

Report To:	Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council
From:	Bob Gray, Commissioner, Legislative and Planning Services and Corporate Counsel
Date:	June 15, 2022
Report No:	LPS50-22
Re:	Recommendation Report - Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49 – “An Amendment to Implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy”

## RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT pursuant to sections 17 and 26 of the *Planning Act*, Regional Council adopt Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49 – “An Amendment to Implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy”, being Attachment #1 to Report No. LPS50-22.
2. THAT the Director of Legal Services prepare the necessary By-laws to give effect to Recommendation No. 1 above.
3. THAT the Regional Clerk forward the necessary documentation to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the approval authority for Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49.
4. THAT the Regional Clerk give notice of the adoption of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49 in accordance with the *Planning Act* and its regulations.
5. THAT the Regional Clerk forward a copy of Report No. LPS50-22 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, the Town of Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation Authority, the Grand River Conservation Authority, the Halton District School Board, and the Halton Catholic District School Board for their information.

## REPORT

### **Executive Summary**

- The purpose of this report is to recommend Regional Council adopt Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) No. 49 – “An Amendment to Implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy” provided as Attachment #1 to this report.
- ROPA 49 is the second amendment to the Regional Official Plan advanced as part of Halton’s municipal comprehensive review under section 26 of the *Planning Act*. The purpose of the amendment is to implement the results of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process and to address conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- The amendment proposes to update how the Regional Official Plan plans for future growth in population, housing, and jobs. It plans to accommodate growth up to 2041 within Halton’s existing urban areas and provides a framework for planning for growth between 2041 and 2051. The amendment also includes other updates that support Halton’s growth strategy, including updates to intensification and density targets, development phasing, the Regional Urban Structure, Strategic Growth Areas, Employment Areas, and corridor protection, among other things.
- The proposed amendment is informed by the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, a multi-year process that considered a range of approaches to accommodating growth in Halton Region to 2051 and that culminated with Regional Council’s direction to advance a Modified Preferred Growth Concept. It was also supported by public input and a range of technical studies, including a Land Needs Assessment, which is provided as Attachment #2 to this report.
- Consultation on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy has occurred throughout the Regional Official Plan Review Process. Public consultation on Draft ROPA 49 occurred between March and May 2022 in accordance with sections 17 and 26 of the *Planning Act*. A public open house was held on April 6, 2022 and a statutory public meeting was held on April 13, 2022. Prior to this, a special meeting of Regional Council was held and a draft of the amendment was provided to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Information was also made available on the Region’s webpage for review and comment. The submissions received on Draft ROPA 49 and Regional staff’s responses are identified in Attachment #4 to this report.
- For the reasons outlined in this report, staff recommend that ROPA 49 be adopted by Regional Council and forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing who is the approval authority for the amendment.

## **Background**

This section of the report provides information on the Regional Official Plan Review and Integrated Growth Management Strategy process and how they have informed Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) No. 49. It also provides a summary of the contents of ROPA 49 and the public consultation process undertaken in support of the amendment.

### *The Regional Official Plan Review and Integrated Growth Management Strategy*

The Regional Official Plan Review process began with a Commencement Report in 2014 and an initial Phase 1 Directions Report in 2016. Following successive changes to the Provincial planning framework in 2017 and 2019, including revisions to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the “Growth Plan”) that updated the applicable planning horizon, population and employment forecasts, and other growth targets, the Integrated Growth Management Strategy component of the process began in 2019. The key milestones in this process that have led to ROPA 49 are described below.

- ***Developing Growth Scenarios***

In 2019, through Report No. LPS41-19 re: “Regional Official Plan Review – Progress Updates on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Preliminary Growth Scenarios”, Regional Council received information on a range of Preliminary Growth Scenarios and an Evaluation Framework. This report presented high-level options that Halton could consider in planning for population and employment growth.

Following additional consultation with the Local Municipalities, in May 2020 Regional Council endorsed the Evaluation Framework and directed Regional staff to prepare a range of more detailed Growth Concepts that built on the Growth Scenarios that advanced local plans and priorities.

- ***Defining a Regional Urban Structure***

A series of Discussion Papers were released in July 2020 to explore issues and receive public input on the range of theme areas considered in the Regional Official Plan Review. For the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, a ‘Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper’ explored key areas in Halton Region where higher-density, transit-supportive growth could be directed, including Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas and other Regional Nodes and Corridors.

Based on the Discussion Paper and the feedback received, Regional Council directed staff to develop an amendment to the Regional Official Plan related to urban structure. ROPA 48 – “An Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure” was adopted by Regional Council in July 2021 through Report No. LPS60-21 and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in November 2021. This framework identified Strategic Growth Areas and advanced strategic employment conversions, providing a foundation that informed how to plan for growth in Halton as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

- ***Defining & Evaluating Growth Concepts***

Building on the Growth Scenarios and Regional Urban Structure, a series of detailed Growth Concepts were prepared by Regional staff. These were presented to Regional Council through Report No. LPS18-21 re: “Regional Official Plan Review - Integrated Growth Management Strategy - Growth Concepts Discussion Paper”. An additional Concept was also produced at the direction of Regional Council, discussed in Report No. LPS45-21 re: “Additional Information Relating to Growth Concepts Associated with the Integrated Growth Management Strategy – Regional Official Plan Review”.

The Growth Concepts identified approaches to accommodating new people, jobs, and housing units in Halton Region. While all Concepts directed a significant amount of growth to key areas within the Regional Urban Structure, they each tested a different proportion of the growth directed to existing urban areas versus new expansion areas (i.e., to lands outside the existing Regional Urban Boundary). The Growth Concepts Discussion Paper also included assessments related to land needs, transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, fiscal impacts, agriculture, natural heritage and water resources, among other things. A significant amount of public input and feedback was received on the Growth Concepts, through Public Information Centres and written submissions between February and July 2021.

- ***Presenting a Preferred Growth Concept***

Following consultation on the Growth Concepts, Regional staff provided an update to Regional Council in July 2021 through Report No. LPS51-21 re: “Regional Official Plan Review: Work Plan Update and Overview of Key Principles as the Foundation for a Draft Preferred Growth Concept”. The report provided an overview of the engagement activities and feedback received on the Growth Concepts and outlined a set of Key Principles which were used as a foundation for a balanced approach to planning for growth in Halton through a Preferred Growth Concept. These included:

- Confirming and Supporting a Regional Urban Structure
- Setting an Ambitious and Achievable Intensification Target
- Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change
- Establishing a Broad Range and Mix of Housing
- Providing a Complete Spectrum of Employment Opportunities
- Advancing Strategic Employment Land Conversions
- Setting Bold Yet Achievable Community Area & Employment Area Density Targets
- Establishing Strong Development Phasing Policies
- Ensuring Growth Proceeds without Negative Fiscal Impacts
- Maximizing Agricultural Land Protection
- Further Enhancing the Natural Heritage System

In November 2021, a Council Workshop was held to provide Regional Council with information on a Draft Preferred Growth Concept developed by Regional staff based

on the Key Principles, the feedback received on the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper, and the evaluation of the Growth Concepts from a technical perspective.

