

# Brant urged to keep growth within present boundaries

## County councillors to debate staff recommendation tonight

Posted By JOHN PAUL ZRONIK, [EXPOSITOR STAFF](#), July 22 2008

Builders and property owners may not like it, but Brant County has no choice but to rein in development, the municipality's director of development services says.

David Johnston will present to county council tonight a recommendation to maintain urban settlement boundaries in the county, including in the Cainsville and Tutela Heights areas, where development companies would like the boundaries expanded so new building can take place.

"There would be great disappointment on the part of the development interests (if council accepts the recommendation), but, at the same time, we don't have a choice," Johnston said Monday.

"We have to comply with the provincial growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe."

Brant politicians have been considering whether to expand the municipality's urban settlement boundaries as part of a review of the county's official plan, a document that dictates where development will take place in coming years.

The potential expansion of settlement boundaries became a controversial topic in April, when county consultant MMM Group Ltd. presented a report to politicians that said there is no justification for expanding settlement boundaries because the county already has enough land designated for development and the province wants new construction to take place in existing built-up areas.

The report caused a stir among developers with an interest in Cainsville, including Concord-based First Urban, which has purchased land in the area and would like to see settlement boundaries expanded.

The MMM report said there is enough currently designated land in the county to meet residential development needs for more than seven decades and enough land for new business and industry to meet needs until 2031. That position was confirmed in a recent analysis prepared for the county, which determined there is "more than enough land for residential and employment," Johnston said.

He said that about 1,000 acres of land is already designated for development in the Cainsville area, but First Urban was hoping the county would include about three times that much in a newly defined settlement area.

In the Tutela Heights area, land banking company Walton International has been pressing the county to provide sewer service for new development. The area proposed for development already has municipal water, but no sewer service.

Johnston said that installing the sewer would put pressure on the county to develop outside existing settlement areas and would go against a provincial policy of encouraging development in areas that already have full municipal services.

"We're saying there is no need to expand an urban settlement boundary (in Tutela Heights) and no need to expand servicing. Our financial resources are better spent elsewhere."

If council passes staff's recommendation tonight, no new development studies would be allowed in the Tutela Heights area.

Earlier this month, council heard a presentation by senior staff from the provincial Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, who told politicians the county should look at developing in already established urban areas before considering expanding urban settlement boundaries.

The province has set a growth target of 4,000 people and 1,000 jobs for the county until 2011 and Brant's official plan must be adjusted to meet the provincial target as part of the current official plan review.

"There would appear to be no planning justification to prove that additional land is needed to provide for the anticipated growth targeted by the province," the staff recommendation going before council tonight says.

But even if council accepts the staff recommendation to not expand urban settlement boundaries, county Mayor Ron Eddy said provincial law would allow private interests to come forward with future development proposals.

"Under the Ontario Planning Act -- which municipalities must adhere to -- there can be applications put forward," Eddy said during an interview Monday. "We're not supposed to predetermine applications."

If politicians tonight decide to abandon pursuing a larger settlement boundary in Cainsville, southwest Paris will become the main area of focus for economic growth in Brant.

"We have invested heavily in infrastructure in the greater Paris area," Johnston said. "We are looking to get services to the 403 so we can take advantage of the highway."

"We feel the land in and around the 403 is our best opportunity to attract industry."

The staff recommendation to council tonight also notes that areas around Burford, Oakland and Scotland will not be able to be developed because of provincial policies limiting growth in areas with no municipal water or sewer services.

Eddy said he expects a crowd at tonight's council meeting to witness councillors make their decision.

"We understand there's going to be a tremendous turnout," the mayor said.