

Communication Update

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

Date: July 20, 2026

Subject: Updated Ministry of Finance Population Projections for the City of Hamilton to the Year 2051

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Submitted By: Anita Fabac
Director of Planning and Chief Planner
Planning and Economic Development Department

Signature: 

The purpose of this communication update is to inform Council of recently updated Ministry of Finance population projections for the City of Hamilton to the year 2051.

Summary

This Communication Update provides Council with an update on the 2026 Ministry of Finance population projections for Hamilton. The 2051 population projection is now 840,808 people, a decrease of 12,322 people from the 2025 Ministry of Finance 2051 projection of 853,130 people.

Background

As stated on the Ministry of Finance webpage, the Ministry of Finance produces an updated set of population projections every year to reflect the most up-to-date trends and historical data. The 2026 update uses as a base the 2023 population estimates from Statistics Canada (released in January 2026 based on the 2021 Census) and includes changes in the projections to reflect the most recent trends in fertility, mortality, and migration.

Details

As illustrated in Appendix “A” to this Communication Update, the updated Ministry of Finance population projections for Hamilton (2051 population of 853,130 people) are higher by 20,808 people than the 2020 Growth Plan forecast (2051 population of 820,000), but significantly lower than 2024 Ministry of Finance projections (2051 population of 903,270) and lower than the 2025 Ministry of Finance projection (2051 population of 853,130).

The Ministry of Finance website references a short-term decrease in the net number of non-permanent residents in its updated projections as the primary driver of lower population growth.

The projections do not incorporate explicit economic or planning assumptions. They are developed using a standard demographic methodology in which assumptions for population growth reflect recent trends in all streams of migration and the continuing evolution of long-term fertility and mortality patterns.

Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 was approved by an Order in Council on August 20, 2024, and took effect on October 20, 2024. replacing both the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and A Place to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan).

The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 requires that municipalities base their population and employment growth projections on Ministry of Finance projections (Policy 2.1.1), but also states:

- Municipalities “may modify projections, as appropriate”; and,
- Municipalities may continue to use the previous forecast issued by the Province until its next Official Plan review.

The growth policies of the City’s Urban Hamilton Official Plan are based on the Growth Plan’s population forecast of 820,000 people and employment forecast of 360,000 jobs by the year 2051.

As shown in Appendix “A” and Table 1, the updated Ministry of Finance population projections for Hamilton are approximately 2.5% higher than the Urban Hamilton Official Plan forecast with the Ministry of Finance projecting 20,808 more people in Hamilton by 2051 than the Urban Hamilton Official Plan forecast.

Table 1: Comparison of Urban Hamilton Official Plan and Ministry of Finance Population and Household Projections

Year	Urban Hamilton Official Plan Population Forecast	Urban Hamilton Official Plan Household Forecast	Ministry of Finance (2026) Population Projection	Ministry of Finance (2026) Household Estimate¹	Difference in Population	Difference in Households
2031	652,000	258,100	680,335	269,317	28,338	11,217
2041	733,000	295,200	759,878	306,025	26,878	10,825
2051	820,000	332,800	840,808	341,245	20,808	8,445

The *Planning Act* requires municipalities to undertake five-year reviews of their Official Plan to ensure conformity with Provincial plans and policies. In 2022, the province approved the City's last update to the Urban Hamilton Official Plan following the completion of the City's Growth-Related Integrated Development Strategy (known as GRIDS2).

Next Steps

As discussed in Report PED26093, received by City Council on June 24, 2026, the Planning Division is implementing a phased Official Plan review program leading to a new city-wide Official Plan which would replace both the Urban and Rural Hamilton Official Plan. As part of this program, an urban growth review phase (similar to GRIDS2) would be initiated in 2027. At that time, Planning Division staff will consider the most current Ministry of Finance population projections and available provincial guidance in determining Hamilton's updated long-range population, household and employment forecasts.

Please contact Anita Fabac, Director of Planning and Chief Planner with any questions at Anita.Fabac@hamilton.ca or by phone at (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1258 or Steve Burke, Manager of Sustainable Communities at Steve.Burke@hamilton.ca or by phone at (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2533.

¹ City of Hamilton staff calculation based on household size (i.e. persons per unit) forecast used in the Urban Hamilton Official Plan.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix “A” – 2026 Ministry of Finance Population Projections