

## The Greenbelt

By Laura Campbell

It's no surprise that my first column of 2019 is about the Greenbelt.

I am an environmentalist after all, and someone whose livelihood depends, in large part, on food that is grown in Southern Ontario.

The Greenbelt is more than just a piece of legislation ? or a swath of land that is meant to stay green.

It's a principle. It's the line that we aren't supposed to cross under any circumstances. It's where our FOOD and WATER comes from. It's how we survive in a planet that is going to hell.

How out-of-touch is this government with these principles? The principles of preservation. Of conservation. (To be conservative once meant to conserve. Not just money, but also land; think of what Theodore Roosevelt was most famous for: setting aside millions of acres for public land).

The Ford government cancelled renewable contracts that were employing real life people, but with Bill 66 are telling us instead that in order to be ?open for business? we shouldn't rule out paving over farmland.

Their handy justification, which on the surface feels generous, is that Queen's Park should give municipalities more power over their own decision-making (such a convenient irony for them, given how much power they exerted over Toronto by shrinking city council, for instance, or how happy they'd be to see amalgamation happen closer to home).

I'm so tired. I'm tired of fighting for common sense. I'm confused that our MPP isn't openly expressing, at the very least, concern about this section of Bill 66, knowing how much her own supporters and constituents like me and my children, support and rely on the Greenbelt.

Sylvia Jones must listen to her constituents on this. There's got to be a way to balance environmental needs and business development.

There have been a whole array of bills that have passed which I take personal and political issue with. That's no surprise considering I'm a Green Party member. But in almost all cases, I can understand her position. I vehemently disagree, but I understand her political logic. Except on this. She MUST oppose the bill unless her party is willing to amend this section. That would be the brave, and right thing to do. It would align with her support of farmers, and the environment.

In the summer, she gave an address at the Mono Pollinator Garden grand opening ? graciously thanking community members who have come together to organize, and plant a vacant meadow on Hockley Road with wildflowers and other plants.

She talked about the power of ?community? and how we can all do our part to protect the environment.

Now it's time to do her part. Without green space, we don't have pollinators. Without pollinators, we don't have food. Food. This is about survival?. and business! The food industry is one of the biggest businesses in the world, certainly in Southern Ontario.

But it's not Doug Ford's business. He's not a farmer. He definitely doesn't strike me as an ?eat local? advocate, either. No. Doug Ford's friends are developers. They are the men who have made their millions paving over farmland until we said NO MORE SPRAWL over a decade ago.

I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but is it any surprise that Patrick Brown was taken down so quickly?

He was a supporter of the Greenbelt and a supporter of the carbon tax. And then Doug Ford became leader. And Ontario Proud made a bunch of money from his developer friends (Mattamy Homes gave Ontario Proud \$100K, only one of the many that contributed astronomical sums to the Facebook group that helped take down the Liberals).\*

Ontario Proud did the legwork for the developers and their green space hitmen.

There are plenty of resources out there if you want to understand how a two-acre plot converted from farmland to an industrial warehouse, for instance, interrupts important ecological systems that are already under assault. Those resources are readily available on Google. But beyond that? it's the principle of conservation in a natural environment under siege that we must protect.

If you have some New Year's Resolutions, and if they include advocating for this planet we share, let that be the one you keep. Send an email to our MPP: [sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org](mailto:sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org). We finally have real representation in Dufferin-Caledon, with a Cabinet Minister for MPP. Let's use that to our benefit.

\* This in and of itself is an interesting sidestep to election financing rules, and arguably the Liberals and NDP have also benefited from this via organizations like LeadNow and North99.