

Mr. Mayor, members of council, and staff. Good Morning. My name is Andrew Spoelstra and I'm here to speak to you today about my concerns over the City of Hamilton's Proposed changes to the greenbelt boundary.

I am the current chairman of Hamilton's Agriculture and rural affairs advisory committee. My family and I proudly own and operate three farm businesses on Guyatt Road in Binbrook. Roy-A-Lea Farms Ltd. Roy-A-Lea Seeds Ltd. and Leosta Farms Inc. are all within the boundaries of the greenbelt plan. Together we manage a 50 cow dairy herd, grow over 2000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay, milk a herd of 200 dairy goats and sell and distribute many trailer loads of Pride seed to local farmers. We have been fortunate to have some of the most productive land in southern Ontario that surrounds the twenty mile creek to grow our crops and our business.

Ontario's Agri-Food sector contributes over 34 billion dollars a year in GDP and sustains over 740,000 jobs making it one of the provinces top performing sectors. Agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe sees much of the same success with gross farm receipts in the range of 2 Billion dollars. Its estimated that farmers in this region provide \$1.6 billion dollars each year in ecological goods and services by following best management practices and being good stewards of the land all while providing fresh, safe food to supply the growing demand in the local food movement.

However Ontario's most important industry is at risk. Each day this province loses 350 acres of farm land to urbanization. That's equivalent to 160 Canadian Football Fields lost every day. This is not sustainable. Recently the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Environmental defense published a report titled Farmland at Risk. This report points out many excellent reasons why Prime agriculture producing land and the agriculture system needs to be permanently protected and how land use planning needs to be improved for a healthy agriculture future in the GGH. The report says:

**The food and farming cluster in the GGH is diverse and multi-faceted with tremendous potential to expand, but the well-being of the cluster is entirely dependent on the destiny of the prime agricultural land base. Soil analyses done for southern Ontario have shown that over 50 per cent of the land in the central zone qualifies as prime agricultural land, and over 20 per cent of this land qualifies as Class 1 soil. Urban development in the GGH threatens this precious resource. It is important to remember that prime agricultural lands (Classes 1, 2, and 3) and specialty croplands—are a very limited resource in Canada. Only five per cent of the Canadian land mass is made up of prime land and only 0.5 per cent of it is Class 1. As farmers continually point out, land is a fixed, unmovable quantity and needs to be protected in the long-term for a stable farm economy to flourish.**

The introduction of the Greenbelt plan in Ontario was met with many challenges. But it does come with some benefits. The protection of prime food producing land is one of them. The current 4 plan review undertaken by the province is a timely one. Its been widely speculated that the Greenbelt will increase in size. Its also been recommended that the province look to implement Hard country side lines and increase intensification and density targets to ensure that the greenbelt, prime ag land and the Agriculture system are protected. Hamilton has roughly 17,000 acres of land outside of the urban boundary but not in the greenbelt called the white belt. The GTA has nearly 150,000 acres of white belt land. This area is to be considered the next area for development and is said to contain plenty of land both in Hamilton and the GGH for growth past 2041.

As a young person I am proud to have a career in Agriculture and I am happy to have the opportunity to operate my business in such a great area. However I am concerned with the proposal to remove some areas from the Greenbelt Plan on the city of Hamiltons Greenbelt Boundary review document. The areas abutting the 20-mile creek are not only some of the best producing and most coveted land in Hamilton but in all of southern Ontario. Agriculturally zoned lands should not have to compete and be intertwined with the urban boundary because we are operating businesses. We make dust, noise, work at all hours and sometimes make awful smells. What makes a better hard country-side line than an existing rural road where the farm community can operate on one side and the urban boundary can be on the other side.

Its for these reasons that the Agriculture and rural affairs advisory committee and I strongly recommend that Area 3 and Area 4 along Golf Club, Hendershot and Second Roads considered for removal by staff on the map by Dillon consulting remain as protected farmland in the Greenbelt Plan. That area 1 and area 2 considered for removal be removed from the greenbelt plan for the purpose of the creation of a hard urban/ rural country-side line. I also wish to commend staff for recognizing areas 1 and 2 on the Dillon consulting map considered for addition to the green belt plan. The Agriculture and Rural Affairs advisory committee supports these additions however feels that Area 2 should encompass the area to miles road and Dickenson road to be consistent with the creation of the Hard country-side boundary as well as the best utilization of the land surrounding the 20 mile creek in that area.

I believe that Hamilton is committed to having a strong, sustainable and profitable Agri-Food sector. This is our opportunity to ensure that Hamilton's best and most productive farmland is preserved for the long term. The farmland in question currently has many uses from raising livestock to growing and selling local food.

The key to a robust agricultural industry is the protection of the land base to farm and carry out farm related activities.

Thank you for your time