

McLeod: The scourge of sprawl



JONATHAN MCLEOD

[More from Jonathan McLeod](http://ottawacitizen.com/author/jonathan-mcleod) (HTTP://OTTAWACITIZEN.COM/AUTHOR/JONATHAN-MCLEOD)

Published on: August 25, 2014 | Last Updated: August 25, 2014 7:23 PM EST



New home build. OTTAWA CITIZEN

There's a culture in our city. It's replicated across the province, country and continent. It appears with every new subdivision and every new road. Each new development stretching out further away from the city centre poses an added threat to our rural

communities. The tensions bred in these communities contribute to the urban-rural class war, and this class war becomes more acute with each municipal election.

This class war is insidious. It snakes through our politics. And it is absolutely ridiculous.

There is no urban threat to our rural communities. Centretown is not coming to Kars. The threat to these communities is sprawl, and sprawl is a threat to all communities.

Sprawl is the unchecked expansion of urban and suburban development into undeveloped areas. It is the high rise near Petrie Island, the new home builds in Riverside South, the transformation of family farms into commuter towns. It is the potential destruction of South March Highland's treasured wetlands.

Sprawl is a tremendous concern to rural Ottawa. Rideau-Goulbourn Councillor Scott Moffat trumpets recent victories against sprawl, as well as the need for continued vigilance:

"In 2013, we held the line on the urban boundary and any village boundary expansions. We need to continue to focus on smart growth for our communities. Any development should lead to community enhancements, not detractions. So far, we have seen slow growth in the Mahogany Development in Manotick and we need to remain focused on how we move forward and how these new homes impact our community.

"In Richmond, we need to stay focused on much of the same. We don't need suburban style development in the rural area. Any new development should fit in with the village and grow at a pace consistent with how Richmond has grown over the last decade. While one development has been approved, we need to take the positive outcomes and work to apply them to future applications."

Sprawl has costs. It has significant costs far beyond any aesthetic concerns. Sprawl demands more streets and more sewer infrastructure. It increases the costs of operating community centres and libraries, emergency services and schools. Sprawl contributes to air pollution, devours green space and makes us fat. Sprawl congests our roads and taxes our public transportation system, robbing us of time.

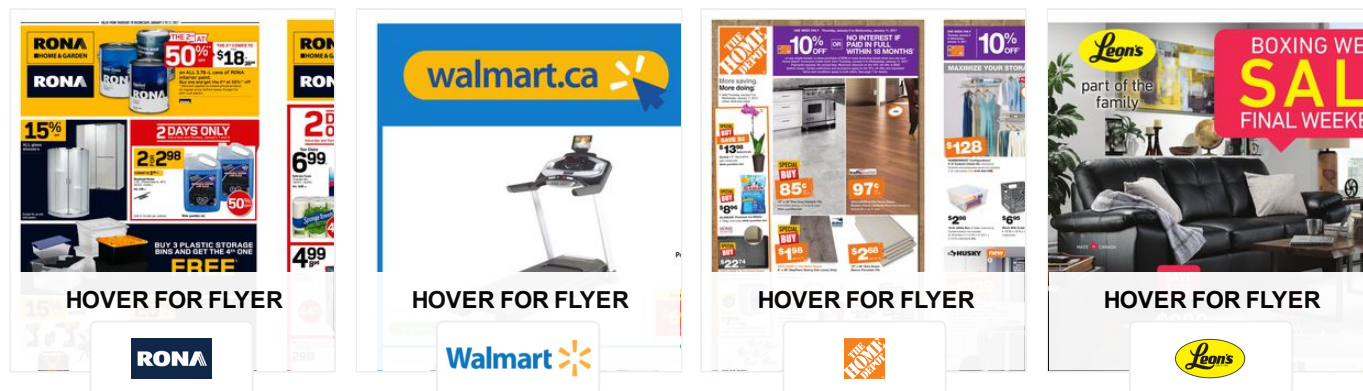
In recent years, Ottawa city planners have taken a decidedly urban-centric view for development projects. As a city, we have embraced intensification, we are increasing suburban development charges, we are building higher and we have made overtures about getting people out of their cars. This talk of intensification, density and urban renewal is antithetical to the quiet rural life, and it is quite understandable that this vision would be seen as a threat by rural residents. But it is this philosophy for municipal planning that will best protect rural areas from creeping suburbia.

