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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Over 3.5 million new people will have to be accommodated in Central Ontario by the year 2035.<sup>1</sup> Given previous growth trends, it is expected that almost all of this future growth will occur within the GTA and its surroundings including the City of Hamilton, the Region of Waterloo, Wellington County (the City of Guelph), Dufferin County (the Town of Orangeville) and the portion of Simcoe County located south of Kempenfelt Bay. These identified growth areas comprise the Study Area for this paper.

Given growth projections to the year 2035, it is important to understand what role south Simcoe County and the balance of the Study Area will play in accommodating this additional population that will choose to live and work in Central Ontario alongside the Region's existing 7.5 million current inhabitants. How then are municipalities within the Study Area currently positioned to accommodate this inevitable growth?

This paper provides a regional context for consideration of Bond Head Development Corporation's proposal to create an expanded settlement area on land at the juncture of Highway 400 and the planned Bradford By-pass (see Figure 1). The proposal seeks to create an expanded urban area knitting together the existing communities of Bradford and Bond Head and incorporating the Highway 400/88 Special Policy Area designated for employment uses. This proposed urban centre, hereafter referred to as the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area*, is expected to support up to 115,000 people and 55,000 jobs. These projections include the population and employment levels currently reflected in the local and County-level Official Plans for Bradford, Bond Head and the balance of lands within the *Planning Area*.

Bond Head Development Corporation's vision for the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is borne from its commitment to create a comprehensively planned, balanced community that will accommodate long-term growth in the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury to the year 2035. This long-term planning vision takes direct aim at avoiding incremental, piecemeal planning in the Municipality that could ultimately take on the characteristics of urban sprawl. The development proposal will avail itself of existing and committed major highway and transit infrastructure investment to the area. Permitting additional urban growth within the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* will also assist the Town in finding the technical and financial solutions needed to ensure that already committed growth in Bradford can be realized.

Bond Head Development Corporation has retained a team of consultants to investigate the planning, environmental, transportation, servicing, economic, demographic and other aspects of its proposal for the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area*, and to provide professional advice on all these matters and on the land use, urban design, engineering and other characteristics of the proposal. With the benefit of research to date and initial input from this consulting team, this paper provides an overview of the emerging Central Ontario context within which the proposal for the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is advanced.

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<sup>1</sup> Shape the Future: Smart Growth Central Ontario Panel Final Report, April 2003

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Throughout this paper, future growth pressures and associated challenges facing Central Ontario are discussed. The paper also identifies past and current Provincial government initiatives intended to manage and direct new urban growth in Central Ontario, given its overwhelming attractiveness as a place to live and work. To better understand where future growth should best occur, this paper identifies the factors influencing the selection of new urban growth areas, summarizes the opportunities and constraints to urban development throughout the Study Area, and examines whether and why the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is well-positioned to accommodate further urban expansion when viewed in its regional context.

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## **2. INFLUENCES ON REGIONAL GROWTH IN CENTRAL ONTARIO**

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### **2.1 Provincial Planning Initiatives: A 50-Year Retrospective**

The challenges of planning responsibly for burgeoning growth in and around the GTA are not new. Over the past 50 years, the Province has attempted to manage and control growth in Central Ontario and the GTA, including recent initiatives that look to the year 2035 and beyond. The shape and structure of Central Ontario as it exists today reflects in many significant ways these deliberate provincial initiatives that have emerged over several decades.

#### **2.1.1 Early Initiatives**

In an effort to manage urban growth, in 1953 the Province of Ontario restructured municipal government in the heart of Central Ontario by creating Metropolitan Toronto. Permitting the planning for growth to be carried out by this new Metropolitan Municipality also led to the creation of a wider area referred to as the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area (MTPA) in which the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board oversaw development. Growth occurred at such a rapid pace, and at such a scale that the Province was forced to involve itself with direct financing of infrastructure projects needed to accommodate urban expansion within the MTPA.

In 1957, the Province of Ontario committed to building the Lake Ontario-based South Peel servicing scheme that anticipated the development in what has now become the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton. As early as 1959, the Province committed itself to the principle of connecting all major urban settlement areas to sewer systems situated directly on the Great Lakes through establishment of the Ontario Water Resources Commission (now the Ministry of the Environment). Early in the 1960's, the Government also embarked on the Metropolitan Toronto and Area Transportation Study (MTARTS) to program the 30-year future for regional transportation, which saw the birth of the GO-Transit service in the mid-1960s. These early initiatives tying regional land uses to regional transportation became the starting point for the next, much broader Provincial government endeavour.

#### **2.1.2 Ontario's Design-for-Development**

In the 1966 Design-for-Development initiative, the Province sought to consolidate growth through regional scale growth management. Design-for-Development broadened the applicable set of provincial urban development policies by enlisting eleven Provincial government departments (now ministries) in a formal process aimed at influencing urban settlement growth across the Province. This initiative sought to organize the long-term visioning of independent departments, and coordinate decision-making on related infrastructure investments. The process involved the development of formal economic and social goals intended to be achieved through a goals-oriented regional pattern of land uses and urban settlement.

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This program precipitated provincial planning for the area identified as the “Toronto-Centred Region” and the subsequent re-organization of municipal government in what are now the Regions of Peel, York, Durham and Halton covering much of the area expected to experience the greatest development pressure. The year 2000 was established as the horizon year for the Design-for-Development initiative.

### **2.1.3 The Toronto-Centred Regional Plan**

The Toronto-Centred Regional Plan was an effort to guide development in and around Toronto so that anticipated growth would not outstrip the ability to provide services. In an effort to ensure efficiency in public spending for matters such as servicing and transit, the Plan directed urban expansion in an east-west orientation along Lake Ontario (referred to as Zone 1) and established the Parkway Belt West Planning Area extending from Hamilton/Wentworth in the west to Markham in the east to encourage compact urban form. The boundaries of the Toronto centred-regional Plan were similar to those relied upon in the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel’s Final Report (April 2003).

