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From: Phil Pothen <ppothen@environmentaldefence.ca>

Sent: June 14, 2021 8:55 AM

To: ZZG-COUNCIL <zzg-council@peelregion.ca>; ZZG-COUNCIL <zzg-council@peelregion.ca>

Subject: Planning and Growth Management Committee submission, Interpretation of Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)

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Please find attached the written submission of Environmental Defence to be included for the June 17, 2021 meeting of the Peel Region Planning and Growth Management Committee. Please note that this submission is entirely separate and distinct from the oral deputation scheduled for the June 17th meeting. **This** written submission is being *provided on request of the Committee Chair, Councillor Carolyn Parrish* as a written summary of a verbal deputation made April 29th on a very distinct and technical issue - the Interpretation of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)

Phil Pothen, J.D., M.L.A.

Ontario Environment Program Manager

Pronouns: he/him



environmental
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June 8th, 2021

By Electronic Mail: council@peelregion.ca, zzg-council@peelregion.ca
Planning and Growth Management Committee,
Region of Peel, 10 Peel Centre Dr., Suite A
Brampton, ON L6T 4B9

Attention Planning and Growth Management Committee:

Re: April 29th Item 5.2 - Interpretation and Application of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology For the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)

I am a land use planning and environmental lawyer, and Ontario Environment Program Manager with Environmental Defence providing this written submission at the request of Peel Region Planning and Growth Management Committee, as a written version oral deputation of April 29th, 2021 regarding the interpretation and application of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). It is distinct from my oral deputation scheduled for June 17th, 2021, which will relate to a separate matter.

This Committee should be very concerned - both about the way that the region's consultants have been misinterpreting and misapplying the Land Needs Assessment Methodology, and about the (unintentionally) misleading way the process has been presented to this Committee and to Peel region residents.

Contrary to the way the Land Needs Assessment analysis has been presented to this Committee to date, the Growth Plan and Land Needs Assessment Methodology leave Peel Region wide discretion as to how and where new jobs and homes will be accommodated. **It is not just good planning - but also legally permissible - for Peel to accommodate the next 30 years of job and population growth within its existing neighborhoods and built up areas.** While it seems evident that the present government would *like* to railroad Peel and other Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities into sprawling onto speculator-owned farmland on their periphery, its mandatory planning instruments are not effective in accomplishing that.

To date, the Land Needs Assessment analyses have been presented to Planning and Growth Management Committee as a largely mechanistic process, wherein objective data (or projections prescribed in the growth plan) are fed into the methodology and a single "right" assessment of land need is arrived at. This is incorrect: most of the 10 stages of the Land Needs Assessment Analysis hang on inputs that are either highly uncertain or else *within the control of municipalities*. An appropriate Land Needs Assessment would include:

- for each input, the full range of possible input scenarios, and the an identification of the municipal policy levers that could be used shape those inputs

- for each stage, and the entire process, the full range of possible outcomes resulting from the interaction of those uncertain (or influenceable) inputs.

As a preliminary matter, it is important to establish it is the role of Peel Regional Council, rather than its consultants, to inform the public of the alternatives and select which among the wide band of plausible estimates of future land need, should that while consultants may express views as to how age distributions should be estimated, it is inappropriate to give their views special weight, and certainly to treat them as authoritative in any way, based on their relationship to the Ministry while it was preparing its targets. Moreover, it is entirely inappropriate to treat the statements of Ministry staff themselves as at all authoritative when interpreting Peel Region's obligations.

- Legally, they do not form part of the Government Methodology or the Government Plan.
- Recent events have demonstrated that what government planning measures (e.g., recent MZO's) actually do, and what the present government wishes they would do are two very separate things.
- The past population projections of the Government's consultants have been notoriously bad, and its entire growth planning process is now being audited by the Auditor General.

There are many points of uncertainty and many available policy levers available to Peel Region. However, the following are of particular note.

First, while the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Government Plan) prescribes the population "forecast" (the Government Growth Targets) that must be accommodated, and the Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Government Methodology) requires that "population forecast by age group" must be derived from it, neither of those documents, nor any other document Hamilton is bound to comply with, specifies **what proportion of population should be forecast for each age group**, nor does it prescribe any particular method for determining that proportion.

- Particularly because so much of GTHA population growth is immigration, there is first of all a measure of uncertainty as to what age categories the added regional population between now and 2051 will fall into.
- More importantly, however, the age distribution of populations varies widely among neighborhoods and among municipalities in the GTHA. To a large extent, it is the differing policy choices of those municipalities and neighborhoods - policies this Council gets to choose - that will drive what age groups will be attracted to them, versus other municipalities.
- This decision has a very large potential impact on land need, because the Land Needs Assessment Methodology requires that municipalities arrive, for different age groups, at different household formation rates and propensities for households to occupy particular dwelling types.

