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To: Office of the Mayor; Johnson, Aidan; Partridge, Judi; Green, Matthew; Johnson, Brenda; Farr, Jason; Collins, Chad; Pearson, Maria; Pasuta, Robert

Subject: Special Planning Committee Meeting for the Greenbelt Plan

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of the Planning Committee:

After participating in the City of Hamilton public consultation sessions on the Greenbelt, I would like to underline my support for an expanded Greenbelt and my concern about potential removals suggested by staff in the report to the Committee.

The Greenbelt is a great opportunity for the City of Hamilton to promote its image as an environmentally green community that has permanently shed its smokestack image. It is an opportunity to show that Hamilton is committed to the highest standards of environmental protection and sustainable growth, as opposed to more low-density suburban sprawl and additional loss of agricultural land.

In particular, I share the concern of Environment Hamilton about the possible removal of several large blocks including one in Upper Stoney Creek designated as Area 2. EH has indicated that the province has specifically designated these properties as tender fruit lands and as such, I join with those who feel they should be protected from development. Adding to the concern is the recent acquisition of 178 acres by the Hamilton Conservation Authority that comprises about a quarter of Area 2. The Authority stated that the purchased properties are a major step in acquiring floodplain lands, existing and former forested wetland areas in the East Escarpment with the potential for restoration and enhancement and also for passive recreation. In other words, these lands are fully consistent with Greenbelt inclusion, not exclusion!

Given the volume of the staff documentation with appendices for this meeting, I am also concerned that there was only one week to digest the extensive material and prepare a formal submission in time for the meeting. The schedule of public consultation and Open Houses was better in that it provided more time for public input. It would be preferable if decisions, at least as far as the most contentious boundary changes, could be deferred at the meeting to allow more time to study the material, especially when recommendations from the Greenbelt review panel chaired by David Crombie have not been released yet.

I would close with a 2014 Environics poll, suggesting that more than 90 per cent of Ontarians support the Greenbelt and three-quarters want to see it expanded. A strengthened Greenbelt offers the benefits of helping to tackle climate change, encouraging more sustainable growth and generally enhancing the quality of life amid rampant urbanization of the Golden Horseshoe. As documented in the summary of public feedback prepared by Dillon Consulting, considerable support for improving the Greenbelt was expressed by Hamiltonians at the Open Houses and I hope that message will resonate with the Committee.

Thank you.

Gord McNulty
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