

Hello, everyone!

I am thankful for the bit of rain we had yesterday and for the opportunity to address you.

The Extinction Rebellion Hamilton Indigenous Affinity group has four demands, the first three of which are also international demands of XR.

1. TELL THE TRUTH
2. ACT NOW
3. GO BEYOND POLITICS
4. LISTEN! RESPECT! TRANSFORM!

The fourth demand is our own, which we now publicly share in part for the first time:

We steadfastly affirm and will uphold demands for and acts of self-determination and sovereignty by First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. The response to the climate crisis must centre the voices, rights and needs of communities who are most disproportionately impacted.

I will skip to our Fourth Demand for the moment, and how it relates to today's topic.

**Listen! Respect! Transform!** Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy document includes a special responsibility to consult with the Indigenous community. (Page 23, Action 3.) Heather Travis's slide only listed one Indigenous community engagement. It is important to hear Indigenous voices and to learn from Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples' world view of the land, that it cannot be commodified to \$18,000 an acre, 4 million if it's smothered by a subdivision, cannot be commodified at all, ever. Land is to be respected and listened to with due humility, as are the voices of one's ancestors: only then can you hear what Mother Nature and those who went before you are guiding you to do. As sprawl often destroys wetlands, this is another area that has to be understood, as Indigenous peoples never surrender their care of and duty to the water, no matter what agreements they or their ancestors may have made on their land - because water is life!

Hearing diverse voices takes effort on the part of established ones, and during the pandemic, is even more difficult to bring about because Indigenous and racialized communities are especially absorbed in taking

care of their vulnerable Elders and their families. The special duty to consult with Indigenous peoples should include the knowledge that our settler society has -since contact- perfected sprawl and that many of our own families have amassed land and its wealth at the expense of the life and health of Indigenous families, Nations and Peoples. Even immigrants without the benefit of “old wealth” (old stealth!) gain a foothold in this country and get to thrive, become developers, lawyers, landlords, professors (like my father), bankers or city councillors, not because of their hard work alone, but because of the privilege Canada’s ongoing genocide against First Nations and Indigenous Peoples affords them.

The XRIA Group suggests that land consultation should include honest, de-fused conversations about the concept of Landback. Understood instead of being feared, the concept of Landback should fill us with hope of true reconciliation and also of healing the land and water upon which all living beings depend for life. One important question that Skyler Williams, spokesperson of 1492 Landback Lane asks, is whether only settler communities are recognized as needing to grow and thrive, or as being allowed to grow and thrive? The implications of that question are vast and deep, and they need to be discussed in a peaceful way.

We want you to know that the XRIA Group, who are your constituents, are counting on you to **Act Now** to freeze the urban boundary, and to extend the timeframe for decisions about it until in-person delegating resumes. And we need detailed conversations such as would happen in a citizen’s assembly. (What time limit do your lobbyists have, I wonder?)

By creative use of as much infill building and gentle intensification within the existing boundary in the next ten years as possible, there would still be time to expand the boundary in responsible ways IF the population growth predictions mentioned by the provincial government and home builders associations appear to be accurate. The term “market-driven forces” often masks greed and land speculation, of which we should all be wary. Your constituents are also counting on you to **Tell The Truth** about why this push to lock in boundary expansion is even happening during a

pandemic, and to speak up against this land and power grab by the provincial government and its backers on our behalf. Slow that Mustang down!

And we in XRIA are counting on you to follow the City of Hamilton's 'urban indigenous strategy plan'. We have much to learn from an Indigenous world view that can help bring our settler society into balance. Our way of life has done so much harm to the more than human beings with whom Indigenous peoples have always shared a spiritual connection: we wish to highlight just two of those beings whose decline directly connects to sprawl.



Only five mating pairs left in southern Ontario

Barn owls (no doubt they have a different name in Indigenous languages), so shimmeringly elegant they personify the magic of woods on a moonlit night, need open hunting grounds and open wood barns they can fly into and nest inside. Agribusiness uses tightly closed steel structures that give barn owls nothing to grip. Sprawl and the intensity of agribusiness have also decimated the range of barn owls, as well as of the species they feed on, further endangering them to the point of “extirpation”. What a cold sad lonely word that is! It means “to be rooted out and destroyed completely.”

Barn swallows, so colourful, so swift and graceful in flight, with their own Indigenous legend as to how they got their distinctive tails, so good at devouring mosquitoes, are threatened in our province by the same sprawl factors as the barn owl; in their case, unyielding agribusiness structures that have replaced the family farm's wooden barns provide them many fewer places to stick their nests securely.

“Threatened” means the species lives in the wild in Ontario, is not endangered, but is likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it. Surely expanding the urban boundary anywhere in Ontario will not address these factors, but further damage these iconic birds' survival and ability to thrive, respectively. In XR, we understand that our survival is linked to the survival and ability to thrive of wild beings who share our world. Please consider a fixed urban boundary!



Good day to you all, on behalf of the XR Hamilton Indigenous Affinity Group.

