

The Star.com

Growing up: Growth is good, says Mississauga's Hazel McCallion — within limits

The mayor hopes to limit the OMB's powers to let developers build even higher and denser than Ontario's growth plan demands.

By: [San Grewal](#) Urban Affairs Reporter, Published on Wed Mar 27 2013

One in an occasional series on the GTA's growing density and its effects on life in the city.

Facing pressure under Ontario's Places to Grow Act to house more of the GTA's population boom, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion is pushing back.

At city council Wednesday, McCallion said Mississauga has accepted the province's mandated growth targets but will not accept decisions by the Ontario Municipal Board that allow developers to build beyond those targets. The spurt of highrise construction is hurting the city's already overstretched infrastructure, she said.

"They can't be playing around with our land use like they do," McCallion said of the province and the OMB, which rules on municipal and planning disputes.

Council unanimously passed a motion asking that Ontario's Planning Act be amended so developers cannot appeal city council decisions to the OMB, if the city's official plan is in compliance with Ontario's growth strategy. The strategy sets municipal density targets that aim to encourage cities to build up rather than out.

McCallion and other councillors said developers, seeing profits in building even higher, are simply going to the OMB whenever they want densities for projects increased. The OMB then uses the growth plan as the rationale for ruling in favour of the developers. The end result is often more lucrative for builders, but puts pressure on already overstretched municipal services.

For Mississauga's motion to take effect, it would have to be endorsed by Queen's Park.

Councillors cited a number of high-density projects in Mississauga over the past few years that residents and council, adhering to the city's official plan, opposed. But developers eventually got their way at the OMB, they said.

"I am really concerned about the increased densities ... our (infrastructure) is not designed to take the climate change and the increased densities," McCallion said.

She said the increased densities beyond what has been planned will cost Peel Region "at least a billion dollars" to take care of the extra garbage alone.

MPP Frank Klees, she said, sat down with her recently to get McCallion's support for a private member's bill he tabled last week at Queen's Park, mirroring Mississauga's motion.

"The OMB is over-reaching far too often when the municipality is in compliance with the growth act and the planning act," said Klees, who represents the riding of Newmarket-Aurora.

Prior to re-tabling his own bill Wednesday, with some minor amendments, he said Mississauga's move is "very important," given the flaws in the growth act.

"I have yet to see a perfect piece of legislation. One of the unintended consequences is what we face now — (the growth act) essentially gives an override to the OMB. It leaves a great deal of room for the OMB to achieve even higher numbers or targets."

His words must be music to McCallion's ears. With her city facing a \$1.5 billion infrastructure deficit, having more control of how much the city will grow, and where that growth will go, is exactly what she wants.

Councillor Jim Tovey, who introduced the motion, explained that it costs tens of millions of dollars not only to fight at the OMB, but also to revise infrastructure planning, whenever a developer decides a high-density project should deviate from those plans.

"I came to the conclusion that we're not going to be able to get rid of the OMB," he told council. He stated that developers who challenge the city at the OMB simply say, "I'll just take my chances with the board." But he said if his motion helps bring in a new law, "that's not going to happen."