The Toronto-Centred Regional Plan identified a commutershed zone (Zone 2) located north of Toronto, and sought only limited growth in this area. A third zone situated north and east of Toronto, including Barrie and other communities, was identified as a target area for growth in the Plan. New growth was directed to Zone 3 to better balance the strong growth which had historically occurred to the west of Toronto, and to promote growth beyond the commutershed of Toronto. To this end, the Province funded water and sewer infrastructure to promote growth in and around the City of Barrie in an effort to create a strong, balanced community with employment for its residents, and to create an economic hub that would in turn stimulate growth in more northern communities.

The Toronto-Centred Regional Plan reflected major expressway projects including expansions to the capacity of Highway 400, extension of Highway 427 and Highway 404, and new Highways 407 and 403. Thus, current day plans to extend Highway 404 northward paralleling the south shore of lake Simcoe, to introduce a northerly east-west crossing (now known as the Bradford By-pass), to expand Highway 427 northward to relieve traffic on Highway 400, and extend Highway 407 eastward to Peterborough were all conceived and committed to as early as 1969 as part of the Toronto-Centred Regional Plan.

In 1972, as part of the Toronto-Centred Regional planning exercise, major land assemblies in the northwestern section of the Town of Pickering, the eastern section of the Town of Markham, and the northeastern section of Metropolitan Toronto were initiated by senior governments to provide for a new airport and a new community housing some 250,000 people. This land assembly was yet another example of overt actions on the part of the Province of Ontario to manage and direct regional growth through provincial initiatives.

The Toronto-Centred Regional Plan also saw the formation of a two-tier form of local government to replace the counties and local municipalities surrounding Metropolitan Toronto. This two-tier form of government was fashioned to more effectively implement the municipal powers delegated under the *Planning Act* to manage urban settlement growth. Under this reorganized system of

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local governance, the new regional governments were considered the primary channel through which coordinated land use planning would occur, such that lower-tier Official Plans would be required to conform with upper-tier regional Official Plans.

Several aspects of the regional planning vision embodied in the Toronto-Centred Regional Plan did not unfold as originally intended due, in part, to financial constraints and a decision on the part of the Province to support growth-oriented sewage treatment/trunk works and regional transit improvements that allowed more growth to occur in the commutershed than was originally intended under the Toronto-Centred Regional Plan.

#### **2.1.4 Niagara Escarpment Plan**

In 1985, the Province created the Niagara Escarpment Plan. This Plan has been described as Ontario's and Canada's first large-scale environmental land use plan. The main purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the associated Niagara Escarpment Planning Area (NEPA) was to protect and preserve an environmental feature, while at the same time allowing compatible development. The Planning Area also had the effect of delineating a western growth boundary for the GTA.

The approved Niagara Escarpment Plan established land use designations, specified allowable land uses, set limits on the density of development and lot creation, and established criteria by which all development would be judged. Designation of the Niagara Escarpment as a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1990 has helped foster stronger ministerial and bureaucratic support for the environmental preservation goals of the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Today the Plan remains in force and effect.

#### **2.1.5 Provincial Policy Statements**

Following from a series of amendments to the *Ontario Planning Act*, the Province sought to codify major land use, resource and environmental policies to ensure that regard be given to provincial objectives in the municipal land use decision-making process.

To this end, the "Land Use Planning for Housing" Policy Statement (1989) issued by the Liberal Government contained policies requiring local and regional Official Plans to, among other things, ensure a 10-year supply of land designated for housing, provide for a range of housing types, and promote residential intensification. This action on the part of the Province was a positive step to averting a repeat of the housing boom problem in the GTA in the mid 1980s. At that time, the available supply of serviced or readily serviceable land in the GTA was seriously inadequate, and a disproportionate share of the available land was set aside for larger lots for detached homes. The consequence of these factors was an explosion in land and hence housing prices with dire repercussions on housing affordability. Many renter households were priced out of the ownership market. Despite the longer commutes to jobs in the GTA, many homebuyers searching for affordable housing relocated to centres outside the GTA such as Barrie, Cambridge and Kitchener.

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The need for Official Plans to designate an adequate supply of land for housing was carried forward in the Province’s “Comprehensive Policy Statement (1994)” and again in the “Provincial Policy Statement (1997)”, but with the requirement that an even longer supply of designated land (20 year to 30 year supply) be identified in Official Plans to accommodate urban growth.

To the credit of the policy statement initiatives of all three of the past provincial governments, when the housing market surged once again in the latter 1990s, municipalities had made ample lands available to accommodate the rising demand. As a result, the rise in new house prices in the GTA to date has been quite moderate given the strength in demand, when compared to the events in the late 1980s.

The “Provincial Policy Statement (1997)” continues to be a very significant influence on the pattern of urban expansion since it contains policy objectives against which to measure the acceptability of urban settlement initiatives. These objectives seek to manage change in a way that balances the goals of economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and social well-being.

### **2.1.6 Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan**

The 160 km long Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) traverses 32 municipalities in the regions of Peel, York and Durham, the four counties of Dufferin, Simcoe, Peterborough and Northumberland, and the City of Kawartha Lakes. Approximately 65% of the area of the ORM lies within the Greater Toronto Area.

To protect its ecological and hydrological features and functions, in November 2001 the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing announced a comprehensive strategy for the Moraine. The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 enacted on December 14, 2001 authorized the introduction of a proposed Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). The Province also proposed a settlement involving an exchange of lands in Pickering for certain private lands in the Richmond Hill and Uxbridge sections of the Moraine, and created the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. The ORMCP approved in 2002 provides land use and resource management planning direction to protect the Moraine and implements the vision of a continuous east-west natural corridor. The stated vision of the ORMCP is to protect the ecological and hydrological features and functions that support the health and well-being of the region’s residents and ecosystems. The ORM functions to delineate the northern growth boundary for the GTA. In turn, the presence of the ORM will influence the future form and structure of south Central Ontario in the areas north and east of the GTA.

