

Report Released on Implementing the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Has the strategic regional vision been compromised? And How could this impact Peterborough?

October 30, 2013

Toronto (30 October 2013): A [new report](#) released by the Neptis Foundation, the first comprehensive review of the implementation of Ontario's award-winning Growth Plan, finds that this innovative plan designed to promote "smart growth and curb sprawl" is under pressure, behind schedule, and faced with serious problems that undermine its stated goals.

The report, based on a detailed examination of municipal and provincial planning documents throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, provides the first complete calculation of how much new land in total will be urbanized to accommodate an additional 3.7 million residents in the region by 2031. The total is **107,100 hectares (1,071 sq km)** an area almost one and half times the size of the City of Toronto. This is slightly more than the amount specified in the government's own call to action in 2004, an amount that would be urbanized under "business-as-usual" development patterns. The Growth Plan was established in 2006 to change these patterns.

Two troubling findings indicate how it came about that more land is being slated for urbanization than might have been intended by the Plan:

1. Nearly half of the land available for urbanization across the Greater Golden Horseshoe lies in the Outer Ring, outside the Greenbelt, *even though the Outer Ring is expected to attract only one-third as many new residents and one-quarter as many jobs as the Inner Ring.* What this means is that the Outer Ring municipalities (with the exception of Waterloo Region), many of which do not offer transportation alternatives to the private automobile and do not have well-developed water, sewer, and other infrastructure, will be permitted to replicate the kind of low-density, car-oriented development patterns that have led to problems in the Inner Ring.
2. Within the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (Inner Ring), where billions of dollars are being spent on transit and other infrastructure, only one regional municipality (Peel) is planning to exceed the minimum targets set out by the Plan. The targets consist of a minimum intensification rate (40% of all new residential development is to be directed to already built-up areas), and a minimum greenfield development density (50 persons and jobs per hectare

combined) for currently undeveloped lands. Moreover, Ontario Ministry of Transportation's *Transit-Supportive Guidelines*, published in 2012, suggest that 50 people and jobs combined can support only "basic transit service," let alone frequent or rapid transit service.

The report also notes that much work remains to be done to address major issues that have arisen during the implementation of the plan:

- Given the lack of clear guidelines on how municipalities must proceed and battles over the language of the Plan at the Ontario Municipal Board, the adoption process of the Growth Plan has produced a patchwork of differing approaches to growth management throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, rather than a coordinated regional approach.
- Variations in the way municipalities calculate land budgets have led to inconsistencies in the way the Growth Plan is being implemented.
- The Growth Plan has allowed some fast-growing municipalities to adopt lower intensification and density targets than certain smaller, slower-growing municipalities.

The report concludes that despite claims that the Growth Plan has constrained the land supply in the region, sufficient land has been set aside to accommodate population and employment at average densities similar to those that are typical today. If those densities were to increase, the current land supply would last even longer.

The findings in the report are intended to inform the 10-year review of the Growth Plan by the Ministry of Infrastructure in 2016.

For more information and media enquiries about the report, please contact Marcy L. Burchfield, Director of Research Programming & Communications with the Neptis Foundation at mburchfield@neptis.org or [416-972-9199 x 2](tel:416-972-9199).

[Read the full report here](#) .

Local Implications:

- The Future of Food & Farming Working Group of Sustainable Peterborough is researching how much land do we need to achieve the stated goal of feeding ourselves today and in 2036?
- The Peterborough Social Planning Council completed a study "Planning for Great Streets" (2010) that reflected the changing expectations of how we plan our community to reduce dependence on cars and increase capacity for alternate forms of transportation.
- Through the City of Peterborough's consultation for the Official Plan Review, the community identified the following issues:
 - Promote intensification by facilitating intensification in the downtown while maintaining the human scale of the built form while preserving green spaces and parks.
 - Focusing on mix of uses, with more living space above existing uses
 - Planning for higher density along transit corridor to encourage transit ridership
 - Promoting and creating incentives for adaptive re-use of underutilized sites

- Create less focus on the car and more on multi-modal transportation d) Improving travel demand management measures, traffic calming and increased pedestrian safety
- Planning for more walking and cycling by focusing on Active Transportation through increased walkability throughout the City and designing the City with a pedestrian first focus
- More off-street cycling lanes separated from traffic with designated lanes that are also connected to the trails system
- Creating more cycling facilities including bike parking
- Considering creating “car free zones” closing off some streets to cars i.e. Hunter Street West on certain days or more permanently

Inner Ring and Outer Ring single and upper tier municipalities as referenced in the report in relation to Peterborough:



Some questions we should consider locally:

How will our local Official Plans (both city and county) be impacted by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe directions?

What type of planning should we be doing for a changing social infrastructure of our community, given the potential impact this Growth Plan?

What type of planning should we be doing to ensure that we have adequate land to produce our own food?

For more information about our InfoNotes contact: Dawn Berry Merriam at 705-743-5915 or email dawnbm@pspc.on.ca.

