

**From:** Don McLean

**Sent:** March 24, 2021 4:59 PM

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**Subject:** Please include this in the correspondence for the March 29 GIC

Re: General Issues Committee March 29 2021 – item 8.1 – Municipal Comprehensive Review etc

To: Mayor Eisenberger and all Members of Hamilton City Council

Dear elected officials,

I believe there are multiple reasons why you should reject the recommendations in item 8.1 (and delay any decision on 8.2) arising out of the Land Needs Assessment process. These include that the public consultation being reported was inadequate and indeed effectively impossible to carry out during the restriction arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Too many Hamiltonians were effectively denied the possibility of participating. And even if they could have participating the vast majority would be unable to interpret the acronyms used to try to engage them. To actually engage residents, the consultation effort would need to wait until in-person meetings are again the norm, and would need to honestly explain that this is about how our city is planned to grow over the next 30 years, and more specifically whether that should include any expansion of the urban boundary onto agricultural and other rural lands.

The consultation would also need to offer a FULL range of options rather than the two presented in the January attempt which were only expansion or more expansion, less foodlands or even less foodlands, elimination of a zero carbon future or even more certain elimination of a zero carbon future, etc. The staff decision to refuse to offer a no boundary expansion option doomed this consultation from the start. So what you are now presented with is not and cannot be the views of the public about the future growth of the city, but merely a choice made by a very small number of residents between two very similar options that could not possibly gather an accurate picture of residents' views.

The consultation process done in January and to date throughout the MCR/GRIDS2 process has also failed because it has not included a full description and accounting of the tax costs of each option presented. The most recent one had effectively nothing to say about this even though it is well established that growth does NOT pay for itself and that the costs of growth are intimately tied to the resulting density.

As you know and your staff constantly remind you, our city is increasingly failing to find the funds to even maintain our existing infrastructure. The current shortfall, I believe, is \$3.8 Billion and rising by about \$200 million per year. Your general manager of finance has advised you that even to just stop making this enormous hole any deeper would require an immediate property tax increase of 30 percent. Unfortunately, council has not chosen to carefully examine how we got into this hole, so we haven't seen staff advice on how to get out of it. No doubt there are complex features of this situation, but one thing is dramatically obvious – we have too much infrastructure to be maintained by existing taxpayers without a massive increase in taxation.

That is fundamentally, I would suggest, a problem of density. We need more residents, but without additional new infrastructure, to start extracting ourselves from this deep financial hole. That's one of the reasons why we need to freeze the urban boundary while our population continues to increase. That will gradually give us more taxpayers to pay for the necessary repair and replacement of our roads, pipes, and other public infrastructure.

But that is not the vision of your planners who stand behind the report at 8.1. They are not grappling with this fundamental problem, and their recommendations will undoubtedly make it much worse. Expanding the urban area with more low-density housing (and anything under 200 persons per hectare cannot support efficient public transit) will sharply increase the amount of public infrastructure and the costs of maintaining that.

It will also bring with it a plethora of additional problems.

We will lose thousands of acres of prime agricultural land that could help feed us in the increasingly difficult food security situation facing the global community.

These car-dependent areas will pour thousands of additional vehicles onto existing publicly-owned roads and escarpment accesses, aggravating congestion and associated problems.

The vast increase in impervious areas will impose much heavier stormwater runoff. It will increase water consumption in areas that are the furthest possible from our water source and treatment facility. It will increase sewage flows over very long distances to those treatment facilities.

Indeed for much of the rural land south of our existing urban boundary, the gravity feed is AWAY from our treatment facilities, thus requiring immense pumping costs to push it uphill before it will be able to take advantage of down slopes.

The new housing will be extremely expensive so these new areas will be ghettos of the well-off (or at least of the deeply indebted well-off). Indeed even trying to locate affordable housing in low-density areas far from the city centre and public facilities is a fool's game. How can low-income people live so far away from their employment and other needs with no more than low frequency transit service?

And most importantly of all, in my view, is the unavoidable climatic impact. If council fails to freeze the urban boundary it should retract its declaration of a climate emergency and stop pretending this was serious.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely

Don McLean  
Hamilton ON