To Mayor Fred Eisenberger, and Hamilton City Council:

The City of Hamilton has recently announced that the public is invited to attend and express views on the new Urban Official Plan. This new Urban Official Plan provides direction and guidance on the management of our community for the next thirty years. This new Urban Official Plan designates lands in Elfrida and Upper Stoney Creek as the City of Hamilton’s only Future Urban boundary expansion area. These same lands where included in the City of Hamilton’s Rural Official Plan as Special Policy Area B Future Urban Growth Node. The Province of Ontario in it’s Notice of Decision, December 24th, 2008 section # 49 stated that Special Policy Area B – Future Urban Growth Node was to be deleted in it’s entirety. The conclusion of the GRIDS Final Report was that an Urban Boundary Expansion was not warranted because of the available unit supply within the existing urban area, 31,911 in vacant land inventory and 26,500 intensification potential, 58,411 units. Hemson Consulting estimates that the city of Hamilton will require 55,000 units for growth from the year 2006 to the year 2026. The city of Hamilton does not need an Urban Expansion to at least the year 2026. Since the GRIDS GROWTH STUDY the city of Hamilton has increased the Downtown Urban Growth Density Target from 200 persons and jobs per hectare to 250 persons and jobs per hectare. In fact we would have a surplus of 3,411 units. These units could support future growth and development for a period of 2 or 3 years beyond 2026 (2028-2029). We are also in an economic downturn, a recent article in the Hamilton Spectator of May 20, 2009 stated that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation predicts building permit numbers to plunge in 2009 and that it will take at least four years before home construction in Canada returns to the level experienced earlier this decade. They also state that in Hamilton and Burlington housing starts will drop at least 29% in 2009. The Grids Growth projections were made from the year 2003 to 2006 when the Canadian and City economy were in much better shape. It is conceivable given the economic times and the increase in the Downtown Urban Growth Targets that the year 2028 – 2029 could be too ambitious a projection of when an Urban Boundary expansion is necessary.

The Grids Growth Study concluded that an Urban Boundary expansion is not warranted at this time. The Provincial Policy Statement states that a full comprehensive review is necessary at the time an expansion is warranted, in other words a new Grids Study would be needed. The Grids Study of 2003 would not be relevant to the realities of the city of Hamilton in the year 2028 – 2029. In fact even today the Grids Growth Study is highly controversial and in many ways flawed. The Grids Growth Study was based on Triple Bottom Line Assessments by
evaluators that compared the different growth options under the headings Community Well Being, Ecological Well Being and Economic Well Being. A significant amount of information and facts presented to the evaluators by the City of Hamilton’s Planning Department about the Twenty Road East Growth Option and the Elfrida Growth Option was either false or completely omitted. Myself and others have made numerous verbal submissions, sent letters and reports to the city of Hamilton outlining these falsehoods and major omissions but have never received an adequate response from the city of Hamilton’s Planning Department. The city is now in the process of submitting the new Urban Official Plan to the Province of Ontario, the Elfrida area has been designated in this plan as the city of Hamilton’s only residential future Urban Expansion area. I would like once again to summarize the serious flaws of the Grids Triple Bottom Line Assessments and the unfairness of the Grids Growth process.

- The Grids Growth Study was initiated in 2003 and was introduced to the public on Tuesday May 16 and the evening of Wednesday May 17, 2006, at two public information meetings. On the afternoon of May 18, 2006, the Grids Final Growth Report was presented to the Committee of the Whole. The Committee of the Whole recommended that the preferred Growth Option Nodes and Corridors be approved and incorporated into the new Official Plan for the city of Hamilton. Six days later on May 24th, 2006 Grids was presented to Hamilton city Council, voted on and ratified as Hamilton’s only residential expansion area. Grids was rubber-stamped through Committee of the Whole one half day after being introduced to the general public. There was no time for anyone to properly study or assess Grids or for any changes to be made to Grids. The last three years the city of Hamilton’s Planning Department has completely refused to alter Grids, in any way shape or form, their standard response has been “No changes to Grids”.