A subsequent Council Workshop was held in February 2022, and a detailed Preferred Growth Concept Report was provided to Regional Council for information. This Report outlined Regional staff's draft recommendation on a growth strategy for Halton, and included the following detailed technical assessments related to this growth strategy:

- Land Needs Assessment
- Existing Employment Area Delineation
- Agricultural Impact Assessment
- Natural Heritage and Water Resources Assessment
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment
- Water and Wastewater Assessment
- Transportation Assessment
- Fiscal Impact Assessment

The Preferred Growth Concept presented to Regional Council at that time identified a detailed distribution of growth to the Local Municipalities to 2051 which directed almost 80 per cent of population and employment growth to existing urban areas and planned for significant shifts in Halton's future housing and employment mix. It also identified urban expansions for 1,120 hectares of new Community Area land and 1,070 hectares of new Employment Area land in order to accommodate certain types of housing and employment growth that analysis indicated could not be located within existing areas.

- ***Advancing a Modified Preferred Growth Concept***

Following the presentation to Regional Council of a Preferred Growth Concept, on February 16, 2022, Regional Council adopted a motion directing staff to advance a Modified Preferred Growth Concept. Through the adoption of this motion, Regional Council directed staff to develop an amendment to the Regional Official Plan that would advance an approach that accommodates growth in two phases: pre-2041 (where all growth is directed to areas within the existing Regional Urban Boundary) and from 2041 to 2051 (where a policy framework guides how planned growth is distributed through a future amendment).

While this direction differs from the approach set out by Regional staff in the February 2022 Preferred Growth Concept Report, it is not contradictory, as it continues to advance many of the same important objectives for accommodating growth in Halton. The Modified Preferred Growth Concept generally implements the recommended Preferred Growth Concept up to 2041 while taking a careful approach to planning for the 2041 to 2051 period by setting out a policy framework to guide the distribution of growth during this later timeframe. This approach is supported by an updated Land Needs Assessment, provided as Attachment #2 to this report, which confirms there is sufficient land in Halton to accommodate growth to 2041.

## ROPA 49 Overview

The purpose of ROPA 49 is to advance changes to the Regional Official Plan that implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and address conformity with the Growth Plan. The key components of the amendment are described below.

- ***Planning for Growth in Halton to 2051***

Building on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Regional Council's direction on a Modified Preferred Growth Concept, ROPA 49 advances a strategy for accommodating the 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs assigned to the Region through Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan by identifying these population and employment forecasts for Halton in Table 1 and planning for this growth in the two distinct phases described below.

For growth prior to 2041, the amendment updates Table 1 to identify a specific distribution of population and employment growth to each Local Municipality. Growth during this period is directed to areas within the existing Regional Urban Boundary, to important Strategic Growth Areas that form the Regional Urban Structure, and to areas throughout the Built-Up Area and Designated Greenfield Areas.

For the 2041 to 2051 period, the amendment identifies a framework that would apply to planning for growth during this timeframe through a future amendment to the Regional Official Plan. Such an amendment would be subject to the existing settlement area boundary expansion policies in the Regional Official Plan as well as a framework that requires consideration of changes to the Provincial planning framework, information from an annual monitoring framework on key growth-related indicators, and the results of studies related to natural heritage and agriculture.

- ***Intensification & Density Targets***

The amendment updates existing intensification and density targets in Table 2 and adds a new density target for Halton's Employment Areas. These targets are required by the Growth Plan and support implementing and achieving Halton's growth strategy.

ROPA 49 proposes an alternate intensification target of 45 per cent of new housing development each year being located within the Built-Up Area (the area identified by the Province as having existing urban development by 2006). The Built-Up Area is shown on Map 1H of the Regional Official Plan. The alternate target of 45 per cent is different than the 50 per cent target identified in the Growth Plan. The need and rationale for advancing an alternate intensification target has been documented through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process. The use of this alternate target is necessary in order to enable a sufficient amount of growth to be directed to strategic areas both within and outside of the Built-Up Area. A formal request to use this alternate target in accordance with Policy 2.2.2.4 of the Growth Plan, including the required rationale, is provided in Attachment #3 to this report.

At 62 residents and jobs per hectare, the minimum density target for the Designated Greenfield Area identified in Table 2 exceeds the Growth Plan minimum of 50 residents and jobs per hectare. It is important to note that this target applies to all lands within the Regional Urban Boundary that are outside the Built-Up Area, including lands that were developed at lower densities than are currently being planned for. Lands added to the Regional Urban Boundary through the Sustainable Halton process and ROPA 38 are generally being planned for a minimum density of 65 residents and jobs per hectare. A minimum density target is identified for each Local Municipality which reflects the applicable local context.

A new minimum density target is proposed in Table 2 that applies to Halton's Employment Areas – lands that are identified and protected over the long term for certain types of employment uses. The minimum density target is 26 jobs per hectare. This new target and associated policy updates will support the efficient use of land in Halton's Employment Areas. Like the Designated Greenfield Area target, an Employment Area density target is identified for each Local Municipality that recognizes the unique characteristics of their employment lands.

Through ROPA 48, a new Table 2b was added to the Regional Official Plan to identify growth targets for applicable Strategic Growth Areas. These targets are proposed to be updated through ROPA 49 to identify a minimum density target for the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area and to identify minimum density targets and general targets for the proportion of residents and jobs within Primary Regional Nodes located in the Town of Oakville and Milton. These targets are intended to be measured over the entirety of the Strategic Growth Area, as applicable, and achieved over the long term.

- ***Regional Development Phasing***

The Regional Official Plan identifies Regional development phasing targets in five-year increments. This long-standing phasing approach is proposed to be updated through ROPA 49, with the identification of housing units within the Built-Up Area and Designated Greenfield Area of each municipality and the phasing of employment growth in five-year increments to 2041. This is consistent with and builds on Halton's existing development phasing policies. Appropriate updates have been made to implement the Modified Preferred Growth Concept, to reflect changes to the 2021 base year resulting from information in the 2021 Census, to implement the updated intensification target, to incorporate information from local planning processes, and to ensure the logical and orderly progression of development across Halton.

- ***Regional Urban Structure & Strategic Growth Areas***

The Regional Urban Structure was identified through ROPA 48, the first amendment advanced as part of the Regional Official Plan Review process. Through ROPA 49, a number of updates are proposed to this framework. This includes the identification of the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area in the area of Milton known as

Agerton, an update to the framework for Regional Nodes, and the introduction of a framework for Regional Intensification Corridors.

