halton uniquely combines vibrant agricultural communities with major urban centres.

The Region is strategically located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), close to major markets in Canada and the U.S. which is important to the Ontario economy. Businesses continue to invest in Halton Region because of its proximity to major markets, low taxes and a highly educated and skilled workforce. Halton is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada and must grow to a population of 1 million by 2041, more than doubling its population since 2008, to meet the expectation outlined in the Provincial Growth Plan.



In a recent poll of Halton residents, the top five issues identified relate to growth:

1. Traffic congestion and transportation
2. Growth/development
3. Infrastructure/roads
4. Keeping taxes low
5. Schools

To be successful in addressing the needs of the people of Halton, while supporting the direction of the Provincial Government, a strong, collaborative, action-oriented partnership is necessary. Keys to success, consistent with those outlined by The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, include:

1. A multi-year provincial infrastructure investment plan connected to the Growth Plan for schools, hospitals, transit, highways and housing
2. Funding formulas that recognize growth and service demand
3. Removing legislative and regulatory barriers to economic growth and jobs
4. Clarity of accountabilities between municipalities and the Province to eliminate inefficiencies, unnecessary costs and streamline administration
5. Open dialogue and collaboration

Halton Region and our 4 municipalities are committed to providing high quality services, keeping costs as low as possible for our residents and ensuring financial sustainability of our municipalities.

Halton Region is committed to working with the Provincial Government to invest in people's talents and skills, build and revitalize community infrastructure, and create a dynamic, innovative environment where businesses thrive, all while providing the services that our residents need. There is an opportunity to work together in the short-term to take action on key priorities, many of which have been long-standing requests by Halton.

### **Growth Management**

The pace of growth in Halton has been a key driver of increased costs for the Region and our Local Municipalities. It is essential that the Province provide municipalities the tools necessary to ensure growth does not create a cost burden for growing municipalities. This includes ensuring the Development Charges Act allows municipalities to collect the full cost of growth related infrastructure and Provincial funding programs and funding formulas appropriately reflect and respond to the growth expectations of the Provincial Growth Plan.

Development charges are the primary municipal revenue tool used to recover the costs of new municipal infrastructure that is required for growth and directly reflect the cost of providing the infrastructure required to service growth. DCs are a relatively small percentage of the cost to build a home, approximately 5-7% of new single family home prices in the GTA. Current development charges legislation, through the Development Charges Act (DC Act) does not allow municipalities to recover the full cost of growth which is not consistent with the principle that growth pays for growth. In order for municipalities to be able to adequately fund and deliver the infrastructure required to support increase housing supply in our communities, the recommended changes to the Development Charges Act are necessary.

The application of provincial planning policies and processes have created obstacles to economic growth, job creation and achieving complete communities for the people of Halton. Significant inefficiencies and costs have been created as a result. Municipalities must be provided with the flexibility to achieve Growth Plan objectives while responding to local opportunities and priorities.

### **Halton Requests:**

- Provide municipalities the funding tools required to fund growth infrastructure. This includes amending the DCA to address outstanding changes consistent with the principle that growth pays for growth:
  - No exemptions of municipal services
  - Remove 10 per cent discount for all services
  - Provide Councils with the ability to determine exemptions
  - Conservation Authority infrastructure development charges
  
- Authorize and recognize that the designation of employment lands as Strategic Mixed Use Areas are not employment land conversions rather these areas reflect the new realities of intensified, urban employment areas and achieve employment targets in the Growth Plan.

- ❑ This will create great opportunities to create jobs in Strategic Mixed Use Areas in Halton exist at:
  - The Health Oriented Mixed Use Node in Oakville (at the new Oakville Hospital)
  - The Milton Education Village
  - The Mobility Hubs at GO Stations in Halton

### **Infrastructure & Transportation**

Congestion on Regional and Local roads is a key issue for the people of Halton. This congestion is significantly impacted by the service levels on Provincial highways and transit systems. Key opportunities to improve the service level of the road system in Halton include the provision of key improvements to the highway system (401 and QEW) and the GO Transit system in Halton.