### **2.1.7 Central Ontario Strategic Transportation Directions Report**

In 2001, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) undertook an independent analysis and projections of the likely long-term development of Central Ontario. The ensuing Central Ontario Strategic Transportation established strategic directions for the development of the provincial transportation system, and detailed strategies that MTO could pursue in relation to the overall transportation network in Central Ontario.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Central Ontario Strategic Transportation Directions Report, Jan. 2002

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The Directions Report recognized that historical growth patterns in Central Ontario had seen development occurring primarily to the south of the ORM and east of the NEPA. The report noted that as population and employment levels increased in the future, there would be ever-increasing pressures to provide transportation services to areas north of the ORM and west of the NEPA.

In Central Ontario, the Directions Report noted that projected future transportation demands could be addressed by maximizing the capacity of existing systems and increasing transit service. Encouraging transit-supportive land use such as mixed land use development and higher settlement densities was seen as a means to assist in achieving these transit goals. Another solution identified in the report to addressing future transportation demands was to add strategic links to the existing highway system in instances where an economically significant corridor exists but where demand exceeds capacity or where strategic links do not currently exist. The following specific near-term and far-term improvement strategies were identified in the Central Ontario Strategic Transportation Directions Report.

**Near-term (within 30 years)**

- Expand regional rapid transit systems consisting of bus, light rail and heavy rail transit, each operating on its own right-of-way, with high levels of frequent service, linking city and regional nodes,
- Pursue widenings to existing highway corridors, including the western and eastern sections of Highway 401 and appropriate sections of the QEW and Highways 400, 404, 403, 410 and 427, as well as a number of the King's highways throughout Central Ontario.
- Construct the Niagara Mid-Peninsula Highway extending west from the Niagara River atop the Niagara Escarpment and perhaps connecting to Highway 401 in the section situated between Cambridge and Guelph.
- Complete Highway 407 east to Highways 35/115.
- Extend Highway 404 northward, initially to the planned Bradford By-pass at Keswick and subsequently northeast beyond Sutton.
- Construct the Bradford By-pass between Highways 400 and 404 initially, and later to the Highway 427 extension.
- Extend Highway 427 north past the Bradford area to meet Highways 400/11 at points north of the City of Barrie. This improvement is intended as a parallel complementary transportation corridor to Highway 400.
- Widen Highway 400 from 6 to 10 lanes in stages, including the section between Major Mackenzie Drive and the Bradford By-pass.

**Far-term (30+ years)**

- Upgrade Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph.
- Construct a new GTA east-west Highway corridor connecting Guelph to the GTA north of Highway 407.
- Improve highway connections between Hamilton and Waterloo Region.
- Construct the remainder of the Niagara Mid-Peninsula Highway running west and north of the NEPA through Dufferin and Wellington Counties and then north of the ORM, connecting to the Bradford By-pass and then passing through York and Durham Regions en route to Peterborough and Eastern Ontario.

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The location of these identified near and far-term transportation infrastructure improvements are reflected in Figure 2 to this paper.

### **2.1.8 Central Ontario Smart Growth Initiative**

The Central Ontario Smart Growth initiative commenced in February 2002 sought to provide the Province with a vision, core values, guiding principles, strategic directions and a growth concept to accommodate an expected population of 11 million people who will choose to live and work in Central Ontario by the year 2035. Central to the initiative was a desire to build strong communities, sustain a vibrant economy, and promote a healthy environment by integrating decisions on development, infrastructure and the environment to ensure that growth-related decision-making will be economically sound.

The Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel's Final Report (April 2003) presented a comprehensive set of recommendations for managing and promoting growth in Central Ontario in the short, medium and long terms (to 2035). The Final Report also identified an action plan aimed at tackling ongoing problems of gridlock and waste management. Figure 3 shows projected population growth by zone for the period 2001 to 2026, as presented in the Panel's Final Report. According to the Smart Growth Panel, total population growth in Central Ontario is expected to amount to approximately 3.5 million people over the period 2001 to 2035.

Like its predecessors, the Design-for-Development and Toronto-Centred Regional Plan, the Smart Growth Initiative relied upon a series of technical reports all aimed at informing the Panel so that it could develop a coherent vision and a set of recommendations to guide growth in Central Ontario.

The Smart Growth Panel's list of recommendations to the Province included a set of strategic directions aimed at reshaping where and how development should occur, protecting the environment, solving gridlock, rethinking how to manage waste, and optimizing other infrastructure. The stated objectives of the Panel included the development of balanced communities, accommodating transit supportive uses, directing growth to existing designated urban and settlement areas where the use of existing infrastructure can be optimized, promoting growth in locations that will support regional economic areas, and allowing growth where it will not compromise the natural-heritage system or unique agricultural lands identified for protection.

To solve the problem of gridlock and accommodate growth, the Final Report proposed a long-term (to 2035) rapid transit system for rail and bus services, together with a system of goods movement and economic corridors consisting of existing and planned highways, rail lines, airports, ports, inter-modal facilities and border crossing points (see Figure 3). The transportation/transit improvements recommended by the Smart Growth Panel relied on the strategic vision of MTO's Central Ontario Strategic Transportation Directions Report (2002).

### **2.1.9 Liberal Government's Proposed Planning Reforms**

In December 2003, the provincial government introduced proposed planning reforms to implement its new policy planning direction. Among other things, these proposed reforms include disallowing an appeal of a municipal Council's decision to deny or fail to render a decision on an application to expand or change the boundary of an urban settlement area. The new Provincial policy direction also proposes to establish a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Study Area as a first step to creating a

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permanent Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt consisting of some 240,000+ ha of environmentally sensitive land and farmland (see Figure 4).