The Town of Milton has identified planning for the Agerton area near the intersection of Trafalgar Road and Derry Road as a key local planning priority. Planning for these lands has been an important consideration as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. Through ROPA 48, a strategic employment conversion was advanced on lands west of Trafalgar Road. Through ROPA 49, a Major Transit Station Area boundary is proposed as delineated on Map 1H and the conversion of additional lands within this boundary is also proposed in recognition of the important role of these lands in the Regional Urban Structure. In accordance with the motion adopted by Regional Council on April 20, 2022, the amendment also proposes to add the lands within the northeastern quadrant of the delineated Major Transit Station Area to the Regional Urban Boundary. These lands are currently owned by Canadian Pacific Railway and are not used for farming purposes. The inclusion of these 25 hectares within the Regional Urban Boundary will facilitate comprehensive planning for the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area, supporting its ability to accommodate high-density, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development.

The policy framework for Regional Nodes is proposed to be revised in response to modifications made by the Province through its decision on ROPA 48 which removed the direction to Local Municipalities to set density targets for Regional Nodes on the basis that such targets must first be identified in the Regional Official Plan. ROPA 49 proposes to revise the framework for Regional Nodes such that: Primary Regional Nodes are now those that have a delineated boundary on Map 1H and that are assigned targets in Table 2b, and, Secondary Regional Nodes are identified by symbol on Map 1H and are not assigned targets in Table 2b.

Regional Intensification Corridors are proposed as an additional component of the Regional Urban Structure in ROPA 49. These are areas that serve an existing or planned higher order transit function, have a role in connecting other elements of the Regional Urban Structure, and are planned to accommodate higher-density development appropriate to the existing local context. The proposed Regional Intensification Corridors are identified conceptually on Map 1H. The policy framework for these areas makes clear that they apply only within the Regional Urban Boundary, highlights their important role within the Regional Urban Structure, and identifies the importance of local planning in guiding growth and development in these areas.

Together, the updates to the Regional Urban Structure proposed in ROPA 49 reinforce the important role of Strategic Growth Areas throughout the Region in accommodating a significant amount of population and employment growth in Halton.

- ***Halton's Regional Urban Boundary***

The existing Regional Urban Boundary has been delineated and is proposed to be shown on all maps in the Regional Official Plan through ROPA 49. The boundary reflects the extent of the existing Urban Area designation. It also includes the addition

of the lands described above related to the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area. Halton's growth strategy described above directs growth to 2041 to lands within the Regional Urban Boundary. With the exception of the change associated with the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transition Station Area, no expansions to this settlement area boundary are proposed through ROPA 49.

- ***Halton's Employment Areas***

Halton's Employment Areas are shown on Map 1H of the Regional Official Plan and represent areas identified and protected over the long term for a broad range of employment uses. The initial delineation of the Employment Areas occurred through ROPA 38, and the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process has reviewed these areas and advanced certain revisions, conversions, and additions through both ROPAs 48 and 49. Employment conversions have been assessed in accordance with the criteria in Policy 2.2.5.9 of the Growth Plan and Section 83.2(4) of the Regional Official Plan, as well as the principles set out in the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper (July 2020). These principles built on the Provincial and Regional policy criteria and provided additional information on how impacts to employment land supply, demonstrated need, employment area viability, and other general considerations would be considered in assessing conversion requests in the context of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. The delineation of the Employment Areas as proposed in ROPA 49 is summarized in 'Appendix B' to the Preferred Growth Concept report provided to Regional Council for information in February 2022.

Changes to the policies that apply to these areas are also included in ROPA 49. The amendment continues the existing prohibition on residential and major retail uses, revises the policy framework for permitted uses within the Employment Areas, updates the criteria for planning for sensitive land uses (including prohibiting sensitive land uses with a residential component), and provides additional direction to support the more detailed planning for these areas undertaken by the Local Municipalities.

- ***Corridor Protection***

Recognizing the importance of Halton's Employment Areas in accommodating growth, ROPA 49 proposes to narrow the corridor protection area that currently applies predominantly in the Town of Halton Hills and the Premier Gateway Employment Area. ROPA 49 proposes to remove a significant amount of land from the corridor protection area initially added to the Regional Official Plan through ROPA 43 in 2014. The corridor protection area is narrowed such that it only applies to lands within the Preferred Route and Focused Analysis Area for Highway 413 and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor as well as for an area related to the Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS). The policy framework is updated to clearly identify the process through which the corridor protection area would continue to be narrowed.

- ***Other Policy & Mapping Updates***

The amendment includes proposed updates to the maps in the Regional Official Plan related to the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, including depicting the delineated Regional Urban Boundary on all maps, and updating the boundaries or conceptual locations of Strategic Growth Areas on Map 1H, the boundaries of Employment Areas on Map 1C and Map 1H, and the boundaries of corridor protection areas on Map 3.

A comprehensive update to the maps of the Regional Official Plan, including to address matters related to source protection, the Regional Natural Heritage System, and the Agricultural System, will be advanced in the next stage of the Regional Official Plan Review process and implemented through a subsequent amendment.

### Consultation Process

ROPA 49 has been informed by the consultation that has occurred throughout the Regional Official Plan Review and the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process as well as by the specific public input and feedback received since the release of Draft ROPA 49 on March 24, 2022.

A significant amount of consultation on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy occurred as part of the Regional Official Plan Review process. An initial summary of the consultation process was provided to Regional Council in February 2021 through Report No. LPS05-21 re: “Regional Official Plan Review – Phase 2 Initial Consultation Summary”. An updated summary of public engagement on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, including a summary of the feedback on the Growth Concepts received at a series of Public Information Centres held in May 2021 was provided to Regional Council in July 2021. A final summary of the consultation process, including a detailed response document on comments received in relation to the Growth Concepts and the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, was included in the information materials provided to Regional Council at its Council Workshop on February 9, 2022.

Prior to the release of the draft amendment in March 2022, the consultation requirements in section 26 of the *Planning Act* were met. A special meeting of Regional Council was held on November 18, 2020 that provided the public with an opportunity to discuss the revisions that may be required to the Regional Official Plan. Consultation also occurred with the approval authority and the prescribed public bodies, including the circulation of a draft amendment to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in October 2021.

Consultation on Draft ROPA 49 from March 2022 to May 2022 has included:

- the release of the draft amendment for public consultation on March 24, 2022, including posting the amendment and supporting information on [halton.ca/ROPR](https://www.halton.ca/ROPR), providing notice via e-mail to the Regional Official Plan Review mailing list and to prescribed bodies and agencies, and through advertisements in local newspapers;

- circulation of the proposed amendment to prescribed bodies and agencies, such as conservation authorities, school boards, utilities, railways, as well as to Indigenous communities;
- a 50-day public commenting period between March 24, 2022 and May 13, 2022;
- a public open house held virtually on April 6, 2022 to provide the public with an opportunity to review and ask questions related to the amendment, attended by over 150 people;
- a statutory public meeting held on April 13, 2022 to provide the public with an opportunity to make submissions to Regional Council on the proposed amendment, at which 18 delegations were made and 25 written submissions were received;
- a meeting with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff in April 2022;
- meetings with Local Municipal planning staff in April and May 2022; and
- informal discussions at the request of the public and other stakeholders.

