Mr. Chair and Members of the Planning Committee:

“Many Ontario residents and neighbourhood groups are concerned about development proposals in their communities. Unfortunately, these residents and ratepayer organizations often lack the resources and specialized knowledge necessary to navigate the complex planning approval process. The system is hugely weighted in favour of those in the development industry, who have the resources, knowledge and experience (and access to a stable of planning, environmental and other professionals with specialized expertise) to skillfully argue their case. The resources that developers are prepared to invest to overcome residents’ objections far surpass the capacity of most citizens groups, environmental organizations, and even conservation authorities and municipalities.”

And I can attest to this personally – the protection of the browlands has been a passion and priority of mine for the last five years. I have attended public meetings, traveled to Toronto with the Planning department to look at similar developments, developed and maintained an information website, handed out flyers, hosted a community bbq, developed presentations and chaired many community meetings and much, much more. And I can tell you that I have not done this for personal gain nor do I suffer from a not in my backyard syndrome. I have done this because I honestly believe that the browlands deserve my care, attention and time. And I have not been alone in this time and energy commitment. There has been a very small group of us working very hard on this for what feels like a very long time. We are actually getting quite tired by the whole matter.

We have given a lot of ourselves and would respectfully ask that we somehow be involved in the “settlement” that will be presented to you today. From what I understand there is a new applicant with a new and different plan. The community has been engaged on this since the development was a mere whisper – and just a rezoning request! And we need to stay involved thru to the end. I’m sure one more round of public consultation is not too much to ask for after our years of civic contribution on this issue.

We have enough energy for one more kick at the can and I think we deserve at least that.

You can’t finish this without us being at the table. On behalf of our community, I am asking you to send the plan back for a final public consultation.

Thank you for listening and for respecting the value of citizen input.

Rod Priel