

Susan Yazdani 3 DEC 2015

The Niagara Peninsula's tender fruit lands, especially that which remains in the City of Hamilton, is dear to my heart.

I've lived in Hamilton half my life. I've noticed the disappearance of agricultural land, especially during my absences. I grew up in Stoney Creek in the 60s and 70s. My childhood home, on the Walker Heights plateau, backed onto the TH&B Railroad, and the Niagara Escarpment. My father also grew up in Stoney Creek, living here more than half his 80n years. He grew up near Saltfleet High School, across from the Skyway Drive-In. He would have walked past orchards and vineyards on his way to RL Hyslop PS back in the 40s, when Stoney Creek was less than a sq mile. Walker Heights, where he raised his family, was orchard then too, until houses like ours started being built in the 50s. I remember as a kid, crossing the tracks, jumping the fence and picking pears in the abandoned orchards, at the base of the escarpment. The Nash and Green orchards from Centennial Parkway to Nash Road, and from the escarpment to north of King St, are all just a memory now too. Sustainability must not have been considered back then when all this land was developed.

In the summer of 81, following my first year at McMaster, my family left the area. That summer I worked for the Town of Stoney Creek, Planning Department (for Ron Marini). I had the best job! I drove every road in the town that summer, making note of the land use for each parcel of land. Then back in the office, created large colour coded, detailed land use maps the Planning Department would use over the next year. Best summer job ever... and it sure beat picking asparagus in Bobcaygeon the following summer!

That job changed my educational path. I ended up graduating, with an Environmental Studies degree from the University of Waterloo in 1984. The highlight of my 4<sup>th</sup> year was a cartography project. The map I created showed how over time, tender fruit land on the Niagara Peninsula was disappearing. Now, 30 years later, its even worse. I

wish I could share that map with you today, I knew someday it would come in handy, but it was unavailable to me on short notice.

I returned to Hamilton in the 90s for 8 years, visiting The City of Stoney Creek many times, and saw so many farm fields, and orchards I remembered from my job in 1981, now filled with row after row of new, mainly single family homes.

Now, 15 years later, I've moved back again, with my son, born here in the 90s, who's attending Mohawk College. Right away I met a group of friends, you've likely heard about recently, including the 2 women who took to the water of Hamilton Harbour a few weeks ago, protesting the hazardous environmental disaster they has found along the shore there in October. It was during my time by the water with them, that I met Councillor Matthew Green, among many other City Staff, journalists, and supporters.

A few days ago, I learned through Councillor Green about today's meeting, and made an application to be heard.

Hamilton has many natural treasures, created and shaped over millions of years, giving us a landscape rich in natural resources. From Lake Ontario, to the Niagara Escarpment, our many waterfalls, and more. Ancient glaciers left their mark on our landscape. The Niagara Fruit Belt is a result of the sand and clay particles deposited by them. Glaciation set the stage for the prime agriculture soils in Niagara, along with the unique micro-climate effects in the region, producing ideal growing conditions for tender fruits, such as grapes and peaches, and have made the region recognized at both a provincial, national and global scale. (In Grimsby, Beamsville and Hamilton, terraces mark the location of the ancient glacial shorelines.)

So, why now, in 2015, during the week world leaders are meeting in Paris to discuss Climate Change, are we considering giving up some of our precious Green Belt? Those trees help clean our air, and feed us.

Have you considered that:

- only 6% of Canada's land is farmable?-that less than half a percent of Canada's land is considered Class 1, meaning it has no significant limitation for farming?
- or that less than 0.004% of Canada's land is suitable for growing tender fruit?

Did you know that:

- More than 85% of urban growth has happened on Class 1-3 lands, (and fruit lands.)
- or that Class 1 land is twice as productive as Class 4, and fruit lands are even more productive
- or that in the past 50 years, over 6 million hectares (60,000 sq km) of agricultural land in Canada, and over 1.5 million (15,000 sq km) hectares in Ontario has been lost, that's roughly 2 times the size of Algonquin Park!

Now consider:

- 2/3 of the value of Canadian food imports consist of food that is grown commercially in Canada.

Living north east of Toronto the past 15 years, I seldom found Ontario produce locally. Everything was imported, even in summer when Ontario produce was in season.

Some unchecked facts I found online:

- There are more than 600 commercial tender fruit growers in the Niagara Region.
- The Niagara Peninsula accounts for 95% of Ontario's peach crop and 81% of Canada's peach harvest.
- The Ontario wine-production industry has matured over the past quarter century; Ontario wines now compete globally

## SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

All those fruit trees helped clean our air, and feed us.