A summary of how this consultation has informed ROPA 49 as recommended for adoption by Regional staff is addressed in the following section of this report.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this section of the report is to provide a summary of the comments received on Draft ROPA 49, how they have been considered and responded to by Regional staff, and the changes that have been made to the amendment as a result. It also provides Regional staff's analysis of the amendment in relation to Provincial plans and policies and a recommendation to Regional Council on the amendment. Finally, it outlines the next steps related to ROPA 49 following a decision by Regional Council.

### *Public Comments on Draft ROPA 49*

In total, 62 written submissions were provided on Draft ROPA 49 by the end of or just following the conclusion of the commenting period on May 13, 2022. These submissions are documented in Attachment #4 to this report. In that attachment, Regional staff's responses are provided alongside the submissions and indicate how the submission has informed ROPA 49. Appendix II within ROPA 49 (Attachment #1 to this report) also identifies in detail the items in the amendment that have been updated based on the feedback received and further review.

A summary of the key feedback received on Draft ROPA 49 and a description of how it informed the final amendment as presented to Regional Council is provided below.

- ***Comments on the Modified Preferred Growth Concept and the Framework for Planning for Growth between 2041 and 2051***

A number of submissions identified support for the Modified Preferred Growth Concept and the growth strategy advanced through ROPA 49. These submissions highlighted

the benefits of directing growth to existing urban areas and protecting prime agricultural areas, among other things. At the same time, many submissions expressed concerns with the approach, and in particular its relationship to Provincial planning policies and local municipal planning objectives, the implications of not advancing any expansions to the Regional Urban Boundary, potential challenges with achieving the ambitious shifts in the Region's housing mix, the lack of detail on how growth between 2041 and 2051 will be distributed, and overall concerns that ROPA 49 does not reflect a balanced approach to accommodating growth in Halton.

- *No changes to ROPA 49 were made based on these submissions.*

The population and employment forecasts to 2051 for Halton Region as set out in the Growth Plan are included in Table 1 of the Regional Official Plan as amended by ROPA 49. This growth is distributed to the local municipal level to 2041 in a manner that advances many important Provincial, Regional, and Local Municipal planning objectives by focusing a significant amount of growth over the next two decades in the Strategic Growth Areas that form important parts of the Regional and Local Urban Structures, as well as to areas throughout the Built-Up Area and existing Designated Greenfield Areas in Halton.

The Land Needs Assessment provided as Attachment #2 to this report was prepared in a manner consistent with the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Based on this technical work, there is sufficient land within the Region's existing urban area to accommodate population and employment growth to 2041. It is noted that, based on currently available information and analysis, the Land Needs Assessment identifies a need for additional land to accommodate growth between 2041 and 2051.

ROPA 49 recognizes the importance of planning for growth between 2041 and 2051 and sets out a framework to guide how this growth is to occur.

It is important to note that the Strategic Growth Areas in the Regional Urban Structure will continue to play a central role in accommodating growth in Halton. As noted in Section 35 of the Regional Official Plan, these Strategic Growth Areas represent durable elements that are subject to long-term planning beyond 2051. This is reinforced in Section 55.3 of the Plan, which notes that many of the targets in Table 2b are to be achieved beyond the 2051 planning horizon. In this way, through ROPAs 48 and 49, the Regional Official Plan Review and Integrated Growth Management Strategy have identified a structure that will support accommodating a significant amount of Halton's future population and employment growth over the long term. Growth will continue to be directed to these areas to 2041, 2051, and beyond, based on their strategic locations and the existing and planned investments in infrastructure that will ensure a range of important planning objectives are met. For example, the Land Needs Assessment is based on about 75 per cent of housing unit growth between 2041 and 2051 continuing to be accommodated in existing areas.

The monitoring framework in ROPA 49 requires reporting on an annual basis on a range of growth-related indicators. This is a central component of the framework for planning growth in the 2041 to 2051 period. In addition to annual reporting on key growth indicators, the Regional Official Plan will continue to be reviewed regularly in accordance with the *Planning Act* or at the direction of Regional Council. There will be at least two, and possibly more, reviews of the Regional Official Plan prior to 2041. This will support evidence-based decision-making for growth in the later part of the planning horizon and ensure it occurs in a timely manner that allows for sufficient time to advance comprehensive planning work for areas where this growth will ultimately be distributed. This will also support Halton in continuing to achieve the objectives of the Growth Plan that support planning for a significant shift to a more compact and mixed-use urban form.

The growth strategy proposed in ROPA 49 also takes into consideration the importance of planning objectives related to agriculture, the natural heritage system, and climate change. In balancing these objectives, the amendment appropriately directs growth to existing urban areas while ensuring current information and adequate time are available to support decision-making for growth in the later part of the planning horizon.

- ***Comments on Planning for New Community Area and Employment Area Lands***

Many submissions sought a reconsideration of the approach in ROPA 49 and its exclusion of any expansions to the Regional Urban Boundary. These submissions provided information on specific areas within Halton, highlighting their attributes as areas outside the Regional Urban Boundary that would be appropriate locations to accommodate planned population and employment growth.

- *No changes were made to ROPA 49 based on these submissions.*

Based on Regional Council's direction related to the Modified Preferred Growth Concept, the amendment does not advance any expansions to the Regional Urban Boundary, save for the small area within the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area. The Land Needs Assessment provided as Attachment #2 to this report, prepared in a manner consistent with the Provincial methodology, concluded that there is sufficient land within the Region's existing urban area to accommodate population and employment growth to 2041.

Any future expansion to the Regional Urban Boundary would occur in accordance with the policies set out in the Regional Official Plan as amended by ROPA 49 through a future amendment, as necessary. This includes the existing settlement area boundary expansion policies, as well as the framework for planning for growth between 2041 and 2051 implemented through ROPA 49. As noted above, this framework includes provisions for comprehensive monitoring that will report annually on a series of growth-related indicators. This will ensure that should it be determined that lands outside the existing Regional Urban Boundary are required

to accommodate future growth, there will be sufficient lead time to undertake the comprehensive planning of these lands prior to 2041.

- ***Comments on Existing Designated Greenfield Areas & Development Phasing***

The role of the existing Designated Greenfield Areas in Halton Region in accommodating growth was also raised in many submissions. In particular, landowners expressed concerns around impacts to ongoing local secondary plan work and requested a transition policy be included in the amendment so that these lands would be planned for in accordance with the existing Regional Official Plan.

- *No changes to ROPA 49 were required in response to these submissions.*

As noted in a number of submissions, the role of existing Designated Greenfield Areas in accommodating growth in Halton was a subject of discussion throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process. In particular, a component of the Region's growth strategy focussed on what was termed 'densification' or 'greenfield intensification'. It was clarified that this refers to planning for additional apartment units in certain strategic areas within the Designated Greenfield Area in support of local plans and priorities. For example, this includes additional growth contemplated in the Primary Regional Nodes in North Oakville as well as important areas in the Town of Milton such as the Milton Education Village and the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station and the adjoining Trafalgar Road corridor.