- The November / December 2005 Public Event Consultation Report lists a full page of reasons that the Greenbelt lands of Pleasantview in Dundas should not be part of the Grids Growth Study. Some of the reasons given were Pleasantview was protected under Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Parkway Belt West Plan and the Greenbelt Plan, the Pleasantview area has been conclusively determined to have biologically significant flora, the Pleasantview area serves as a buffer to Cootes Paradise, and the city should consider inclusion of Pleasantview within NEC jurisdiction. The city of Hamilton’s Planning and Development Department with all of these ecological and environmental concerns about Pleasantview included these lands as part of the Twenty Road East Option # 3 Distributed Development Growth Option. The public consultation event report states that Option # 3 because of Pleasantview “THIS OPTION WAS HIGHLY CRITICIZED”. The Grids Draft Report also documents the Triple Bottom Line Assessments
of the evaluators and the only concerns about the Option # 3 Growth Option were about the environmental and ecological drawbacks of Pleasantview. The city Planners after the T.B.L. Evaluation Process of the different Growth Options stated on page 64 of the Grids Final Report, that the only reason Option # 3 was rejected was that “future development in Pleasantview is not a rational option”. The Grids Report came out three months later in May 2006 the lands of Pleasantview were still in Option # 3 the Twenty Road East Growth Option. The Planning Department should have taken the lands of Pleasantview out of the Twenty Road East Growth Option and considered these lands on their own merits.

- The Provincial Policy Statement in section 2.3.1. states “Prime Agricultural Areas shall be protected for long- term use for agriculture”. The Greenbelt Plan, the Places to Grow Plan and Vision 2020 also states that the preservation of Prime Agricultural Lands is one of the most important considerations that municipalities must consider when assessing new development and Urban Expansions. The P.P.S. states it clearly in section 2.3.5.1. “Planning Authorities may only exclude land from prime agricultural areas if there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid Prime Agricultural locations”. The city of Hamilton commissioned SOIL RESOURCE GROUP in June 2003 to initiate a LEAR STUDY to identify prime agricultural areas in contiguous designations within the city and to differentiate these from rural (non prime ) lands. The Soil Resource Group Finalized their final report in February 2005. The results of that report was that all of the lands in the Twenty Road East area were classified Rural non-prime agricultural and all of the lands in Elfrida were classified Prime Agricultural . The results of this lands evaluation and Area Review study was intended to direct growth to non prime agricultural areas and preserve the Prime Agricultural Areas for future generations. The city of Hamilton’s Planning and Development Department identified the lands in the Twenty Road East Growth Option as Prime Agricultural instead of RURAL (NON-PRIME AGRICULTURAL). All of the Province of Ontario’s guidelines, directives, Plans and Acts are clear and specific about the priority that municipalities must place on the development of non – prime agricultural areas first and the preservation of prime agricultural areas. The city of Hamilton’s preferred growth option nodes and corridors will be built on a large contiguous prime agricultural area and the Twenty Road East non-prime agricultural area will not be developed at all. Instead of following Provincial Policy to preserve prime agricultural areas the city of Hamilton proposes to develop them before developing a non-prime agricultural area. How could the city of Hamilton’s Planning Department go through a three year Growth Study and not identify the Soil Classification accurately. What was the purpose of spending large sums of monies for a one and a half year LEAR STUDY and mislabeling the agricultural designation of the
Twenty Road East area. If the evaluators would have been aware that the lands of the Twenty Road East Growth Options were non-prime agricultural wouldn’t they have followed the Provincial Policy Statement’s directive to develop non-prime agricultural areas before prime agricultural areas. What possible reason would their Triple Bottom Line Assessments favor development of the prime agricultural area of Elfrida before developing the non-prime agricultural area of Twenty Road East?

