

I'm happy to be with you again today to discuss the issue of Grids 2, the land needs assessment and the importance of farm land preservation. I am Drew Spoelstra, I farm in Binbrook and sit as Vice president of the OFA and the chair of Hamilton's Agriculture and Rural affairs advisory committee.

The OFA represents 38,000 farm families across Ontario and works as a strong advocate for Farms and Food forever. Farmland preservation and a sustainable agriculture system is a key priority for our membership and we continue to advocate provincially and locally for fixed urban boundaries to slow the loss of agricultural land. The goal being to benefit the overall agricultural system, agricultural services, agricultural infrastructure, local farm markets, distributors, food processors etc.

As highlighted by former chief planner in Toronto Jennifer Keesmat, Ontario loses on average 5 farms per week to development. That's 175 acres or 132 Tim Hortons fields per day of farmland lost permanently from food production capabilities right here in Hamilton and Ontario. We can better use land in our existing urban areas to build up- not out. At only 5% of Ontario's land base being suitable for food production, agricultural land is a finite, shrinking non renewable resource that must be preserved for food production.

The farm industry right here in Hamilton is home to 810 farms, producing grains and oil seeds, dairy, poultry, greenhouse vegetables and field grown local produce, contributing over \$1 billion in gross economic impact for the city. Not to mention the incredible contribution that the Hamilton Port authority plays in Ontario's agricultural economy as key player in the export/ import market and food processing sector.

The agriculture sector plays a key role in climate change mitigation and providing environmental benefits. The OFA also believes that Government's should recognize the non-agricultural benefits or environmental goods and services, provided by agricultural lands; aesthetic and recreational space, air quality and Biodiversity

Other Environmental benefits like carbon sequestration, climate change mitigation, nutrient cycling, pollination services, soil erosion control, water cycling (purification, retention, flood attenuation, groundwater recharge) and wildlife and endangered species habitat are possible when land is retained for Agriculture.

Hamilton enjoys a historical and vibrant rural economy with over 70% of our land mass being rural. The back bone to rural life in Hamilton is agriculture, an important primary sector to the city.

I fully appreciate the effort that staff have made to work towards an ambitious density target moving forward but it's simply not ambitious enough. With respect to the suggestion that removing 1340 ha is insignificant with Hamilton's vast rural landscape I would argue that just because land is in the greenbelt or the rural area doesn't mean it's a prime agricultural area or the best available land for food production.

If I can share my screen for a moment I took the liberty of identifying the prime agricultural areas in the Elfrida growth area through the OMAFRA web portal using the CLI. As you can see the overwhelming majority of this land is Classified as #1 with the rest in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> category under CLI. That's Prime Farm land. To put it in perspective of local food and production, this is land that every year has the ability to produce 5.3 million loaves of bread, 1.15 million litres of Ethanol for clean fuel production, 12.8 million litres of soy milk and hay and forage to feed 83,800 cows or Clydesdales for a day. Recently the ag sector made recommendations to the mayors economic recovery task force that identified Farmland protection as a top priority for the city to support Hamilton's economy.

Simply put we can't have it all. Lets focus on higher intensification targets and densities in urbanized areas and supporting our agriculture sector by permanently protecting food producing land in Hamilton.