It is important to note that the planning context has evolved considerably in the decade since the last update to the Regional Official Plan in 2009 through ROPA 38 and the identification of Regional development phasing through ROPA 39 in 2011. The Integrated Growth Management Strategy has provided an opportunity to review and update previous assumptions related to the timing of development. Most importantly, this includes incorporating information available from recent local municipal planning work, which Regional staff have ensured is appropriately reflected throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. In many cases, these updated local municipal plans and priorities differ from ROPA 38 and the Region's 2011 Best Planning Estimates.

ROPA 49 also reflects information from the 2021 Census as well as current understandings of the likely timing of development based on how growth in the Designated Greenfield Area has progressed between 2011 and the present. In this way, it appropriately reflects the existing and expected timing of development within the Designated Greenfield Areas and advances the Regional Official Plan's objective of ensuring development occurs in a logical, orderly manner.

It is important that the lands within the Regional Urban Boundary be planned for comprehensively through the Regional Official Plan. The Region's growth strategy is implemented through Tables 1, 2, 2a and 2b, which contain specific targets that apply across Halton Region and that are necessary in order to conform with and implement the policies of the Growth Plan. It is not possible or appropriate to apply

the existing Regional Official Plan policies and targets to specific parts of Halton Region.

Based on the information provided above, in Regional staff's view, a transition policy is not required or appropriate in ROPA 49. It is recognized that the timing of development within the existing Designated Greenfield Area will occur over a slightly longer timeframe, informed by the observed realities of the past ten years as well as updates to the Region's overall growth strategy. However, no changes are proposed through ROPA 49 that would significantly alter the ongoing planning of the existing Designated Greenfield Areas and their ultimate development as envisioned by the Local Municipalities. Regional staff will continue to work with the Local Municipalities and landowners to support the development of lands within the existing Designated Greenfield Areas in Halton Region.

- ***Comments on Planning for Employment Areas***

A handful of submissions were received from participants in the Regional Official Plan Review process seeking to remove their lands from the Regional Employment Areas through the employment conversion process. Other submissions highlighted the importance of protecting and planning for employment lands.

- *No changes have been made to ROPA 49 in response to this information.*

These requests have all been considered as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process in accordance with the approach identified in the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper in July 2020. This approach is based on a consideration of Provincial and Regional policy criteria and related principles outlined through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. A summary of changes to the Region's Employment Areas, including details on the assessment of conversion requests, was included in Appendix B to the Preferred Growth Concept Report provided to Regional Council for information in February 2022. No additional conversions beyond those already included in the draft amendment are proposed to be advanced in ROPA 49 as attached to this report.

No significant comments were received on the overall changes proposed to the Employment Area policy framework as set out in ROPA 49. However, concerns were identified by landowners within the Premier Gateway Employment Area and Town of Halton Hills staff related to the proposed removal of an existing exemption for non-employment uses where such uses were permitted in a Local Official Plan prior to December 16, 2009.

- *A change has been made to ROPA 49 in response to this feedback.*

A new Section 83.2(1.1) is proposed in ROPA 49. The proposed policy would continue to recognize major retail uses that are permitted by a Local Official Plan prior to December 16, 2009 (the date Regional Council adopted ROPA 38). This balances the objectives of implementing a consistent framework across the

Region's Employment Areas while ensuring existing local planning frameworks are recognized and supported.

- ***Comments on Corridor Protection***

Draft ROPA 49 proposed to narrow the corridor protection area related to Highway 413 and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor to reflect only the Preferred Route for Highway 413 as identified by the Province in 2020. Additional information was provided with respect to the need to continue protecting the broader Highway 413 Focused Analysis Area and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Narrowed Area of Interest until such time as the requisite Environmental Assessment Act processes have been completed or it is determined that lands no longer require protection.

- Adjustments have been made to ROPA 49 based on the feedback received.

The corridor protection areas identified on Map 3 are proposed to be updated in the version of ROPA 49 attached to this report. Map 3 now proposed to identify primary and secondary corridor protection areas for Highway 413 and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor, with the primary area representing the Highway 413 Preferred Route and the secondary area representing the Highway 413 Focused Analysis Area and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Narrowed Area of Interest. The proposed policies in ROPA 49 note that the primary corridor protection area is to be protected over the long term while the secondary corridor protection area is intended to be protected only until such time as the final locations of the Highway 413 Corridor and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor are confirmed.

The proposed policies also identify how further updates to the corridor protection areas will occur. First, the corridor protection areas would be narrowed automatically when a preferred alignment has been determined through an Environmental Assessment Act process. Second, the corridor protection areas would be updated through the phased release of lands by the Region and Local Municipalities, in particular within the secondary corridor protection area, where it is determined that they no longer require protection in consultation with and to the satisfaction of the Province. In both cases, no further amendment to the Regional Official Plan would be required. Corridor protection is also identified for the Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS).

This approach results in the release of approximately 1,800 hectares from the corridor protection area originally implemented through ROPA 43, with about 225 hectares of this being lands designated Urban Area within the Premier Gateway Employment Area. Regional staff will continue to work with the Town and Province to further narrow the corridor protection areas in Halton and to ensure designated employment lands are made available for development as soon as possible.

- **Comments on Planning for Agriculture**

The importance of planning for agriculture and supporting farms and farmers was also highlighted in a number of the submissions and feedback received on the draft amendment. A range of perspectives were provided, including those that were supportive of the amendment given its approach to direct growth within the existing Regional Urban Boundary as well as those that highlighted concerns around the viability of agriculture in Halton, and in particular in areas which can be considered as locations for future urban growth in accordance with Provincial plans and policies.

- Comments related to planning for and supporting agriculture will be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Official Plan Review.

Report No. LPS44-22 re: “Regional Official Plan Review – Policy Directions Report”, identifies a number of proposed policy directions that will inform updates to the Regional Official Plan in support of planning for agriculture and the rural and agricultural policies in the Regional Official Plan. Halton’s existing Agricultural Strategy will also be reviewed in the coming years to further support and strengthen the agricultural sector in Halton Region.

- **Comments on Planning for Climate Change**

The importance of ensuring the Regional Official Plan responds to the challenges posed by climate change was also raised in a number of submissions on the draft amendment and the feedback on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

- An update has been made to ROPA 49 in response to the feedback received on how the amendment addresses climate change.

Climate change has been an important consideration as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. The growth strategy implemented through ROPA 49 advances an approach that supports many of Halton’s objectives related to addressing climate change, including by directing growth to existing urban areas that can be supported by existing and planned transit infrastructure. To more effectively emphasize this, a new objective for the Regional Urban Structure is proposed to be added to Section 78.1 of the Regional Official Plan. This objective identifies the importance of Halton’s growth strategy in supporting climate change mitigation.

Comprehensive updates to the Regional Official Plan that address policy directions on climate change mitigation and adaptation will occur in the next stage of the Regional Official Plan Review process as outlined in Report No. LPS44-22.

- **Comments on Mapping Updates**

A number of comments were received related to the mapping changes advanced in ROPA 49. For the most part, these comments identified the need for minor boundary

adjustments or technical corrections, and opportunities to provide greater clarity in the depiction of map elements, legend items, or notations. Clarification was also sought in terms of the types of changes being advanced as part of ROPA 49 versus through a future part of the Regional Official Plan Review process.