- The P.P.S. states in section 2.2.1. “Planning Authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by identifying surface water features, ground water features, hydrological functions and natural heritage features and areas which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the watershed”. The T.B.L. evaluations of the Grids Growth Process under the heading Ecological Well Being stated that the Twenty Road East option would have “moderate potential for some impact on water quality and quantity in downstream watershed as a result of development”. This same Grids T.B.L. evaluation stated that the Elfrida Growth Option # 5 Nodes and Corridors “Elfrida development has the largest potential for impact on downstream flood hazards, wetlands and geological features in the Twenty Mile Creek Watershed”. The Triple Bottom Line Assessment of the Elfrida growth option had one major omission, the Sinkhole Creek is centered in Elfrida and is a sub watershed of the Provincially Significant Natural Area the Twenty Mile Creek, was never mentioned in the Triple Bottom Line Assessment. The Sinkhole Creek has a sub watershed of 17 square kilometers and is characterized by sinkholes, depressions, caves and underground drainage this type of topography is known as Karst. The P.P.S. in section 3.1.1. under the heading “Natural Hazards” defines Hazardous Sites as “means property or lands that could be unsafe for development and site alteration due to naturally occurring hazards, these may include unstable soils or unstable bedrock”. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority in their Twenty Mile Creek Watershed Plan states that there was significant Karst Topography along the Sinkhole Creek and it’s Watershed. The Twenty Mile Creek Watershed Plan actually states “due to the location of the Karst features, future study of the area from a hazards perspective is likely not necessary (Terra Dynamic Consulting 2005) because they will never be threatened by development”. It is inconceivable that the city of Hamilton’s Planning Department was unaware of the Sinkhole Creek centered in Elfrida with a subwatershed of 17 square kilometers and that the Sinkhole Creek and it’s subwatershed were recognized by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority as being an area of Karst Topography (Hazard Lands). These two major omissions from the Grids Ecological Well Being Triple Bottom Line Assessments greatly affected the results
of the growth study. The city of Hamilton’s Planning Department should have made these important facts available to the evaluators.

- The Grids Growth Study was highly unfair to the Twenty Road East Growth Option. A prime example is demonstrated on page # 67 of the Grids Final Report, under the heading REFINEMENT OF PREFERRED GROWTH OPTION states “following the T.B.L. evaluation city staff met to review the outcomes and the recommendations to refine the preferred growth option”. The city of Hamilton’s Planning Department met after the T.B.L. evaluation of the Grids Growth Process and added 420 acres to Option # 5 Nodes and Corridors. A comparison of the maps of Option # 2, Distributed Development and the Preferred Growth Option reveals that they are exactly the same lands. Option # 2 Distributed Development was rejected during the Grids Growth Process because it would remove 2500 acres of Prime Agricultural lands for development. Astoundingly the city planners simply RE-LABLED the rejected Option # 2 and called it the Preferred Growth Option Nodes and Corridors. Also highly unfair to the Twenty Road East Growth Option, the same Planning Department refined the preferred Growth Option by adding approximately 250 acres of land that was not part of the GRIDS GROWTH STUDY, these lands were completely UNEVALUATED. These 250 acres are located between First Road East and Second Road East and Mud Street and Highland Road East. City staff added these unevaluated lands after the T.B.L. evaluation process. What was the purpose of a three year Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (Grids) when at the end of the Study, lands that were not part of the process and were completely unevaluated are included for development.