Halton Region has committed \$2.2 billion over 10 years in an infrastructure program to support growth in the Region however funding this infrastructure continues to be a challenge. The lack of timely delivery of provincial infrastructure, particularly schools and transportation have made it difficult to create complete communities.

The Region has committed to a \$1.7 billion investment in a 10-year transportation capital program as traffic congestion continues to be the number one issue for Halton residents. By investing in transit and the provincial transportation system in Halton, to align with the Growth Plan, will help address congestion while supporting economic growth and jobs.

Municipal governments own more of Ontario's infrastructure than any other level of government, and most of it is essential to economic prosperity and quality of life, including: drinking water, wastewater, waste management, parks and recreational facilities, social housing, roads, bridges and transit. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), municipalities need an additional \$4.9 billion per year for ten years to close the infrastructure gap while continuing to deliver existing programs and services.

Phase 1 of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan included \$1.5 billion for Ontario municipal transit and \$1.1 billion for water, wastewater and storm water systems. We eagerly anticipate the roll out of Phase 2 of the program.

### **Halton Requests:**

- ❑ Provide a coordinated, multi-year provincial infrastructure investment plan and funding connected to the Growth Plan for schools, hospitals, transit, highways and housing. As outlined by If Halton is expected to grow, then the necessary provincial infrastructure must be in place to support it and the high quality of life for the people of Halton.
- ❑ Commit to timing and delivery of all day, two-way GO service to Milton and Georgetown to support significant planned population growth.
- ❑ Commit to timing and delivery of a new GO station at Trafalgar and 401 which is a key mobility hub in Halton's Mobility Plan.
- ❑ Commit to continue with and enhance Gas Tax funding for local transit.

- Roll out of the Phase 2 Infrastructure Plan.
- Provide Halton \$7.9 million in funding support for necessary social housing improvements previously funded through Cap and Trade.

### **Health and Public Safety**

Municipalities play an important role in the overall health system in Ontario. Establishing clear accountabilities with all partners fulfilling their obligations will eliminate inefficiencies and unnecessary costs, while ensuring the health and safety of the Halton community. It is critical to improve the performance of the provincially operated Mississauga Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) to address long-standing concerns regarding its operation and with the obsolete technologies and processes used.

Halton has identified several important opportunities that would both reduce the cost and improve the service levels of Halton Paramedic Services.

#### **Halton Requests:**

- Commit to accelerated timing of the delivery and implementation of new technology and triage tools for the Mississauga CACC and to properly align the accountability and funding for the Dedicated Offload Nurse program to the hospitals who are responsible for the operation of Emergency Departments.

One of the most significant challenges for Halton in the delivery of both social services and public health is that Provincial funding formulas have not kept pace with growth. This has resulted in increased costs on the property tax bill related to these services and pressures on service levels.

The Provincial Government has underfunded Halton's Health Department for many years, despite increasing population and expectations for Public Health. In 2019, the annual provincial funding shortfall for Health Department programs is \$10.4 million. Significant needs also exist for mental health and Long-Term Care services in the Halton community.

#### **Halton Requests:**

- Provide sufficient funding for Public Health programs to keep pace with growth and increased flexibility to focus on local community needs.
- Commit to annual funding for Halton Healthcare Services of \$1 million needed to provide ongoing critical mental health clinical services in north Halton currently funded by Halton Region.
- Commit to additional Long-Term Care beds in Halton Region to meet the growing needs of our aging and underserved community.

Halton Region is encouraged by the Provincial Government's commitment to streamline and integrate the administration of social services programs and the review of the boundaries of the LHINs. Halton Region encourages the Province to review funding formulas for social services and public health and ensure that the formulas are responsive to growth.

## Conclusion

Halton Region is a strong and fiscally responsible municipality that is advocating for support from all levels of government on critical issues affecting the Region. In order to maintain a high quality of life, build the necessary infrastructure, and ensure the financial integrity of the Region, continued partnerships, significant funding investments and legislative and policy changes are required. As Halton Region is a major component to the success of Ontario's economy, working together, we can create a Strong Halton for a Strong Ontario.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to provide input into the 2019 provincial budget. If you would like more information about Halton's advocacy priorities, please visit **Halton.ca**.