## **2.2 Public and Private Sector Partnerships**

Apart from the influences of Provincial planning initiatives, the existing and future pattern of urban settlement growth has always relied on the ability to foster and secure public/private sector partnerships. Under this partnership arrangement, private sector market-responding forces are influenced by the opportunities and constraints established through government initiatives to supply potential urban settlement locations through the positioning of essential primary regional infrastructure. Such partnerships must have regard for and respect the legislative regulatory frameworks of urban and regional planning. The fulfilment of existing servicing strategies to accommodate already committed growth is often dependent on private investment that looks to achieve reasonable and cost-effective economies of scale and attractive investment return related to the delivery of necessary infrastructure improvements

## **2.3 External Economic Forces**

External economic forces beyond the control of provincial government policy and initiatives have a direct influence on where urban employment growth will occur. Farther-reaching influences include accessibility to the economic markets in the United States and the ability of regional development patterns to capitalize on these economic linkages. Similarly, the spatial structure of major economic activity (Lester B. Pearson International Airport, employment centres at intersections of 400-series highways, downtown Toronto) will influence where future employment areas will locate.

To a lesser extent, elements of natural geography also influence decisions on major investments of regional infrastructure. Federal government decisions related to airport, rail and port facilities coupled with advances in transportation and communications infrastructure also influence the spatial distribution of employment uses and the future development opportunities. These economic influences have the effect of conferring economic advantage onto potential development areas by enhancing the economic productivity of investment in certain areas.

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## 3. FUTURE URBAN GROWTH DEMAND IN CENTRAL ONTARIO

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### 3.1 Estimates of Growth

The growth of Central Ontario over the past 50 years has been driven by a substantial influx of population and the region's burgeoning economy.

Several independently sponsored population projections provide data on the overall amount of population growth expected to occur in Ontario, Central Ontario and/or the GTA (see Appendix A). These various forecasts exhibit a narrow range of differences and are based on different growth periods. Collectively the various projection sets arrive at the common conclusion that a very substantial amount of population growth will occur over the next 25 to 30 years.<sup>3/ 4/ 5/6/7</sup>

The Hemson Consulting, 'Investing in Tomorrow' report prepared for the Greater Toronto Home Builders Association (Feb. 2003) projects population growth of 3.4 million in Central Ontario from 2001 to 2031, of which 2.4 million people are expected to be accommodated in the GTA.<sup>3</sup> The IBI/Dillon Futures Study <sup>6</sup> prepared for the Neptis Foundation (Aug. 2002) projects population growth in Central Ontario (excluding the Region of Haldimand, Brant and Haliburton Counties, and portions of Wellington and Peterborough Counties) of 3.172 million during the period 2001 to 2031, of which 2.306 million are expected to be accommodated in the GTA. The Ontario Ministry of Finance (July 2000) projections forecast population growth of 2.991 million from 2001 to 2028, including 2.2 million accommodated in the GTA. According to the Smart Growth Panel, total population growth in Central Ontario is expected to amount to approximately 3.102 people during the period 2001 to 2026, with 2.344 million people accommodated in the GTA. During the extended period from 2001 to 2035, the Smart Growth Panel has assumed a growth of 3.5 million people in Central Ontario.

The findings of the Ministry of Finance and the Smart Growth Panel are elaborated upon in this paper, and have been selected for further analysis since both sets of projections address growth in Central Ontario on a region or county basis. The Ministry of Finance's growth projections generated in July 2000 looked at low, moderate and high growth scenarios. The Smart Growth Panel relied upon the Ministry's moderate growth scenario when formulating its recommendations on a long-term growth strategy for Central Ontario.

#### 3.1.1 The Ministry of Finance's Findings

According to the growth projections generated by the Ministry of Finance in July 2000, the population of the Province of Ontario is expected to reach 15.124 million by the year 2026, equating to a growth of 3.31 million people during the period 2001 to 2026. The estimates of

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<sup>3</sup> Henson Consulting, Investing in Tomorrow, Jan. 2003

<sup>4</sup> URS Cole Sherman, Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment, June 2002

<sup>5</sup> MTO, 427 Extension Draft Transportation Needs Assessment, Nov. 2002

<sup>6</sup> IBI Group/Dillon Consulting, Toronto-related Regions Futures Study, Aug. 2002

<sup>7</sup> Final Report, GTA Steering Committee on Population and Employment Forecasts for the GTA, Mar. 2000

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growth in Ontario during this period are expected to vary from a high of 710,000 people during the 5-year period 2001 to 2006, to a low of 616,000 people during the final 5-year period from 2021 to 2026. For Central Ontario, its 2001 population was estimated to reach 7.876 million people by the year 2001, continuing to grow to 10.665 million by 2026 (a growth of 2.789 million over a 25-year period) and to 10.867 million by the year 2031 (for a growth of 2.991 million people over a 30 year period). In comparison to the Province as a whole, growth in Central Ontario during the period 2001 to 2026 is expected to vary from a high of 594,000 people during the period 2001 to 2006 to a low of 530,000 for the final period of 2021 to 2026, according to the Ministry of Finance.

It was the further finding of the Ministry of Finance that in comparison to other areas of Central Ontario (including the GTA), the Region of York and Simcoe County that they will account for in the Central Ontario Region. According to the Ministry of Finance, the proportionate share of Central Ontario growth to be accounted for in the Region of York and Simcoe County will increase from 25% of overall Central Ontario growth during the 2001 to 2006 period to 35% for the period 2021 to 2026.

