January 16, 2008

His Worship
Mayor Fred Eisenberger
City of Hamilton
77 James Street North
Suite 230
Hamilton ON L8R 2K3

Dear Mayor Eisenberger:

Thank you for your letter of November 30, 2007 and enclosed staff report concerning the Hamilton Rural Official Plan (Rural OP) which has been submitted to the ministry for review and approval in accordance with the Planning Act.

I appreciate the importance of the Rural OP to the City of Hamilton, as it is the first step in creating a new official plan for the entire restructured city – one which will replace the former regional and lower-tier official plans. I understand that the city is currently developing a new Urban OP, which is the second step of the process.

As part of creating the Rural OP, I understand that the city has updated its policies and land-use designations to reflect current provincial policy, including the Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) – which came into effect on February 28, 2005 and March 1, 2005, respectively.

In the course of its review, the ministry has proposed potential modifications to the Rural OP which include ‘One Window’ input from provincial partner ministries and additional modifications as requested by city staff. On April 16, 2007, we provided potential modifications to the adopted Rural OP for Council’s consideration.

On May 16, 2007, Hamilton Council’s response to our potential modifications was forwarded to the ministry for further consideration prior to a decision being made.

With respect to your recent concerns about timing, I can inform you that staff are currently reviewing the adopted Rural OP in light of council’s response. As you are aware, we are also currently sharing information about the Rural OP with certain First Nations as part of our communication with Aboriginal communities regarding land-use planning matters. City staff has been informed of and has been jointly involved in these communications throughout the process, and I would like to thank them for their participation and cooperation in this process.
Mayor Fred Eisenberger

To date, the ministry has written and met with representatives of two First Nations to provide information about the Rural OP: the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and Six Nations (both the elected council and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council). The most recent meeting was held on November 30, 2007.

As you noted in your letter, the Planning Act requires circulation to the Chief of every First Nation council for all official-plan approvals dealing with lands within one kilometer of a reserve. While no First Nation reserves are within one kilometer of the area to which the proposed Rural OP applies, the Province wishes to share information about the Rural OP as part of our communication with Aboriginal communities regarding land-use planning matters. The ministry is proceeding with efforts to complete these communications and is hoping that City staff will continue to assist in this regard.

I can assure you that we understand Hamilton Council's strong desire to move forward with the Rural OP, and we appreciate your continued cooperation as we undertake this stage in the process.

The Rural OP is an important municipal planning document that provides a vision for Hamilton's rural and agricultural areas. Ultimately, the Province must be satisfied that a thorough review has been completed prior to making a decision on this plan.

Once again, thank you for bringing this important matter to my attention.

Sincerely yours,

Jim Watson, MPP
Minister

c: Mr. Tim McCabe, General Manager, Planning and Economic Development, City of Hamilton