- *The following map updates to the Regional Official Plan as amended by ROPA 49 have been made on the basis of feedback received:*
  - An update is proposed to the Regional Urban Boundary in ROPA 49 to implement the direction from Regional Council on April 20, 2022 related to the inclusion of lands within the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area. Updates to all maps on which the Regional Urban Boundary is depicted have been made along with the applicable updates to land use designations and constraints to development.
  - Changes are proposed to Map 1H to update the boundary of the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station (in response to Regional Council direction) and to refine the boundary of the Neyagawa Urban Core Primary Regional Node (based on feedback received from Town of Oakville staff). Updates are also proposed to the depiction of Regional Intensification Corridors to ensure it is clear that they are identified conceptually and that their associated policies only apply to lands within the Regional Urban Boundary.
  - A note is proposed to be included on Map 1D – Municipal Wellhead Protection Zones to direct the reader to the applicable Source Protection Plan pending future updates to this mapping as part of the next phase of the Regional Official Plan Review.

A comprehensive update to the maps of the Regional Official Plan, including to address matters related to source protection, the Regional Natural Heritage System, and the Agricultural System, will be advanced in the next stage of the Regional Official Plan Review process and implemented through a subsequent amendment to be introduced in 2023. More information about the proposed policy directions and mapping updates that will be addressed through the Regional Official Plan Review is available in the Policy Directions report provided to Regional Council through Report No. LPS44-22.

#### *Local Municipal Comments on Draft ROPA 49 & Integrated Growth Management Strategy*

The Local Municipalities in Halton have provided essential input throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process. A summary of local municipal feedback on Draft ROPA 49 as well as their positions on the overall growth strategy set out in the amendment and the Modified Preferred Growth Concept is provided below.

- ***City of Burlington***

In January 2022, Burlington Council received a staff report that provided comments from a Burlington perspective on the Draft Preferred Growth Concept. The report

noted that the Preferred Growth concept would result in a growth strategy generally consistent with the City's own Growth Analysis Study. The report also recommended increasing the amount of major office employment directed to Major Transit Station Areas and supported the conclusion that it is not appropriate to include the North Aldershot Policy Area as part of the Preferred Growth Concept.

Through a May 2022 report, the City provided comments on Draft ROPA 49. Overall, the comments were supportive of the changes to the Regional Official Plan being advanced as part of ROPA 49. The City's comments and responses from Regional staff are documented in Attachment #4 to this report.

- ***Town of Halton Hills***

Formal comments on the Draft Preferred Growth Concept were not provided by the Town. However, in response to a July 2021 report on the Growth Concepts, Town Council supported an expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area of about 350 hectares as well as the addition of approximately 350 hectares of new employment lands.

In a letter dated May 16, 2022, Town staff provided comments on Draft ROPA 49. The letter provided comments on matters related to the policies for Halton's Employment Areas as well as corridor protection areas, which have been discussed above in relation to other feedback received on Draft ROPA 49.

The Town's letter also identified concerns related to the amount and timing of development identified in the Town's Built-Up Area and Designated Greenfield Area. These comments, as well as Regional staff's responses, are documented in Attachment #4 to this report.

In particular, Regional staff note the Town's comments on the amount of growth directed to the Town's Built-Up Area, and concerns with this minimum target potentially being treated as a maximum through the implementation of ROPA 49. Ensuring there is appropriate support and flexibility in planning for growth through intensification will be an important part of implementing Halton's growth strategy. The Regional Urban Structure is planned to accommodate a significant amount of growth across Halton in both the short-term and over the long-term. As the Region's infrastructure master plans are updated to support the Region's growth strategy, consideration will be given to analyzing the potential for intensification at levels greater than anticipated as well as for growth that will occur within the Regional Urban Structure beyond the horizon of the plan. This will help support increased flexibility in planning for intensification in the Town and across Halton Region.

- ***Town of Milton***

In January 2022, Town Council received a staff report on the Draft Preferred Growth Concept. Town Council adopted the report's recommendation to endorse the Preferred Growth Concept and to request that the Region ensure its growth strategy supports a steady stream of development in Milton.

In a letter dated May 12, 2022, Milton staff provided comments on Draft ROPA 49. The letter reiterated Town Council's support for the Preferred Growth Concept as presented in February 2022 and identified a number of concerns with the approach advanced in ROPA 49. This includes concerns with the supply of available employment lands in the Town, issues with the lack of balance between residential intensification and development in designated greenfield areas and the Town's ability to plan complete communities, and related concerns about impacts to assessment growth and fiscal instability due to shortfalls in land available for development. These comments are documented in Attachment #4 to this report.

In accordance with the framework for planning for growth between 2041 and 2051, the Region will actively monitor and report on a range of growth-related indicators, including those related to employment land supply and absorption rates. This will ensure the Region is able to plan appropriately for growth during this period and ensure sufficient time is provided to advance comprehensive planning work for the areas where this growth will ultimately be distributed.

- ***Town of Oakville***

In January 2022, Town Council received a report on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Draft Preferred Growth Concept. The report identified a number of concerns with the Draft Preferred Growth Concept, including with the proposed settlement area boundary expansions and approach to the distribution of growth throughout Halton. Town Council endorsed these criticisms and forwarded them to the Region as input to the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

Many of the Town's concerns are addressed as part of the Modified Preferred Growth Concept and ROPA 49, and Regional staff have worked closely with Town staff on adjustments to the amendment to ensure it appropriately reflects the Town's urban structure.

#### *Additional Changes to ROPA 49*

In addition to the changes to ROPA 49 discussed above and proposed in response to the feedback received, an additional change is proposed to the housing mix target in the Regional Official Plan based on Regional staff's review. Section 86(6) of the Regional Official Plan contains housing targets related to affordability and the overall mix of housing units. The existing housing mix target states that at least 50 per cent of new housing units produced annually in Halton be in the form of townhouses or multi-storey buildings. Halton has met the existing housing mix target on a consistent basis over the past decade, as reported on through the annual State of Housing report.

As has been highlighted throughout the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process, the Region's growth strategy as reflected in ROPA 49 is based in large part on shifting toward accommodating a significant amount of growth in Halton through apartments. This is reflected in the Land Needs Assessment analysis as well as the

updates proposed to the intensification and density targets and the Regional phasing shown in Tables 2, 2a, and 2b, respectively. As a result, it is appropriate to update the housing mix target to ensure it reflects the results of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process and so that there is consistency with the overall growth strategy throughout the Regional Official Plan. Section 86(6)a) of the Regional Official Plan is proposed to be updated such that the annual target for the proportion of new housing units in Halton that are townhouses or multi-storey buildings is 65 per cent to 2031 and 75 per cent for each year thereafter.