### **3.1.2 The Smart Growth Panel's Findings**

According to the Smart Growth Panel, the population of Central Ontario increased by almost 600,000 persons during the period 1996 to 2001. It was the further findings of the Panel that:

- Central Ontario will continue to accommodate almost half of Canada's total population growth and more than 90% of Ontario's growth, as has been the case during the period 1996 to 2001;
- an estimated 7.5 million people live in Central Ontario as of 2001, composed of 5.5 million people in the "Metropolis" (defined as the GTA plus Hamilton) and just less than 2 million people in the three adjacent outer areas (Figure 3);
- by 2026, the total population of Central Ontario is expected to be 10.6 million, with 7.9 million residing in the "Metropolis" and almost 2.7 million people in the outer areas (Figure 3).
- by 2035, the total population of Central Ontario is expected to increase to 11 million, with growth of 400,000 people occurring between 2026 and 2035;
- average household sizes have declined in Central Ontario from over 4 persons per household in the 1950s to fewer than 2.7 persons per household in 2001, resulting in an increase in the number of dwelling units, land area and capital investment required to house an equivalent number of people;
- even with higher-density housing and intensification, the current absorption rate of land for urban growth in Central Ontario is much higher than the serviced land available to meet projected demand;

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- a guiding principle of Smart Growth is that existing and future residents and businesses should be provided with a reasonable level of choice of where to locate; and
  - a combination of provincial, municipal and private leadership, vision and financial investment is required to deliver long-term planning and development solutions at the scale required for the Central Ontario zone.

It was the finding of the Panel that most of Central Ontario's population growth is expected to occur in the "GTA/City of Hamilton". Of necessity, a major growth component also will be accommodated in the "outer ring" comprising the Region of Waterloo, the Counties of Wellington, Dufferin and Simcoe, and the municipalities of Guelph, Orangeville, Barrie, and Orillia. The Smart Growth Panel projected that 92% of Central Ontario's population growth over the 2001 to 2026 period, or an additional 2.8 million persons, will choose to live in these two areas.

### **3.2 The GTA's Role in Accommodating Future Growth**

Although the various growth projections prepared for Central Ontario place a heavy reliance on the GTA to accommodate the bulk of the growth to 2031, substantial population growth is also forecast for the "outer ring" both in absolute terms and, especially, in terms of percentage growth over existing population.

It is estimated that 2.3 million of the additional 3.1 million people to locate in Central Ontario by 2031 will be accommodated within the GTA, 1 million of which will need to be accounted for through urban boundary expansions and increased densities. These expansions will occur during the next round of regional Official Plan reviews that will be looking to secure a 30-year supply of designated urban lands.

Given the potential powers afforded municipal councils under the proposed provincial planning reforms, it is quite likely that the local decision making of GTA municipal councils will influence the location and extent of urban settlement growth. Given the anti-growth or limited-growth platforms of some newly elected GTA municipal councillors, local decision-making and ongoing pressures from resident groups may result in delayed urban area expansions within the GTA. Furthermore, the proposed establishment of a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt coupled with bids on the part of municipal councils to secure more lands for green space, will reduce the amount of land within the GTA available for urban development. The aforementioned factors will affect the ability of the GTA to accommodate its share of forecasted future urban growth.

The ability of the GTA to realize its estimated share of projected future growth in the Central Ontario Region will be tested over time. Should the City of Toronto and other GTA municipalities fall short of these estimates, then even greater pressure will be brought to bear on the "outer ring" municipalities to accommodate a larger share of the projected growth sooner than would otherwise be expected to occur.

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### 3.3 Insufficient Urban Land is Currently Available to Accommodate Growth

Although many Central Ontario residents will elect to live in medium and high density housing forms, most will continue to require or prefer ground-oriented housing consisting of detached, semi-detached and street townhouse dwellings. The new residents are expected to seek housing close to the new employment centres. Even with higher density housing and intensification, the Smart Growth Panel concluded that current demand for housing is much higher than the land currently designated to meet the demand.<sup>3</sup> Intensification within existing urban areas will not be sufficient to meet the full range of future housing types and locations needed by the growing population. Thus, development of new residential communities will continue to be required to expand the supply of ground-oriented housing in Central Ontario close to opportunities for skilled employment.[]

The public pressure to protect natural areas and to maintain environmental integrity through the use and design of stormwater management ponds and larger buffer areas will also have an impact on the overall residential and employment densities and the amount of available developable land.

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A substantial amount of land will also be required to attract economic development which will be the key to sustaining Central Ontario's economic growth and providing the almost 2 million new jobs required by existing and future residents. Land will also be needed for the commercial, institutional and recreational activities that are vital to healthy communities. Since such jobs cannot all be provided solely in infill locations, extensive new business parks located close to major transportation facilities will also be required.

There is not sufficient land designated in existing Official Plans to accommodate projected growth of approximately 2.3 million persons in the GTA/Hamilton area over the 2001 to 2031 period. The GTA can accommodate about 15 years of growth in existing Official Plans, or approximately 1.3 million more people by 2018, when the supply of ground-oriented housing will be exhausted.<sup>8</sup> The City of Hamilton is projected to house approximately 100,000 additional persons by 2031.<sup>3</sup>[]

Designated urban areas in the major "outer ring" communities are insufficient to accommodate the expectation that up to 1 million people will choose to locate to this area of Central Ontario during the period 2001 to 2031 (see Appendix A). Potential residential growth in Barrie, Guelph and Orangeville is constrained by the need to expand existing urban boundaries and/or due to servicing limits such that together these centres have the capacity to house only approximately 100,000 additional persons.<sup>9/10/11</sup> The Region of Waterloo's population is projected to grow by approximately 200,000 additional residents by 2026, with a further 40,000 persons accommodated during the period 2026 to 2041.<sup>12</sup>[]

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<sup>8</sup> Hemson Consulting, Growth Management in Simcoe County Presentation, July 7, 2003

<sup>9</sup> C.N. Watson, City of Guelph Household and Population Projections 2001-2027, April 2003

<sup>10</sup> C.N. Watson, City of Barrie Development Charges Background Study, Aug. 2003

<sup>11</sup> Urban Strategies Inc., Town of Orangeville Official Plan Review, Background and Proposals Report, April 2003

<sup>12</sup> Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Planning Our Future: recommended Rational Growth Management Strategy, 2003

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Based on the Smart Growth Panel's findings that up to 3.1 million additional people will choose to locate in Central Ontario during the period 2001 to 2026, long-range plans should be made now to identify new areas capable of accommodating 1.2 million of these people not presently accounted for in local and regional Official Plans. Given the Smart Growth Panel's expectation that an additional 400,000 people will locate to Central Ontario during the subsequent period 2026 to 2035, the number of new people not presently accounted for in Official Plans increases from 1.2 million in 2026 to 1.6 million in the year 2035.

