

Midhurst Ratepayers' Association Inc.

Box 272, Midhurst, ON L0L 1X1

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

The Honourable Bob Chiarelli
Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transport

February 12, 2012

Dear Ministers,

RE: Midhurst Secondary Plan (OPA-38)

We wrote to Minister Kathleen Wynne on December 9 and to Minister Bob Chiarelli on December 23, expressing our support for the Province of Ontario's *Places to Grow* policy and our opposition to the Midhurst Secondary Plan. Unfortunately to date we have not received a reply, but we now wish to update our correspondence and acknowledge two significant developments since the above dates.

Firstly, the Ministry of Infrastructure has published the new Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006 Office Consolidation, January 2012, together with the accompanying transition regulations; and secondly the Midhurst Ratepayers Association has compiled a petition of over **1,000 signatures**, confirming widespread opposition to the Midhurst Secondary Plan. Regrettably, our views could not be expressed earlier, as the residents of Midhurst were largely kept in the dark concerning this massive proposed development for our village.

Growth Plan, January 2012

Places to Grow is to be applauded for attempting to halt the wild speculation of agricultural land, which we have witnessed in the past.

However, as far as we can understand from the latest version, together with the accompanying transition regulations, certain plans which were adopted prior to January 19, 2012 will seemingly be allowed to proceed, even if their content disregarded the requirements laid out in the Planning Act of 2005 and the Growth plan of 2006. This would surely amount to a capitulation to developers who, understandably in their presentations to the townships, appear to have emphasized certain messages contained in the Growth Plan (e.g. *intensification*) while paying far less attention to clauses which were not readily achievable (e.g. 2.2.2 Managing Growth and specifically sub-clauses 2.2.2.1 b, c, d, e, g, h and j).

Midhurst Settlement Area

In 1996, Springwater Township councillors established an amended settlement area for Midhurst, with a population expectation of some 6,500 people by 2031. This number remained unchanged until March of 2008 and somehow during the following 6 months, after many meetings with developers, the number grew to well over 28,000. (See Appendix¹).

Opposition to the Midhurst Secondary Plan (OPA-38)

Midhurst residents are oppose to OPA-38 for reasons which include the following:

1. **The Village.** Midhurst is one of Ontario's most picturesque villages, with a population of just 3,500 people, situated on historic Willow Creek, which winds its way to the Minesing wetlands. The influx of an additional 25,000 people, living mostly in high density housing *in the country*, will completely spoil the nature of the community.
2. **Local Traffic.** The current plan calls for three high and medium density housing nodes, to surround the existing village. There is no provision for a ring road so, according to the Official Plan, most traffic will be required to pass through the center of the old village. The two main roads are currently residential and most residents back onto these streets. These roads were never intended for high volume of traffic.
3. **Commuter Traffic.** Studies have shown that 85% of the *current* residents of Midhurst, commute elsewhere to work, many of them going as far as Brampton, Mississauga, Scarborough, etc. As there is no industry in Midhurst, we must assume that approximately 10,000 additional workers, will also need to travel to Toronto, or look for work in Barrie, (an area of particularly high unemployment). It follows that OPA-38 will further exacerbate traffic congestion on the Province's highways and contribute to more environmental pollution.
4. **Not a Complete Community.** With no prospects for sustainable jobs in Midhurst, no possibility of walking between the three satellite urban nodes and insufficient areas reserved for service facilities, OPA-38 cannot possibly provide for a *complete community* as required in Places to Grow.
5. **Public Participation.** Most residents feel that they were not adequately consulted about plans for our village. (Section 4. (1) of the Planning Act refers).

Because of numerous irregularities in the preparation of the Midhurst Secondary Plan, we implore the Province of Ontario to uphold your appeal to the OMB. The Midhurst Ratepayers have applied for Party status at the hearing and will arrive well prepared.

An acknowledgement of this letter, together with assurances of your resolve to uphold the principles contained in *Places to Grow* will be much appreciated.



David Strachan
Secretary, Midhurst Ratepayers Association
(705) 229-4722

cc Ken Hare, Council, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
cc Tja Derk, Director, Growth Policy, Planning and Analysis

Appendix

1. Dr. Paul Fleming was a Springwater Township councillor from 1994 to 2000. Here is his account of how the settlement area in Midhurst came about:

“In 1996, Springwater Township councillors completed a Growth Management study which laid out an area to be studied for the future growth of Midhurst. It also established population growth expectations for the whole of Springwater of 6,500 people over a 20 year planning horizon. In 2004 another Springwater Growth Management study re-iterated these expectations.

In the spring of 2008, Hemson Consulting carried out a Growth Management study for the County of Simcoe which indicated a population growth of 8,400 people in Springwater over a 20 year planning horizon.

Also in 2008, Springwater Township council ignored the expectation of the planning exercise on a 20 year horizon and approved Secondary Plan studies that used a “long term planning horizon” (page 33, Springwater OPA-38). As well, they ignored the previous population expectations as generated by their own Growth Management studies and the Growth Management study of Simcoe County. Instead of using the catchment area as an area of study, they converted it to a settlement area. As a result they generated a plan to add 28,638 people to Midhurst alone, not including the addition of hundreds of more people in other parts of Springwater.”