

My name is Michelle Oosterveld. Myself and my husband, Henry and our four children, own Country Estates Landscaping Inc. We have lived on Beeforth Road in Flamborough since April, 1994, 21 years, on a ten acre property. That's before the greenbelt and before the city of Hamilton was given Flamborough. We pay residential, commercial and agricultural taxes on different portions of our property. None of this makes sense to me. There might be 167 landscaping companies in Flamborough but there are many times that number in 'other businesses' operating in Flamborough. Why just landscapers? On Beeforth Road alone there is an electrical company, a general contractor so big they build schools and has a giant shop, me, a welding company, greenhouses, another landscaping company, a shop with a lift to fix cars, a vacation rental house and another set of greenhouses. That's just between 5th and 6th Concession. In a twenty minutes drive from my house these are businesses that I passed that either have a sign out or someone I know. Welding, a bakery, a canoe maker, three electrical companies, plumbers, air conditioning and heating, picture framer and artist, horse trailer lawyer, accountant, naturopath, counselling, carpenter, stone mason, three tree service companies, firewood, yoga studio, dog grooming, house cleaning, irrigation, pet walking, parking lot maintenance, Bobcat service, appliance repair, embroidery, draperies and sewing, day cares, sewage and waste removal, small engine repair, tutoring and dump trucks. I am not throwing anyone under the bus. I am throwing EVERYONE under the bus. We all need to stand together to keep our homes. Because while these are the places we park our trucks at night, make no mistake, these are our homes. Every single business and the 167 landscapers live where we park our trucks at night. These are families. Hundreds and hundreds of families most of whom have been here for decades. You can't go after just the landscaping families and not the families of electricians, plumbers, etc. We are not doing anything different than them. We park our truck in our yard at night and drive away to work in the morning. We do not work on our property 24/7 or we would be broke. We have no customers coming to our yard and we don't sell anything from our yard. We use the roads like every one else and we buy commercial stickers for those vehicles that cost us thousands and thousands of dollars that are supposed to be used for roads. The many giant tractors, combines and sprayers that drive down my road do not pay road tax. They run on coloured diesel and they don't pay any gas tax either. Also on my road and just around the corner are three horse farms that produce many tons of manure that have to be dealt with. We also are surrounded by corn that is horrible for the environment. Corn seeds are treated with the chemicals that are responsible for decimating the bee population. Cannon Nursery is a two minute drive from my home that use tons of fertilizer on there 100 acres of trees that are not good for the environment. There is an easement across the back of my property where the trans Canada pipeline runs. Go after them if you want to protect the environment. I have 200 raspberry bushes the bees love and gardens and places for Monarchs to stop by. Those business are okay but mine isn't.

I am just one family of six and have no say or control over what happens to me. We were here long before the Greenbelt. We are not a farm. We aren't pretending to be a farm. Originally, it didn't even include us. Millionaire developers that I can't begin to compete with wanted to develop areas south of us. Without me even having a clue, the line was moved and we were inside the Greenbelt. So you can't build a shopping mall on my 10 acres, fine, but no one is going to buy my 10 acres, plow it under and make a living farming on it. And that would be an environmental disaster. We have many species of frogs in our pond. We a meadows and a pine forest. Every spring a pair of owls make a nest and has a couple babies in our pine forest. We sit and listen to them at night and it's awesome. The Beeforths that farmed this land only just moved away a couple years ago. They owned all the land from 5th to 6th Concession. They sold it off in mostly 10 acre parcels 50 years ago. It's not going back to farming. As landscapers by our very nature we are stewards of the land. My kitchen is 45 years old but the

front of my house is gorgeous. The dozen landscaping families I know personally all have beautiful properties. Just down the road people have their wedding pictures taken on a landscaping families front lawn. We have planted hundreds of trees on our property over the 21 years we have lived here. When we moved in my oldest son Michael was only 9 months old. Our property has never been sprayed with herbicides or pesticides because I didn't want my children or dogs playing on poison.

In 21 years we have never had a complaint. We love all our neighbours and we take care of each other. Except the neighbour to my north. Thirteen years ago, without any notice he put in a driveway on our property line, 40 feet from our home. He took out the drainage ditch that runs between the two properties. The water had no where to go. So it flooded my basement twice in six months. I almost lost our home insurance. We had to raise our backyard by two feet. We had to replace our septic system and run weeping tile 100 feet down the side of our home to catch the water where it runs into a culvert in my backyard and empties into the pond. That cost \$25,000. That's a nuisance. I don't have the power to get rid of him and if I did I would never go after hundreds of families homes and livelihoods to get rid of just him.

There are hundreds and hundreds of families with businesses on their properties in Flamborough. This is our community. This is our home. Our children were born and raised here. They go to school here. They work here. We are coaches, managers, trainers, sponsors in local sports. We are volunteer fire fighters and member of community groups and parent councils. We don't park our trucks at night and go live in another community. It is wrong of you to be thinking of us as businesses. Every single business in Flamborough is a family. A family that contributes greatly to our community. We are entrepreneurs and that makes us the kind of people that get involved. It would be a huge loss to have that many people with so many talents leave our community.

So where does that leave us. We need to be able to have our shops (our shop was built 50 years ago long before we moved in) and our home and family in one place. But you need our taxes and our talents. We have paid our commercial taxes all these years. It is in your best interest to make sure everyone, not just landscapers, pay their 'fair' share of commercial tax. Millions and millions of dollars for the city. We also employ hundreds of people that count on us for their jobs. In the landscaping industry many of our employees live and pay tax in Hamilton. There are just too many of us to not work with us for an amicable solution to this problem. We only found out about Crophamilton last Monday. It would be completely unfair to not allow us to organize, get our own lawyer and planner to make our side of the argument. And the timing is very smart on their part. At this time of year all our families are working 14 hour days and working on this letter right now means I'm not getting caught up on quotes and calling customers back. I haven't slept since last Monday after reading their letter. I ask you to please work with us on this issue. Give us time to make our side of the argument. And please do not every forget that every single business comes with a family whose children are directly effected by your decision.

The very families that are major contributors to our community.