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## 4. PROVIDING FOR GROWTH BEYOND EXISTING URBAN BOUNDARIES

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### 4.1 Existing Settlement Areas Must Expand

To accommodate the 1.6 million future Central Ontario residents not yet accounted for in local and regional Official Plans, the urban envelopes of some existing major centres in Central Ontario will have to be expanded and some smaller communities will need to become larger.

Both the Provincial Policy Statement and the Smart Growth Panel's Final Report direct growth to existing settlements (cities, towns, villages, settlement areas and hamlets). In contrast, rural areas are to be the focus of resource activity, resource-based recreational activity and other rural land uses. As such, rural areas remote from existing urban areas will accommodate only a very small share of future population growth in Central Ontario.

### 4.2 Long-Term Comprehensive Planning Required

Proactive, forward-thinking planning must begin now to accommodate the long-term growth pressures that will be increasingly shifting to municipalities in the "outer ring". This long-term planning exercise must also factor in additional lands to protect the natural environment, and to accommodate the employment, institutional, parks and open space lands needed to serve this additional population moving to Central Ontario.

In the absence of such a long-term planning strategy, an incremental and reactive approach to land use and infrastructure planning will be hard-pressed to fend off the impending shortage of developable land. However, Central Ontario no longer can accommodate urban expansions through incremental extensions to the urban boundaries within the GTA due to the presence and proximity of the ORM and the NEPA. Without long-term planning, the public policy objectives of compact mixed use urban form, protection of significant environmental features, cost-effective utilization of planned and existing infrastructure and community services, and meeting the housing requirements of future residents are unlikely to be realized.

Since population growth in Central Ontario will continue well beyond 2026, planning for land use and for new servicing systems must look beyond the 2026 planning horizon. Proactively planning for up to the next 30 years will provide a better framework needed to permit a comprehensive approach to planning for future population growth as well as the infrastructure, community services and employment opportunities required to foster the development of balanced communities. Such an approach to comprehensive planning is consistent with the previous actions of provincial governments that embarked on a number of long-range planning initiatives during the past 50 years. Clearly, Provincial leadership, vision and financial investment by all levels of government will be required at this juncture to deliver long-term planning solutions at the scale Central Ontario's population growth will require.

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## 5. WHERE TO FOCUS FUTURE GROWTH WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

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### 5.1 Locational Suitability Criteria

The suitability and appropriateness of an area for settlement area expansion must be evaluated in accordance with the Ontario planning process as it has developed over recent years. To this end, the evaluation of locational suitability must address those recurring and sound criteria established by the Province and other authorities through regional growth management initiatives in Central Ontario. The Ontario planning process has sought to direct urban expansions to locations that:

- maintain and enhance economic prosperity so that a wide range of opportunities for economic investments can be offered at locations that are economically effective, as well as providing for a wide range of housing forms and locations that are required to meet the needs of the diverse and growing population;
- result in the fiscally effective use of existing and committed public infrastructure (provincial, regional and/or local roads, transit, water and wastewater treatment works, and other investments in hard services) and offers the opportunity to develop effective urban infrastructure so that public investment and development progress in tandem;
- avoid, where practical, land identified for protection due to environmental significance (NEPA, ORM), prime agricultural land, areas of mineral aggregate resources, sensitive recharge/discharge areas, and lands supporting significant heritage and archaeological artefacts and/or resources; and
- facilitate the creation of an urban form and structure, which avoids the negative consequences of urban sprawl.

It is important to note that real physical factors related to available land capacity and infrastructure constraints or opportunities also play a major role in determining where urban settlement growth should occur.

#### 5.1.1 Economic Prosperity

A critical factor in achieving macro-level economic prosperity for a region such as Central Ontario is to ensure that the regional structure has a wide range of opportunities for economic investment. To this end, new urban settlement areas are best directed to locations that are economically effective for the development of employment uses and housing.

As stated in the Final Report of the Smart Growth Panel, the goal of achieving balanced growth means that increases in population and employment are to be distributed in such a way that no community will be predominantly single-use, and municipalities will achieve a mix of residential and business uses. In a nutshell, balanced communities require jobs. Therefore, the potential to compete effectively for future industrial and commercial investment should be a key factor in the

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consideration of where new residential development in Central Ontario should be focused. The notion of developing new "bedroom communities", which provide housing for commuters who work in other distant urban centres is not the appropriate approach.

### **5.1.2 Effective Use of Public Infrastructure**

The location of existing and committed regional transportation infrastructure has exerted the greatest influence on the urban structure of Central Ontario and, from all indications, is expected to continue to do so. This phenomenon is not surprising since it is the transportation infrastructure that brings with it the vital economic attribute of accessibility to both employees and residents. Consequently, the recommendations for the location of both expanded inter-regional transit as well as major expansions to the provincial highway system (see Figure 2) have the effect of directing future urban growth to certain areas of the Study Area.

### **5.1.3 Constraints and Opportunities for Future Settlement Growth: Profiles of Individual Sub-Regions Within the Study Area**

Table 1 summarizes the constraints and opportunities impacting the ability to accommodate growth within the various geographic sectors of the Study Area. These identified constraints and opportunities arise from an assessment of associated impacts on the agricultural and natural settings, the ability to deliver the necessary servicing infrastructure, and the opportunity to capitalize on planned regional infrastructure investment. Further details on the agricultural and natural settings of the Study Area, various approaches to water and wastewater servicing in the Study Area, and profiles of individual sub-regions within the Study Area are provided in Appendices B, C and D to this paper.

