

February 27th, 2006

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Sent by Fax and Email on February 27th, 2006



Re: SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING RE:
PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LAND STATUTUE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (BILL 51)
EBR#AF05E0001

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) thank the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the opportunity to input to the reforms proposed as the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Amendment Law Act (known as Bill 51) and for Ontario Municipal Board reform.

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) is a federally registered not for profit corporation. It is a citizen-based advocacy group with hundreds of supporters in Campbellville, Kilbride, Mountsberg, Freelon, and Carlisle. FORCE was formed in June 2004 to protect our natural and built environments in the face of a proposed large-scale, below the established groundwater table, aggregate development in the Northeast Flamborough portion of the amalgamated City of Hamilton.

Further, FORCE is a member of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance. We support its general directions in response to this issue and notably those of lead groups like Ontario Nature, Environmental Defence, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Pembina Institute. Our submission focuses specifically on our experience in the Hamilton and western Halton regions and builds upon our submission made during August 2004 when the Ministry had issued three discussion papers on the topics of planning reform, the PPS, and OMB reform.

In general, FORCE supports the proposed reforms to Ontario's planning system and believes that they will make the municipal decision-making process more transparent, effective and accountable, and begin to make the OMB process more user-friendly and more reflective of local decisions while still protecting broader provincial interests.

FORCE does note one significant omission in terms of making the OMB more accessible and that is the absence of any form of intervenor funding for community groups.

We also encourage the government to resist suggestions to dilute the reforms and encourage it to proceed with the legislation and companion administrative reforms for the OMB in a timely fashion. We look forward to passage during the spring session of the Legislature.

FORCE believes that the initiatives presented in the attached submission are necessary to support the government's intent regarding planning and Ontario Municipal Board reform. They are also necessary to support, rather than undermine, the government's important directions in terms of permanent Greenbelt protection, source water protection, viable agriculture and rural strategy, and sustainable urban and rural development patterns within the Greater Golden Horseshoe and across the province.

FORCE thanks the Ministry again for the opportunity to input and looks forward to reviewing the government's response to these important initiatives.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Flint". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Graham Flint, B.A.Sc., P.Eng.
FORCE Chair & Spokesperson