

P & L LIVESTOCK LIMITED

4480 Paletta Court
Burlington, ON
L7L 5R2

December 13, 2016

Don Campbell
City of Burlington
Planning & Building Department
426 Brant Street
Burlington, Ontario
L7R 3Z6

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Re: Rural, Natural Heritage and Sustainability Policy Directions

We have reviewed staff report PB-83-16 regarding the Rural, Natural Heritage and Sustainability Policy Directions, and are providing our comments in advance of the December 15th Committee of the Whole meeting.

The primary issue we have is the unrecognized conflict that exists between the Agricultural System and the Natural Heritage System. On paper, regional and municipal staff suggests these two systems go hand in hand and operate in a cohesive manner. Unfortunately in reality, that is not the case.

The Natural Heritage System jeopardizes the future of agriculture by creating “no touch” zones around areas with woodlots, wetlands, and creeks, and then requires buffers and setbacks to those features that farmers must keep out of. Over time, those buffers naturalize, expanding the boundaries of the natural feature, and pushing the starting point for the buffers and setbacks outward into the agricultural land, shrinking the land available for farming. This is not theory, this is fact. We alone over the past 5 years have lost over 100 acres of prime agricultural land to the Natural Heritage System in rural Burlington. We have been directed to cease all agricultural activity on lands that have been historically farmed for the past 50 to 100 years and are identified as prime agricultural land in your Official Plan, and threatened with fines and penalties should we attempt to farm our land. That is the reality.

The policies claim normal farming practice are permitted on agricultural lands within the Natural Heritage System, however when we tried to install farm drainage tile on one of our farm properties, which is considered a normal farming practice, we were not permitted to do so. Rather than allow us to improve our agricultural land to optimize long term production, we were threatened with fines, and were asked to plant several thousand trees on the property in order to enhance the Natural Heritage System. This is land that has been farmed for decades, yet somehow should we continue to farm it, we are now committing an offence? That is the reality.

A farmer who wants to build a barn on their property or sever a surplus farm dwelling often needs to hire a professional planner to walk them through the layers upon layers of red tape nowadays, or help them decipher what it means when their property has multiple designations under both the Agricultural and Natural Heritage Systems, and which supersedes which when there are competing requirements. This demands significant time and money, and takes the farmers away from the actual business of farming. Many farmers are struggling to make ends meet as it is and simply cannot afford the time, money or effort needed to pursue upgrades to their property that would improve their agricultural operation, or attend public meetings and submit comments on policy directions such as the ones you are considering now. That is the reality.

While we appreciate that on paper the goal is to protect the long term viability of the Agricultural System and farm operators, the reality of the Natural Heritage System and more importantly how it is enforced has demonstrated that it is not working as intended, and in fact is hurting farmers.

Reconsideration of the impacts of Natural Heritage System policies is needed on a municipal, regional, and provincial level.

Yours truly,

P & L LIVESTOCK LIMITED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Pitblado', written over the company name.

Dave Pitblado