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Submission to the City of Hamilton Planning Committee - December 2, 2015

Re: Coordinated Provincial Plan Review (Greenbelt Plan & Niagara Escarpment Plan Boundary Review) – City of Hamilton Comments (PED15078(a)) (City Wide)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

As a short introduction for some that may not know us, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club has been around since 1919, with the stated purpose of promoting the study, appreciation and conservation of wild plants and animals. To that end we have entered into many cooperative projects with the City of Hamilton, the conservation authorities, other NGO's and industrial partners and own, or manage for others, over a 100 hectare of natural lands.

Our immediate concerns centre around apparent omissions or errors in the information provided during Public Information sessions spoken of in the report before the Committee and the apparent rush to make the recommended amendments.

Specifically, regarding the block in Upper Stoney Creek, listed under section 3.2.3 of the present report, there is the understated importance of the natural lands here within the Battlefield Creek watershed and it's benefit in moderating the impact of extreme weather events downstream in urban Stoney Creek. The importance has been affirmed by the recent purchase of lands in this block by the Hamilton Conservation Authority. During the Public Information Open House, it was also specifically stated, under "Cultural Heritage" that there were no existing trails despite the fact the long established Dofasco Trail, maintained by the Hamilton Conservation Authority, passes directly through it.

We do not have the resources to thoroughly review all of the proposed parcels but the point is the omission of such obvious attributes in this parcel leads to questions about the possibility of missed attributes for the other parcels as presented at the Public Information Open Houses and how this might be reflected in the recorded public input in the Dillion report.

We do not understand the rush to remove the proposed parcels, particularly those in Stoney Creek since they contain both natural and agricultural lands and are not near currently built up urban areas, even if they do border the official Urban Boundary. There is no indication that they are urgently needed to meet the immediate demands of urban growth, especially when they are so far from existing built up areas and in the end, they can only contribute to urban sprawl.

Hamilton Naturalists' Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, appreciation and conservation of our wild plants and animals.

In addition there are several parcels being recommended here for removal from the Green belt, or the Niagara Escarpment Plan, that were not included in the Public Information Open House that I attended in Ancaster. Not having time to review the merits of these changes we can't properly comment on them.

As an organization dedicated to protecting the natural environment for nearly 100 years we obviously want to see the area under the Greenbelt Plan grow. At the same time removal of these parcels seems to weaken other urgent City initiatives like control of urban sprawl and subsequent increased infrastructure costs, and the City's Climate Change Strategy.

In summary we respectfully ask that the Committee approve a combination of Option 4 "Defer Greenbelt Plan Boundary Revision until Completion of Municipal Comprehensive Review" and Option 5 "Grow the Greenbelt" as presented in the report before you.

Thank you.

Paul D. Smith
Conservation and Education Director
Hamilton Naturalists' Club