Based on a review of the information set out in Table 1, the following conclusions can be offered on the relative positioning of certain geographic areas in the Study Area to accommodate expanded urban growth beyond that already approved in local and regional Official Plans.

- The majority of south Central Ontario is comprised of prime agricultural land, particularly those lands located around the perimeter of Lake Ontario where much of Ontario's population already exists (see Figure 5). Those areas of Central Ontario exhibiting poorer soil qualities typically coincide with areas that are environmentally protected such as the NEPA and the ORM, or that possess significant environmental features. In practical terms, it will be virtually impossible to accommodate growth in Central Ontario while also avoiding areas of prime agricultural land.
- Significant environmental features that limit future development opportunities exist beyond the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine (see Figure 6). In north Halton, in areas south of Guelph and in the western section of Hamilton, numerous large provincially significant wetlands exist, whereas the Kitchener/Waterloo area supports substantial forested areas and important groundwater recharge areas. Significant environmental areas are also present around Orangeville. The Holland Marsh and Pottageville swamps act as constraints to development along the southern border of Simcoe County. In contrast, the lands located north of Holland Marsh are virtually unconstrained from a natural features perspective.

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- From a servicing perspective, constraints exist for most of the municipalities in the “outer ring”. Other than Hamilton and some communities close to Lake Simcoe (Barrie, Bradford, Innisfil, Keswick, Sutton), none of the “outer ring” growth communities are on lake-based sanitary and water servicing (see Figures 7 and 8). All of these municipalities dispose of treated effluent in rivers and use groundwater and/or river water supply systems. All “outer ring” municipalities will require new servicing solutions to accommodate large-scale new growth. Water and wastewater solutions to accommodate significant growth in the Region of Waterloo and the County of Wellington will rely on pipeline connections to the Great Lakes system, translating into a significant capital expenditure due to the remoteness of these two areas from the Great Lakes water source. In some cases, these servicing solutions will entail crossing of protected environmental features or other municipalities and/or regions.
  - The principal servicing concern to be dealt with for Barrie, south Simcoe County, north Durham Region and portions of north York Region is the assimilative capacity of Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River, and the ecological health of these systems (see Appendix C). Particularly important will be a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of phosphorus in treated sewage and non-point urban and agricultural runoff on down-gradient surface waters. This assessment is being undertaken within the context of a Total Phosphorus Management strategy, relying on new evaluatory tools such as a net loading concept for phosphorus and phosphorus trading. It is anticipated that implementation of such an approach will demonstrate considerable ecological benefits to the down-gradient Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River.
  - Planned transportation improvements in Central Ontario will increase the accessibility of many of the municipalities located west and north of the NEPA and the ORM. The planned Niagara Mid-Peninsula Highway will improve transportation accessibility to south Hamilton and Brantford in the near term and to Guelph, Kitchener/Waterloo and Cambridge in the far term. In the near-term, Orangeville will be one of the least accessible potential growth areas within the Study Area since no new expressway linkages are planned to serve this area for a considerable period in the future. Transportation accessibility to south Simcoe County will benefit from planned improvements to Highway 400, extensions of Highways 404 and 427, as well as construction of the Bradford By-pass. It is expected that the provision of new planned highways and transit facilities will provide greater accessibility to and facilitate growth in areas beyond the GTA, with much of the planned transit and highway improvements focused on the “outer ring” area beyond the ORM.

Clearly, south Simcoe County is well-positioned to accommodate future urban growth due to the extent of planned regional transportation infrastructure investment slated for the area that is unparalleled elsewhere in the “outer ring” municipalities. South Simcoe County is also one of the few “outer ring” municipalities availed of lake-based water and wastewater servicing. Consequently, expansions to related infrastructure to service south Simcoe County can occur cost-effectively given that a solution to the phosphorus loadings to Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River can be successfully implemented, thereby ensuring the ecological health of these important systems.

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## 6. ASSESSMENT OF THE *BRADFORD BOND HEAD PLANNING AREA* IN THIS CONTEXT

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Given recent planning initiatives undertaken by the Province, current growth patterns, population projections to the year 2035, and an evaluation of growth opportunities and constraints within the Study Area, it is clear that the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is comparatively well positioned to accommodate future growth both in the short, medium and long terms, for a number of reasons.

### 6.1 The *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* and the GTA

Hemson Consulting stated that “*Bradford is immediately adjacent to the York Region boundary and could easily be defined as part of the GTA, given the GO rail service into Bradford.*”<sup>13</sup> The high degree of economic integration between the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* and the GTA is also reflected in the 2001 Census of Canada wherein the *Planning Area* and the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury as a whole clearly forms part of the Census Metropolitan Area for the GTA (see Figure 9). To be included as part of the CMA for the GTA, an adjacent municipality or urban centre must have a high degree of economic integration with the central urban area.

Given its location relative to the GTA and its high degree of economic integration with the GTA, further urban area expansion within the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* constitutes a logical extension of the path of current growth as it inevitably extends northward through York Region along the Highway 400, 404 and 427 corridors, and beyond the protected areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Holland Marsh.

### 6.2 The *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* and the City of Barrie

As documented in Section 3.3 to this paper, long-range plans need to be made now to identify new areas capable of accommodating 1.6 million of the forecasted population growth to the year 2035 not presently accounted for in local and regional Official Plans. Even if we were to assume that 1 million of these as yet unplanned for 1.6 million people could be accommodated in the GTA through new urban designations and infill/intensification, additional lands must still be found now to accommodate the remaining 600,000 person shortfall.

The proposal for the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* seeks to accommodate approximately 70,000 additional residents beyond the existing and planned populations for the Bradford and Bond Head communities already committed to in the local and County Official Plans.

