

On Jul 15, 2021, at 9:14 PM, Richard Johnson wrote:

Hello Hamilton City Councillors:

I hope that all of you are well and safe. Rather than re-writing my letter below to all of you, I am sending you the copy that I sent to Mr. Jason Thorne today. In this email, which was copied to Councillor Johnson (and a result of previous email conversations with Councillor Johnson), I outlined my very deep concerns regarding the proposed plan for expanding current city boundaries into "whitebelt" lands adjacent to Hamilton as proposed by the City planning committee; in addition, I would like to share with you my concerns with the GRIDS2/MCR survey recently sent out. From the outset, my expectation is that Council will be working toward the establishment of a rich, sustainable, inclusive, diversified and climate resilient city of Hamilton in their deliberations and not a Hamilton that further deepens the many problems that our city currently faces and exacerbates the climate crisis that we are all facing; urban sprawl is not the answer to Hamilton's problems, both now or in the future! As councillors and leaders in our city who have been elected to make sound decisions for all Hamiltonians, I strongly urge you to approach urban planning decisions through the lens of our climate emergency and put a hard stop to the proposed urban boundary expansion which is being proposed by our City planners to deal with rather sketchy, future population growth numbers. We cannot follow the Ford government's example as their approach to land use is one aimed at benefiting Ford government supporters and using the environment for their own benefit whilst totally neglecting the needs of all Ontarians for a healthy environment. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Rick Johnson

Begin forwarded message:

From: Richard Johnson
Subject: Re: Proposed Boundary Expansion Survey
Date: July 15, 2021 at 12:27:07 PM EDT
To: "Thorne, Jason" <Jason.Thorne@hamilton.ca>
Cc: "Johnson, Brenda" <Brenda.Johnson@hamilton.ca>

Hello Mr. Thorne:

I hope that you and your family are all well. Thank you for your response to my concerns relayed to you via our ward 11 Councillor, Brenda Johnson. I have many concerns with this whole process of proposed boundary expansion to accommodate future growth in Hamilton. There are many issues within this larger issue that do not sit well with me and many others, especially those folks who are concerned with the environmental impact of expansion; it is beyond my comprehension to explain why City Planning appear to have set these environmental issues to the side and proposed a plan which for the most part ignores these critical issues.

The optics of the City plan to expand the boundaries of the current city of Hamilton are not good at all

and certainly not in the best interests of all current city residents. It appears that the City planners are simply proposing to gobble up some 3300 acres of land currently on the edge of today's Hamilton, much of which is prime agricultural land which is and should continue to be a prime food source for local communities. What will replace that food source if this land is developed for housing which may or may not be needed as projected future population figures are questionable in their own right and may or may not occur? As well, it clearly appears in a pronounced way that the land developers and local builders associations stand to accrue large profits from this development; for example, a certain builders association has taken out expensive newspaper ads advocating for boundary expansion where individuals and smaller groups in opposition to this proposed expansion do not have the deep pocketed means to conduct a similar campaign against expansion.

We all know (and when I say "we" that I include city staff) that suburban expansion infrastructure needed never pays for itself and simply drives taxes to current city residents up in a never ending spiral; this is all ludicrous when we have a backlog of critically needed infrastructure improvement and updating facing us and little in the way of financial means to address this backlog in the near future. It is clear that City planning may have overlooked the opportunities to create future housing within the current city boundaries. There are so many locations across Hamilton which could be repurposed or converted to accommodate this alleged population growth; I have recently learned of the term "missing middles" which seems to describe the fact that the City planners may not have considered current city spaces available for growth and see the growth issue in terms of either single detached home survey growth into sensitive environmental areas or large apartment type building growth where there are in fact many 'middle' type housing options that can be added to the mix and don't require expansion; other suitable housing options such as townhousing as well as low rise condo/apartment type buildings that could be built on current space within the current city limits seem to have been ignored. Proposed expansion into farmland areas to accommodate this alleged population growth simply means that these new homeowners will have to drive further and further to get to their jobs thereby accelerating the use of fossil fuels and further contaminating our environment and working against efforts to put an end to our growing climate crisis. Hamiltonians deserve better and that should start with the City Planning Committee re-looking at opportunities within the current city limits to develop and even re-develop existing spaces that lend themselves to intensification of development to provide suitable housing to new residents. This new housing will need to be affordable and in today's real estate and financial climate, it is highly likely that new homes built in new surveys on surrounding farmland will be far too expensive for the majority of buyers today; it is not news that wages have not kept up with the cost of living and the costs of the pandemic will simply add to the exaggerated costs for all new families coming to Hamilton to live. The reasonable answer again is to make any new housing opportunities affordable; the best way to do that is to develop and re-develop current city lands that are already serviced and not by creating new surveys of homes which have not been serviced and will need to be at high cost to any new home owners and current taxpayers. The only winners in all of this will be the advantaged land developers and builders who will reap large profits from the sale of their lands at inflated prices. Newcomers to Hamilton for the most part are not in a position to pay these inflated prices and I see it as the job of City of Hamilton council and planning committees to make satisfactory housing available at the most reasonable cost possible while not adding to the growing climate crisis that we all face!

