

From: Hussam Taha

Sent: March 24, 2021 10:26 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Urban Sprawl outside the boundaries of City of Hamilton

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

As a physician working in Hamilton, I urge you to enshrine health into the GRIDS2 municipal comprehensive review. **The best course of action for the health and wellbeing of our citizens is for Hamilton to freeze the urban boundary and direct new development and spending into the current urban boundary.**

I am acutely aware of the health outcomes of people living in poverty in our inner city. Lack of affordable housing, crumbling infrastructure, lack of basic services like sidewalk snow clearing, safe bike lanes for those who don't own a car, and reliable public transit all further marginalize families already living in precarious circumstances. **Building more subdivisions beyond the current City boundaries will further gut the core of our City.**

We are in a climate emergency and sprawl would only make it worse. The prestigious medical journal The Lancet has stated that "climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century and tackling it could be our greatest health opportunity"¹. Expanding urban boundaries moves people further from mass transit, requiring more use of cars and generating more greenhouse gas emissions and fine particulate air pollution, which we know **kills over 8,000 Canadians annually**.² We should be making planning decisions that reduce this number, not put more citizens at risk of illness and death from poor air quality.

In her 2017 Report on the State of Public Health in Canada³, Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, says, "Our communities are changing and often expanding through urban sprawl rather than by building compact and 'complete communities'." **Urban sprawl has been linked to sedentary lifestyles, easy access to unhealthy food, less physical activity and higher rates of obesity.** She advocates for the "development of new communities located within urban containment boundaries that support active transportation and physical activity by including higher density and land use mix, a range of housing options and affordability, easy access to recreational facilities and parks and good links to frequent public transit."

Similarly, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, recommends that municipal governments, community planners and developers work together to "establish urban containment policies to manage the outward growth of cities to promote increased development density and opportunities for active travel."⁵ The most popular forms of active travel include walking and cycling.

In their "Planning Healthy Communities Fact Sheet Series"⁴, The Canadian Institute of Planners points out that the "lack of physical activity is considered a 'conveyor belt' to heart disease, stroke and other chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and various cancers." They mention a study of Vancouver residents that found that the walkability index and its components related to land-use mix, residential density and street connectivity were significant predictors of body mass index, a key health indicator.

We have an enormous opportunity to discourage urban sprawl. Doing so would be one of our best tools for fighting climate change and improving peoples' health. People who live in walkable neighbourhoods occupy less space, have a higher quality of life, a smaller carbon footprint, drive less and have better health. Urban planning guidelines that put people closer to each other create successful public transit systems, making our society more efficient and more equitable.

I have attended your city of Hamilton climate plan public meeting in 2019 and I was inspired by what the counselors and representatives discussed and wanting to achieve to green the city. I hope that I don't get disappointed that all said was just for talks.

Sprawl threatens the health of our community today and generations into the future. I urge you to vote to freeze the urban boundary and direct new development and spending into the current urban boundary.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hussam Taha, CCFP

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