Given the shortfall of designated lands available in the “outer ring” to accommodate projected growth in this area, it is expected that additional growth in the City of Barrie area can occur alongside the proposed development in the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area*. Additional growth in Barrie will be contingent upon the designation of the necessary land area to accommodate an

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<sup>13</sup> Hemson Consulting, MTO Demographic & Economic Trends Shaping the Future of Highway Travel in Simcoe County, June 2001

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urban expansion. Given the positioning of the *Planning Area* mid-point between major employment areas in the GTA and in Barrie and its location relative to existing and planned regional transportation infrastructure, it is expected that future significant employment activity in both the *Planning Area* and in Barrie will bring further economic prosperity to Simcoe County and the Central Ontario Region as a whole.

### **6.3 Regional Infrastructure Investment Considerations**

Consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and the recommendations of the Smart Growth Panel, the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* can avail itself of existing and planned regional transportation infrastructure as supported by the following facts.

- The *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* benefits from available highway capacity along Highway 400 and is served by high order regional rail connecting Bradford to major employment areas in the City of Vaughan, York University and downtown Toronto.
- Two of the new highway corridors recommended by MTO in its Central Ontario Strategic Directions report directly link with the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area*. Clearly, the *Planning Area* will benefit from existing and planned major highway and transit improvements. These works include the widening of Highway 400 from 6 to 10 lanes in stages, the northerly extension of Highway 404, the extension of Highway 427 north to Barrie, and the construction of the Bradford By-pass initially between Highways 404 and 400, and later linking Highways 400 and 427 (the latter highway extending north to this location and eventually to Barrie).
- As depicted in Figure 10, the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury is presently served by regional GO Transit bus service along Highway 400 linking Toronto, Bradford and Barrie. Current regional GO Transit rail service to the area links Bradford with Toronto and intervening centres. The infrastructure is in place to expand GO transit bus and rail service to the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury by increasing service frequency and by creating expanded linkages and a rail line extension to Barrie.
- The location of the new community relative to Highway 400, the future Bradford By-pass and the extended Highways 404 and 427 make it ideally suited to urban expansion for future housing and employment needs due to its extraordinarily high level of expressway connectivity in all directions.
- Given the planned highway improvements largely focused to the north of the GTA, directing new growth north of the ORM to locations such as the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* will encourage growth in locations where it will result in the cost-effective utilization of the major investments in infrastructure improvements.

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## 6.4 Avoidance of Special Lands and Resources

The *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is no more constrained from an agricultural preservation perspective than any other potential growth area within the Study Area, since urban growth throughout the Study Area will entail the loss of prime agricultural lands. When compared to the balance of the Study Area, the *Planning Area* is better positioned from terrestrial and aquatic perspectives to accommodate further urban growth since the area has relatively few significant environmental features.

## 6.5 Jobs Are Crucial

As confirmed by Hemson Consulting, a significant amount of marketable employment land is needed as the population in Simcoe County continues to grow.<sup>14</sup> Lands to support well-designed and attractive employment uses should be secured along the 400-series highways in locations that are large enough to provide for a wide range of uses and site sizes, and have the visibility and physical attributes to attract employment uses. Such potential employment locations should be concentrated around Highway 400 and the future Bradford By-pass.<sup>14</sup>

The ability to attract employment users to the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is enhanced by its positioning at the junction of existing and already planned highway and transit infrastructure, its unconstrained land area, and its availability of large tracts of land. Furthermore, the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* is strategically situated at the fulcrum of an east-west economic corridor identified by the Smart Growth Panel, such that the *Planning Area* occupies the enviable position of being the sole location north of Highway 407 and south of Lake Simcoe possessing this strategic economic positioning.

Its location just north of the GTA and the protected Oak Ridges Moraine and Holland Marsh areas, will enable the *Planning Area* to function as a "gateway" between southerly markets and communities and industries in north Simcoe and the near North. Because of this advantageous location relative to road and transit linkages currently in place and planned in the near term, the *Planning Area* is already accessible to major employment concentrations, corporate headquarters and business parks to the south. These employment centres include the major concentration focused around Lester B. Pearson International Airport (located less than 50 km away as noted in Figure 11), the corporate headquarters and business parks along and within nodes located at the junctions of Highways 404, 400, 407 and 401, and employment in and around the City of Barrie. In fact, the *Planning Area* is located as close to Lester B. Pearson International Airport as the southerly portion of the City of Hamilton. These locational attributes are key to attracting significant employment growth to ensure the creation of a balanced community.

Clearly, the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* has unequalled potential to attract employment growth and foster the development of a jobs-led expanded community.

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<sup>14</sup> Hemson Consulting, Draft Simcoe County: Population, Household & Employment Forecasts Update, Jan. 2004

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## 6.6 Conclusions

Permitting urban growth within the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* will foster regional economic prosperity by providing a location highly attractive for employment as well as population growth. Development of the *Planning Area* will also result in the fiscally effective use of publicly developed infrastructure and investment, will integrate development with the limited existing environmental features on site, and will result in the creation of a comprehensively-planned, balanced community designed to be compact and transit-supportive to avoid the negative impacts of urban sprawl. The scale of the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* and the presence of excellent highway and transit infrastructure present a fresh slate on which to fashion an expanded community that minimizes the ill-effects associated with automobile-oriented urban sprawl.

As a candidate for future urban growth, the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* benefits from its proximity to the GTA, available and planned transportation and transit capacity, ease of serviceability and minimal environmental impacts. The *Planning Area* is also capable of attracting jobs and creating balance for the purposes of accommodating a sizeable component of Central Ontario's future growth which must be allocated beyond the confines of the GTA. Finally, planning for urban growth within the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* can also draw upon lessons learned by other urban areas.

*"To date, investment in the (GTA) urban environment has not kept pace, particularly with respect to roads and transit. Traffic congestion is worsening and transit service is not improving. For many residents the quality of life is declining."*<sup>14</sup>

The urban settlement expansion proposal for the *Bradford Bond Head Planning Area* represents an opportunity to reverse this trend.