Second, while the Government Methodology requires that Peel should set a "household formation rate" for each age group in the population (i.e., the proportion of people in each age group who will form separate households) it does *not* prescribe *what* the household formation rate should be, nor does it prescribe any particular way of arriving at such a rate. There is a great deal of uncertainty as to what household formation rates will be in the future, and it is open to Peel to make its own assessment within that broad range of uncertainty.

- There is certainly no justification for projecting forward what household formation rates for a given age group are now or what they were over the past 10, 20 or 30 years.

- That is in part because so much of Ontario's population growth will come from immigration. Household formation rates for different age groups are likely to vary depending on the cultural background of newcomers to the GTA. While today the biggest source of immigration to the GTA is South Asia, but there's every reason to think it could be sub-saharan africa 30 years from now.
- The preference for joint extended family households is just one example of a culturally -correlated phenomenon that can have tremendous impacts on household formation rates, and which broaden the band of uncertainty which must be fed into the Land Needs Assessment Methodology.

Third, It is essential to note that the **“propensities” of households in particular age groups to occupy particular forms of housing are highly uncertain, and also driven to a huge degree by the policies that municipal governments themselves adopt.**

The uncertainty regarding the It should not be assumed “market” has not been building suburban tract housing in response to people’s endogenous preferences. It is much more likely that people have been resigning themselves to suburban tract housing because our policies haven’t generated enough housing, and enough family housing, in particular, in the neighborhoods where they would prefer to live.

- This is borne out by professional polling of current GTA residents (n=1500). A strong majority of Peel resident (64% vs 16% who have other preferences) say they would “would much prefer to live in a neighborhood where [they] didn’t need to use a car to do [their] shopping, recreation, entertainment, or commutes to work or school” if only housing prices didn’t prevent this. Despite this, 75% find themselves living in neighborhoods where they “simply can’t get by without driving [their] car.
- In the 80s and 90s and even through the early 2000s, Greater Toronto Area Municipalities’ policies have made it very much harder to build family homes in high-rise, mid-rise, and missing middle buildings in existing neighborhoods, than to build detached or semi-detached homes on greenfield sites. That is what people bought, because that is what municipalities made it easy to build and sell.
- Current policies still create tremendous red tape obstacles to the creation of new, modest and compact but family sized 3-storey walk-ups, stacked townhomes and townhouses within existing neighborhoods. There is every reason to expect that “propensities” would shift to such units if Peel region made it easy to build a large number of such units, and used that growth to turn those neighborhoods into the more walkable, transit-oriented places even their existing residents say they would prefer to live in.

Finally, and perhaps of greatest significance, the Land Needs Assessment Methodology and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe do not place any constraints on the measures that Peel Region can take to ensure that the entirety of whatever demand for single- and semi-detached homes, and for new workplaces is projected is accommodated within existing neighborhoods, and existing built-up and industrial areas.

- There is ample capacity within Peel’s existing built up areas to accommodate even the inflated demand for single- and semi-detached homes in the present analysis.
- Contrary to earlier advice given to GTA-area municipalities, even the government’s consultants now acknowledge that laneway and garden suites constitute separate single-detached units for the purposes of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology. This means that a large amount of demand can be absorbed by designing laneway and garden suites policies which maximize the number of existing residential lots where they are permitted, which incentivize their construction, and which allow them to be constructed in cost effective ways.
- Most of Peel’s residential neighborhoods have densities far lower than we know can

be accomplished in residential neighborhoods that are still low-rise in character.

- Most of Peel's neighborhoods need the extra people and jobs they would gain by absorbing the next 30 years of new residents, because they currently don't have densities and the mix of uses (~100 people and jobs per hectare) that we see in successful low-rise residential GTA neighborhoods that have high transit and active transportation modal share. It is entirely within the power of Peel region and local municipalities to alter the path of least resistance in existing neighborhoods so that it leads to a larger number of modestly sized homes rather than to the conversion of post-war bungalows into large mansions.

It is essential that Peel Region - and Peel residents, face up to the very real and stark choices that rest in your hands. As the conformity deadline is after the next election, it isn't at all clear that Peel Region will ever be required to push forward with its present conformity exercise. However, even if it is, it is you - not the Land Needs Assessment Methodology, not your consultants, and not staff at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs that will decide whether to barrel ahead with more obsolete sprawl, or to use what may be Peel's last best chance to fix its existing neighborhoods and improve their quality of life long-term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Pothen', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Phil Pothen, J.D., M.L.A.
Ontario Environment Program Manager
Environmental Defence