

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Restore Hamilton Plan**From:** Lyn Folkes**Sent:** July 2, 2024 3:19 PM

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Subject: Restore Hamilton Plan

Hello Council Members,

Thank you for taking action to try and mitigate the poor planning decisions that the province continues to force on our community. I feel that because we live in a democracy, and Ontario voted to protect the Ontario Greenbelt in its entirety, many of the province's actions should be, or are indeed, illegal. Clearly we need to do something about this and I am encouraged by our Biodiversity Action Plan and Toronto's recent announcement to halt gas expansion in their municipality. But there seems to be out-dated systemic problems in our planning process that need immediate attention in order to better protect our municipality's life-supporting natural heritage.

I recently participated in a City meeting about the AEGD lands, and noticed a serious problem in the consulting reports that I reviewed for the Garner Marsh property at 254 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster (GeoProcess Research Associates, EIS, 2021). I found that this Environmental Impact Statement used an out-of-date minimum size criterion to define the worth of a natural area. The report said that any natural area under 10 ha is considered of little value (unless it has some special provincial designation like an 'Area of Natural and Scientific Interest' (ANSI)). And basically, that these small natural lands shouldn't get in the way of development. This size criteria, however, seriously threatens too many important natural greenspaces and linkages left in our community. Ironically, we already have many 'small' greenspaces because of continued fragmentation that is caused by human development in cities.

So, the province and developers see no issue with 'offsetting' or 'moving' what is considered a 'small wetland' out of the way to benefit a developer, at the public's expense. From an educated perspective on wetland function, offsetting alone has a myriad of issues that make it inappropriate in the large majority of cases.

The Garner Marsh is in the headwaters of an important arm of Hamilton's hydrological system, the Ancaster Creek, as recognized in our official plan. Clearly, the marsh is an important source of water for wildlife and the Creek. Moving this wetland will destroy its over 50 years of ecological function, and harm every wildlife species using the marsh. Four bird species alone are "at risk" on this property, as designated both provincially and nationally. In fact, after completing my own recent survey, there are likely almost two dozen significant bird species (at some level) using the marsh and woodlands of this property for their survival.

But my main concern is this 10 ha size criteria. We have to change it before the province fills all our wetlands under 10 ha in size. We should be protecting all our wetlands as water quantity and quality become increasingly at risk with the progression of the global climate emergency. New warnings have just emerged from Europe about water scarcity around the world, so we need to protect our natural hydrologic systems in Hamilton more than ever. This minimum size criteria is sorely out-of-date and threatens our water supply.

Please make strong municipal policies to thwart the province's plans to harm our water. I also read that Caledonia is taking Hamilton water for major residential developments there? We just can't afford that any longer. Again, diverting water from any hydrologic system is out-dated thinking that won't help Hamilton taxpayers.

The natural heritage maps used in the EIS report mentioned above are also based on information mapped over a decade ago (in 2011) although much has changed. This needs to be addressed and up-dated quickly to keep current during the climate emergency and continued provincial threats to our well-being.

Lastly, I read about a recent request from the Aggregate Industry, that they be allowed to destroy 'small' natural heritage sites even if they are designated as a special ANSI or otherwise. This is outrageous backward thinking! I used to assume these things would never happen but I have no trust in our provincial leaders today, for obvious reasons. Please be wary of these comments.

These minimum size issues in planning evaluations, water diversions, and weak protections for wetlands and other natural heritage areas need to be up-dated in Hamilton with serious consideration for the global climate emergency. I know you are working on this and I strongly advise continuing improvements to ensure that we maintain a stable source of decent-quality drinking water into the future.

My family is mostly concerned about climate resilience today. The two-year old "Restore Hamilton Plan" (<https://www.saveourstreamshamilton.org/restorehamilton>) makes good points which you are likely aware of.

I hope this helps.

Thank you!

Lyn Folkes

Master's of Environmental Studies, University of Waterloo, 1994