DVTK Comments on the Proposed Bill 66: Schedule 10

Thanks to a workshop hosted by Environment Hamilton at Knox Presbyterian Church in Dundas on January 15th, 2019, I am better informed about the environmentally destructive powers of the proposed Bill 66 (Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, introduced in the Legislature on December 6th 2018) and the ways in which individual citizens and environmental groups can voice their opposition. As pointed out by EH staff, Bill 66 will open up Ontario’s Greenbelt for industrial, commercial and residential development (Greenbelt Act, 2005), undermine drinking water regulations (Clean Water Act), and regulations aimed to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals that industries are allowed to release into the atmosphere (Toxic Reductions Act).

Speaking as a member of the Dundas Valley Tree Keepers, and on behalf of this group, we have particular concerns about the possibility of residential/ commercial development encroaching on the Greenbelt lands to the west of Dundas (City of Hamilton) and infill intensification in the downtown core, both of which would lead to the loss of trees and wooded areas, if Bill 66 is passed and Hamilton City Council were to adopt Schedule 10 (Open for Business By-law).

The [Dundas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dundas,_Ontario) Valley Tree Keepers (DVTK) are a group of community volunteers who are passionate about the trees in the Dundas Valley, an area endowed with a large number and variety of trees in urban, rural and natural settings. The group formed after the completion of the first Dundas Trees Count in fall 2007. It has successfully nominated two *heritage* trees for inclusion in Trees Ontario’s Heritage Tree Program: a very large tulip tree on Cross Street and a very old Chinquapin Oak in Fisher’s Mill Park at the west end of King Street. The DVTK have educated the public about the importance of trees to the health and beauty of our environment and the threat of diseases that can wipe out and entire species, such as the ash and elm. We have conducted guided walking tours, published a self-guided walking tour, and organized public presentations, and conducted tree surveys.

Given the very real threat of global warming, municipalities across the Province of Ontario, need to pass by-laws aimed at preserving and replenishing trees and forests both in rural and urban areas. Trees are an extremely important environmental asset: they produce oxygen (through process of photosynthesis), improve air quality, conserve water, reduce soil erosion, and support wildlife. Trees provide food, protection and shelter for many birds and mammals. Our group therefore strongly opposes the undermining of any environmental legislation (such as the Greenbelt Act) that now protects the valuable resource of trees and woodlands in the Dundas Valley.

Dundas Valley Tree Keepers