### Provincial Policy Analysis

ROPA 49 is being undertaken as part of the Region's municipal comprehensive review process and advances updates to the Regional Official Plan in response to Provincial plans and policies. A key driver of this review then, has been updates to the Growth Plan, which applies to municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area and provides detailed direction on how this broader region is to plan and manage growth in an effort to shift to more compact development patterns, support a greater variety of housing options, and promote growth that fosters greater integration of transit and land use planning.

The Growth Plan notes that it builds upon the policy foundation provided in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 by providing additional and more specific land use planning policies applicable to the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. As a result, the discussion below focuses on the detailed policies set out in the Growth Plan.

A summary of how conformity with the Growth Plan has been addressed as part of the Regional Official Plan Review process and ROPAs 48 and 49 is provided below.

- ***Managing Growth***

The Growth Plan requires upper-tier municipalities to manage growth in accordance with the forecasts set out in Schedule 3. For Halton Region, this is 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs by 2051. These forecasts are included in Table 1 of the Regional Official Plan as amended by ROPA 49, and provide the basis for planning and managing growth in Halton to 2051.

ROPA 49 plans for a significant amount of growth in Halton Region. It supports accommodating 316,000 more people and 222,000 more jobs in Halton between 2021 and 2041, and supports a Regional Urban Structure that will continue to accommodate a significant amount of growth to the 2051 planning horizon and beyond.

Growth is distributed through ROPA 49 within Halton Region based on Policy 2.2.1.2 of the Growth Plan, which requires that growth be directed to settlement areas and focused in the Built-Up Area, Strategic Growth Areas, and areas with existing or planned transit and public service facilities. This is accomplished in large part through the Regional Urban Structure identified in ROPA 48 and updated through ROPA 49, which identifies important areas throughout Halton Region where a significant amount of growth is directed given the existing or planned transit, public service facilities, and

infrastructure investments in these areas. Growth is also directed throughout the Built-Up Area and the existing Designated Greenfield Areas in Halton Region where growth will occur in new, compact, and complete communities.

The existing Regional Official Plan, as well as the growth strategy and policies in ROPA 49, support the integrated planning approach required by Policy 2.2.1.3 of the Growth Plan. The Regional Official Plan identifies a hierarchy of strategic growth areas within the Regional Urban Boundary, requires comprehensive planning for and the efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure, and supports the protection of the natural heritage and agricultural systems in Halton.

The direction to support complete communities as required by Policy 2.2.1.4 of the Growth Plan is also reflected in the Regional Official Plan and ROPA 49. There are many objectives and policies in the Regional Official Plan that require comprehensive planning for new growth areas to ensure that an appropriate mix of land uses and housing options, as well as access to a range of transportation choices, public services facilities, and parks and open spaces, among other things, are planned for.

As noted above, ROPA 49 reflects the population and employment forecasts set out in Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan as the basis for planning and managing growth in Halton Region to 2051. The local municipal distribution of this growth to 2041 is included in Table 1 as amended by ROPA 49. The specific distribution of growth in the later part of the planning period would be confirmed through a subsequent amendment to the Regional Official Plan, informed by the policy framework identified in ROPA 49.

As discussed earlier in this report, the Regional Urban Structure will continue to play an important role in accommodating growth in Halton beyond 2041 and 2051, and annual reporting on a series of growth-related indicators as part of the framework for planning for growth between 2041 and 2051 will ensure sufficient time is available to undertake or update comprehensive planning for the areas where this growth is ultimately distributed. This reflects a made-in-Halton plan for growth and development and enables Halton to make decisions on future growth having the best possible data and information. The Plan will enable decisions to be made by Regional Council with appropriate time to enable full and comprehensive planning processes to articulate the vision for growth beyond 2041 through the next comprehensive review. This approach continues to respond to and fulfill the Growth Plan's guiding principles and objectives related to prioritizing intensification, making efficient use of land and infrastructure, and protecting natural heritage and the long-term viability of agriculture. It represents an appropriate and prudent approach to planning for growth in the later part of the planning period.

- ***Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology***

Policy 2.2.1.5 of the Growth Plan states that the Minister will establish a methodology for assessing land needs and that this methodology will be used by municipalities to

assess the quantity of land required to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of the Growth Plan. The Provincial 'Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe' was updated on August 28, 2020 and has informed the technical work undertaken as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

The Land Needs Assessment Methodology sets out an approach to determining how much land is required to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth and directs municipalities to plan for and designate a sufficient supply of lands.

The Land Needs Assessment prepared as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy adheres to the Provincial methodology. Comments provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing from February 2022 on a draft of the Land Needs Assessment (included in Attachment #4 to this report) were relatively minor in nature and did not identify any significant concerns with the approach taken at that time. The final Land Needs Assessment provided as Attachment #2 to this report, maintains the overall approach and conclusions of the earlier draft while providing more detailed information on land need to 2041 and 2051. It concludes that there is sufficient land in Halton Region to accommodate population and employment growth to 2041, but that additional land would be required to accommodate growth between 2041 and 2051. The manner in which these conclusions have been implemented through ROPA 49 is outlined above and discussed throughout this report. It is expected that through the next review, additional data and information available through enhanced annual monitoring will enable Council to make decisions with greater confidence about whether land needs are accurate and reasonable.

- ***Intensification Targets, Density Targets, & Strategic Growth Areas***

Building on the overall direction related to managing growth, the Growth Plan sets out a number of targets that upper-tier municipalities are to implement through a municipal comprehensive review process. This includes the intensification target described in Policy 2.2.2.1, the density target for Employment Areas described in Policy 2.2.5.13, the density target for Designated Greenfield Areas described in Policy 2.2.7.2, and the targets for Strategic Growth Areas such as Urban Growth Centres (Policy 2.2.3.2) and Major Transit Station Areas (Policy 2.2.4.3).

These targets form a central component of Halton's growth strategy and have been added to or updated in the Regional Official Plan through ROPA 49. They are included in Table 2, Table 2a, and Table 2b, with supporting policies that implement these targets located throughout the Plan.

Table 2 directs 53,300 housing units to the Built-Up Area across Halton Region by 2041 to implement the target that 45 per cent of new housing units occurring in Halton annually are located within the Built-Up Area. As described earlier in this report and summarized in Attachment #3, the growth strategy in ROPA 49 is based on the use of an alternate intensification target as permitted by Policy 2.2.2.4 of the Growth Plan. The intensification target is supported by a range of other policies that represent a

strategy for achieving the intensification target in accordance with Policy 2.2.2.3 of the Growth Plan, including the identification of the Regional Urban Structure and its Strategic Growth Areas and the policies that support the Local Municipalities in developing comprehensive plans for these areas.

Table 2 also identifies a minimum density target for the Designated Greenfield Area of 62 residents and jobs per hectare and a minimum density target for Halton's Employment Areas of 26 jobs per hectare. These targets reflect the growth expected in these areas of Halton to 2041. In both cases, detailed targets are identified for each Local Municipality that reflect their local context.