Ottawa is going to continue to grow. Our region is approaching a population of one million, and we will have to put people somewhere. Our best plan is to continue with intensification within the city's core, discouraging new suburban and ex-urban developments as much as we can. Density discourages driving, encourages healthy activities like walking and cycling, and allows us to leverage economies of agglomeration, the benefits derived from businesses clustering close together.

North America has learned a number of hard lessons from the scourge of sprawl. It is expensive, unhealthy and it damages our urban and rural communities, alike. There may be many issues that divide the residents of Ottawa, but the battle against sprawl should unite us all, whether we live in the Glebe, Barrhaven or Yorks Corners.

Jonathan McLeod is an Ottawa writer.

Ottawa Flyers



Comments

We encourage all readers to share their views on our articles and blog posts. We are committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion, so we ask you to avoid personal attacks, and please keep your comments relevant and respectful. If you encounter a comment that is abusive, click the "X" in the upper right corner of the comment box to report spam or abuse. We are using Facebook commenting. Visit our FAQ page (<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/story.html?id=7195492>) for more information.

4 Comments

Sort by **Oldest**

Add a comment...

**Roland Stieda** · U of A Augustana

The coming expansion of LRT (phase 2) going to Place d'Orleans and to Bayshore is the perfect opportunity to springboard redevelopment in these areas. The Petrie Island towers will be less of an issue once there is reliable LRT service out to that area of the city. It is still at least eight years off, but we need to start planning for it now. Done correctly we could see a complete reenvisioning of areas like St Joseph Boulevard in Orleans. Any areas within about 750 meters of any of the new stations is going to see a surge in new and redevelopment. Sprawl is definitely an issue and will tax our infrastructure, but if we take the opportunity to develop smartly along the LRT, then we will see intensification and people being able to use convenient transit.

Like · Reply · Aug 25, 2014 10:35am

**Christine Brackenbury** · UOttawa

Have you seen the article in the West Carleton Review, August 21, 2014.... "Video extols benefits of protecting Carp Hills", written by Jessica Cunha ?.....go to OttawaCommunityNews.com

Like · Reply · 2 · Aug 25, 2014 7:07pm

**Oliver Brackenbury** · Toronto, Ontario

<http://www.ottawacommunitynews.com/.../4761898-caring.../>

Like · Reply · Aug 26, 2014 8:21am

**Joe Pavelich**

I don't want to live downtown in a tower or a walk up and I don't want to live in a small rural community. I'm quite happy in suburbia and so are all of my neighbours. Yes there is cost and I pay in property taxes accordingly. If you want to eliminate sprawl in Ottawa then do away with the sacred cow that is the Greenbelt. Of course no one wants that so accept that sprawl is a reality and manage it accordingly.

Like · Reply · Aug 25, 2014 8:44pm

**Erwin Dreessen** · Sint-Lievenscollege Antwerpen

May I suggest you read the 2013 Hemson Report to learn about the relative fiscal contributions of various types of housing -- ref. <<http://www.greenspace-alliance.ca/node/625>> and <<http://www.greenspace-alliance.ca/node/624>>. From the Greenspace Alliance's comment:

"The report shows, on a long-term and all-inclusive basis of costs (both operating and capital) and revenues, considering both tax- and rate-supported services, that higher-density urban development generates a surplus for municipal coffers while three other forms of development (lower-density urban greenfield, low-density villag... See More

Like · Reply · Aug 26, 2014 2:14pm



Don Phillipson · The University of Western Ontario

It is hard to see why the Ottawa Citizen buys so many opinion columns from this particular freelance writer. His usual remarks are opinions supported by no evidence, often directly contradictory. Today, for example, "talk of intensification, density and urban renewal is antithetical to the quiet rural life, and it is quite understandable that this vision would be seen as a threat by rural residents. But it is this philosophy for municipal planning that will best protect rural areas . . ." He can sometimes cite similar opinions, if not evidence, but carelessly. The source for today's column was a local politician. but McLeod (and Citizen editors) did not trouble to spell Scott

([HTTP://WWW.POSTMEDIA.COM](http://www.postmedia.com))

© 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.

Powered by WordPress.com VIP (<https://vip.wordpress.com/>?)

utm_source=vip_powered_wpcom&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=VIP%20Footer%20Credit)