- The city’s of Hamilton’s Planning Department concluded that development in Pleasantview in Dundas “was not a rational option” on page # 64 of their report they state “it conflicts with the cities Nine Directions to Guide Development, Vision 2020, the Provincial Policy Statement, draft Places to Grow Plan and the Parkway Belt West Plan. City staff met to refine the Preferred Growth Option after the Triple Bottom Line Assessment and conclusion that Option # 3 was rejected because development of Pleasantview was not a rational option. The city of Hamilton’s Planning Department had a perfect opportunity to redeem itself even though the Process had been highly unfair to the Twenty Road East Growth Option they could have included the Twenty Road East Area in the Preferred Growth Option. The Twenty Road East Area T.B.L. Assessments concluded that development would only have moderate potential to impact the ecology, the lands were all non-prime agricultural and they contained no Karst Topography. Instead the city of Hamilton included prime agricultural lands that had
been rejected by the Grids Process (420 acres) and they also added completely unevaluated lands (250 acres). These 670 acres could have been phased in at a later date, the Twenty Road East Lands minus the 240 acres at Glancaster Road and Twenty Road West (these lands were included in the Preferred Growth Option) would have been approximately the same size and should have been included. There have been a number of private citizens, property owners, groups, lawyers and planners that have continuously made representations to the city of Hamilton and the city of Hamilton’s Planning and Economic Development Department outlining these and many more flaws of the Grids Growth Process. The response has been consistent “no changes to Grids”.

The results of the Grids Growth Strategy if approved will have far reaching negative consequences for the city of Hamilton for generations to come. The Province of Ontario through the P.P.S. and other planning guidelines and directives provides a framework for comprehensive long term planning to guide the municipalities in their planning decisions. Air quality and climate change effects are two of the many factors that need to be evaluated in the planning process. The Province promotes climate change strategies for example: compact urban form, improve the mix of employment and housing uses to shorten commute journeys and decrease transportation and congestion in other words LIVE/WORK/LIFESTYLES. The closer we are to our place of work the less time we spend in our vehicles, the less fuel consumption and air pollution (Greenhouse gases). Hamilton’s future employment lands are located in Mount Hope and Ancaster (49,000 new jobs) and Hamilton’s future residential urban expansion area is located exclusively in Elfrida and Upper Stoney Creek. The city of Hamilton instead of developing lands adjacent to their future employment lands to reduce commute times has decided through the Grids Growth Strategy to create a satellite city of commuters at a distance from their jobs. **The Twenty Road East lands are perfectly positioned between the future Airport Employment Lands and the North Glenbrook Industrial Business Park.** Why hasn’t the Province of Ontario’s air quality, climate change and Peak Oil strategy being implemented in the city of Hamilton.

The Provincial Policy Statement states that any proposed future urban area expansions will only be considered during the comprehensive five year review. The conclusion of the GRIDS FINAL REPORT was that an urban boundary expansion was not warranted for the short or mid term. The P.P.S. mandates that a comprehensive review and studies should be undertaken at the time an urban boundary expansion is needed and permitted by Provincial Policy. The Province of Ontario recognizes that things change over time and what was relevant in 2003 when Grids was initiated could be outdated at the actual time that an urban expansion is necessary. In fact we have prime examples of this the last two or three years. Grids was finalized in 2006, since then the Downtown Urban Node Density Targets have been increased from 200 – 250 persons and jobs per hectare. We are now in an
economic slump some analysts label this a severe recession, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation predicts building permit applications will plummet 29% in Hamilton in 2009 and that this trend will continue for at least four years. The prime example of the economic slump we are in are the large number of plant closings in our area, one of the city’s largest employers stelco has closed with no immediate plans of re-opening. These two factors increased targets for the downtown and a recession that is decimating new housing starts alone would greatly alter the growth projections of Grids. There are many other factors in the future that would have to be considered and studied before a final decision on the location of an urban expansion area is made for example “PEAK OIL”. The declining reserves of oil and the increase of oil prices in the future will have a greater impact on our economies. The Province of Ontario has recognized this and has directed the municipalities to implement air quality, climate change and Peak Oil strategies. The city of Hamilton’s new Urban Official Plan contradicts all of these principals.

The Province of Ontario has formulated the P.P.S. and all of the other directives to guide development over a number of years. They have seen many mistakes by municipalities in their planning decisions in the past and the Province has designed a clear common sense easy to understand Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Hamilton’s New Urban Official Plan will finally be presented to the Province of Ontario in June 2009. Myself and others are looking forward to finally having our concerns about the city of Hamilton’s Grids Growth Study and the Grids Growth Results submitted to the Province of Ontario.

Sincerely,

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CC.
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