

Dear Minister Clark,

I am writing this letter as a concerned citizen and professional consulting ecologist to urge you and the provincial government to reconsider the amendments to the Greenbelt Plan outlined as part of ERO 019-6216.

It is understood that the proposal has been put forward to expedite the availability of new housing in province. However, the collective wisdom and concern of professional planners, ecologist, engineers, and the public cannot be ignored. There is a clear and unambiguous understanding that lands in the Greenbelt are not required to be developed to meet our housing needs. As a professional in the industry, I agree with this sentiment. This is, however, small potatoes compared to the growing angst that this proposal is creating within the general public.

Today (December 4th, 2022), I attended a rally in the City of Hamilton to see what a subset of the community is saying about the proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Act – unequivocally the message was that this is just a bad idea. There was over one thousand attendees – this however, was not the most compelling aspect of the rally. What was overwhelming, was the number of cars driving by that clearly supported the message that the congregation was spreading. From my perspective, over 80% of people passing by in the hour or so ‘honked’ in support of the rally.

I digress.

From my perspective, there is a collective understanding that the combined emergencies related to climate, food security, and biodiversity are the among the highest concerns among constituents of this province. Policy that is put forward that challenges these issues is going to result in swift and forceful opposition – even if it is proposed to speed up housing availability.

As a professional ecological consultant, I would urge the government to consider alternative policy overhauls that will speed up development approvals process by requiring development applications to begin with due diligence assessments that rapidly define the limits of development based on environmental and hazard constraints, and which then design around these constraints. Based on over three decades of working with developers that are amenable to this approach, it can result in approvals that are realized in half the time of those that are more confrontational and aimed at maximizing developable area and profit. This is anecdotal, but certainly development applications that take an environment-first approach are much less complex in terms of time and resources needed for approval by responsible authorities.

Undeniably, it is clear to the general public, and supported by professionals that study this type of thing, that lands within the Greenbelt are not require to meet our housing needs.

Think long-term and understand that what has been tabled by the government with this proposal does not make sense to professionals, the public, and ultimately undermines the credibility of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Sincerely,

Steve Hill, PhD

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