I appreciate you taking the time to explain the GRID2/MCR (whatever the heck that is - poor optics, in my humble opinion) process to invite comment on the proposed expansion. When I put a sign opposing this expansion into farmland (Stop the Sprawl - HamOnt) on my front lawn, I had numerous neighbours make their way over to my home and ask me what this sign message was all about. They did this

because they knew little or nothing of this whole issue and wanted to know why any City planning committee would propose such a solution for city growth; at that point, it became clear in my mind that the City needed to do better in terms of engaging all Hamiltonians in the process and the postcard type survey did not cut it, obviously! As I had said to Brenda Johnson, I was the only one within 10 homes on my street who got this survey but almost all wanted to know how to get it and respond. One of the reasons was that the survey card was not clearly marked upfront "City of Hamilton" but was more clearly marked GRIDS2/MCR and very few know what that is and one could easily understand how it became possibly viewed as more junk mail. So, what could easily be seen as just more junk mail coming via the means that it did is likely resulting in a very limited number of responses from all Hamiltonians and really not a valid indication of the position on this issue of Hamilton citizens and if the survey does not get a reasonable response then it is not valid and really doesn't do what it was intended to do and that was to get a true picture of what Hamiltonians wanted to see happen with regard to expansion. It seems to me that the City, rather than conducting a personalized mail out to all residents (even if that took considerable time and expense) that would far more accurately measure response, it tried to expedite matters which have or will result in a less than valid response from citizens and certainly not a response that is a true measure of the position of Hamiltonians on boundary expansion! I understand the economics and time concerns of such an approach to determining public opinion but if Council really wants to know what the people think and if they really want to do what is best for the City, then they have to put out an instrument of measurement that gives all Hamiltonians a chance to validly feedback.

Following up on this position, I refer you to the article in the Hamilton Spectator of Monday, July 12, 2021 whose headline reads and I quote "Land use survey has serious design problems." With an issue of this magnitude that Hamiltonians will have to live with forever, this is not what I as a resident want to read! I will leave you to read that article (if you have not already read it) but it is written by two McMaster University professors who are biostatisticians with survey writing experience and it is their position that subtle changes in wording or framing can make a big difference in survey responses and cutting corners in conducting a survey can create bias; further, the professors indicate that "it is all too easy to get the answer that you want by manipulating the design and conduct of a survey." The professors go on to say that they have looked at the GRIDS2/MCR survey and even emailed the City volunteering to help look at how these problems might be dealt with for the collective benefit of Hamilton citizens; at the time of writing (July 12), the professors had not received any response from the City after 4 days and 2 follow up emails. What are the optics of no response by City officials when expert level help is volunteered to make sure that the City finds out what it wants to find out and what it needs to know to do the right things with regard to any possible boundary expansion for future growth? As a resident of Hamilton, I am not happy about this at all and I expect the City team to conduct a survey that truly examines the position of all Hamiltonians. The Spec article goes on to detail the problems regarding the nature of the survey and concludes with the statement, "our concern is the the long term plans for the future of our city may be based on flawed evidence and we hope that the City will do all that it can to mitigate the survey's shortcomings." At this point, it is clear to me that when the experts indicate that the City survey is flawed, then in my mind the results could also be flawed which could lead to a further flawed plan by the City planning team in an attempt to appropriately address the issue of proposed city boundary expansion into environmentally sensitive farmlands and wetlands and existing communities.

In summary, there are a lot of concerns about this proposed boundary expansion that need to be addressed and addressed in a valid, patient and thorough manner. This decision must reflect the opinion of all Hamiltonians, must not be rushed and certainly must not be subject to the lobbying efforts of developers and builders. The process must involve all stakeholders (not just the most influential) and

should certainly take advantage of community experts who are willing to be unbiased participants in the discussion for the betterment of all of Hamilton and it's citizens. Thank you for your time and attention and I am always available to hear what concrete solutions that the City will take to address these issues appropriately so that we arrive at a decision on boundary expansion that meets the needs of all new residents of Hamilton. Be safe and well.

Sincerely,

Rick Johnson