Density targets for Strategic Growth Areas in Halton Region are identified in Table 2b. This includes targets for Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, and Primary Regional Nodes. These density targets are supported by policies that implement the Growth Plan directions related to Urban Growth Centres (Policy 2.2.3) and well as Transit Corridors and Stations Areas (Policy 2.2.4).

- ***Employment Areas***

Section 2.2.5 of the Growth Plan provides municipalities with directions to support and promote economic development and competitiveness by planning for employment. ROPA 49 advances a number of updates to the Regional Official Plan that respond to these directions, including confirming the location of Halton's Employment Areas on Map 1H in accordance with Policies 2.2.5.5 and 2.2.5.6, identifying permitted uses within employment areas in accordance with Policy 2.2.5.7, ensuring land use compatibility and the appropriate interface with non-employment areas in accordance with Policy 2.2.5.8, and directing certain types of employment growth to Strategic Growth Areas based on Policy 2.2.5.3.

- ***Settlement Area Boundary Expansions***

Section 2.2.8 of the Growth Plan identifies policies that apply to settlement area boundary expansions. As noted above, ROPA 49 proposes to direct growth to the year 2041 to lands within the existing Regional Urban Boundary and does not advance any settlement area boundary expansions, with the exception noted below.

The only exception to this is the addition of approximately 25 hectares of land to the Regional Urban Boundary associated with the Milton-Trafalgar GO Major Transit Station Area. These lands were identified as part of the boundary delineated for this Strategic Growth Area and were considered as part of the Preferred Growth Concept report and its supporting technical studies presented to Regional Council for information in February 2022. Given the location of these lands within an 800-metre radius of a proposed major transit station, they were included within a delineated Major Transit Station Area in accordance with Policy 2.2.4.2 of the Growth Plan. The addition of these lands to the Regional Urban Boundary is necessary to support the comprehensive development of the Major Transit Station Area and would not

adversely affect the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets set out in ROPA 49. The feasibility and appropriate location requirements for a settlement area boundary expansion in Policy 2.2.8.3 of the Growth Plan are met in this instance given the location of the lands within a Major Transit Station Area and on the basis of the technical studies and assessments related to infrastructure, fiscal impacts, natural heritage, and agriculture and undertaken as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process.

ROPA 49 also updates the Regional Official Plan to reflect the updated requirements of Policies 2.2.8.2 and 2.2.8.3 of the Growth Plan and to include the ability to advance expansions or adjustments to the Regional Urban Boundary outside of a municipal comprehensive review process in accordance with Policies 2.2.8.4 and 2.2.8.5.

- ***Infrastructure to Support Growth***

The Growth Plan speaks to the importance of infrastructure required to support growth and directs that infrastructure planning, land use planning, and infrastructure investment occur in an integrated manner. The Integrated Growth Management Strategy process has approached planning for growth in Halton in this manner, with assessments related to transportation, water, and wastewater infrastructure, as well as fiscal impacts, forming an important consideration and input into the growth strategy reflected in ROPA 49. The policies in the Regional Official Plan support this approach and contain a strong framework to ensure land use and infrastructure planning occur in an integrated and effective manner. This approach will be continued through a future Integrated Master Plan for Water, Wastewater and Transportation infrastructure undertaken by the Region to support planned growth in Halton.

- ***Protecting What is Valuable***

In addition to the direction related to accommodating growth, the Growth Plan also provides direction to municipalities on protecting and planning for natural heritage, agriculture, cultural heritage resources, mineral aggregate resources, and climate change. The Regional Official Plan contains a strong foundation related to all of these policy areas, with existing policies addressing the directions in the Growth Plan. Updates and refinements to these policies will be addressed through a subsequent amendment to the Regional Official Plan advanced as part of the next stage of the Regional Official Plan Review process.

Overall, through the Regional Official Plan Review and Integrated Growth Management Strategy process, ROPAs 48 and 49 have made changes to the Regional Official Plan to advance conformity with the Growth Plan that support accommodating new people, housing units, and jobs in Halton Region.

### **Recommendation**

Regional staff are satisfied that ROPA 49 is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, conforms to the Growth Plan, and has regard for matters of Provincial

interest. Regional staff are also satisfied it represents good planning and is in the public interest.

On the basis of the information and analysis provided through this report, Regional staff recommend that ROPA 49, provided as Attachment #1, be adopted by Regional Council.

### Next Steps

If Regional Council adopts ROPA 49, the amendment will be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in accordance with Section 17(31) of the *Planning Act*. The Minister is the approval authority for ROPA 49 and has the ability to approve, modify and approve as modified, or refuse to approve the amendment.

With recent changes to the *Planning Act* through Bill 109, once the ROPA is sent to the Minister, the Minister now has the following options as to how the ROPA is approved, modified or refused:

1. The Minister may refer all or part of the ROPA to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) for a written recommendation as to whether the Minister should approve the whole ROPA or part of the plan, make modifications and approve the plan or part of the plan as modified, or refuse the plan or part of the plan and shall give reasons for the recommendation. The OLT may hold a hearing before making a recommendation to the Minister; or,
2. The Minister may refer all or part of the ROPA to the OLT for a decision. The OLT may hold a hearing before making a written decision to approve the whole ROPA or part of the plan, make modifications and approve the plan or part of the plan as modified, or refuse the plan or part of the plan as adopted by Council, and
3. The Minister may suspend the time period for making a decision (120 days) by giving notice of the suspension to the Region which has the effect of suspending the 120 days until the date the Minister rescinds the notice. Once the notice is rescinded then the approval would follow the process set out in 1 or 2 above.

To date there has been no guidance or criteria forthcoming from the Ministry as to how the Minister will decide to refer matters to the OLT for a recommendation or decision.

Regional staff note that a delay in the timing of a Provincial decision on ROPA 49 would have significant impacts to Halton's ability to effectively plan and manage growth. As an example, following Regional Council's adoption of ROPA 38 in December 2009, a Provincial decision was not issued until November 2011. This was followed by a multi-year Ontario Municipal Board hearing, with the approval of Region's growth strategy not occurring until 2013. This resulted in a multi-year delay to local policy conformity and area-specific planning exercises, and ultimately, to the timing of new development in Halton Region. Given the shared interest in planning and managing growth in a timely manner, the Province is encouraged to work with the Region to advance a decision on ROPA 49 within 120 days of receiving the amendment as set out in the *Planning Act*.

Regional staff will monitor the Provincial decision-making process on ROPA 49 and advise Regional Council of what actions are being taken by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

The current approved budget for T8021D (Regional Official Plan Update) includes sufficient funding to facilitate the ROPR.

Respectfully submitted,



Curt Benson  
Director, Planning Services and Chief  
Planning Official



Bob Gray  
Commissioner, Legislative and Planning  
Services and Corporate Counsel

Approved by



Jane MacCaskill  
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report,  
please contact:

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Attachments: Attachment #1 – ROPA 49 – June 2022 (Under Separate Cover)  
Attachment #2 – Land Needs Assessment Report – March 2022  
Attachment #3 – Alternate Intensification Target Request Information  
Attachment #4 – ROPA 49 Comment Response Document (Under Separate Cover)