

**To: City of Cambridge Council**

**Date: January 1, 2019**

**From: Cambridge Environmental Advisory Committee**

**Re: Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018**

This letter was prepared by the Cambridge Environmental Advisory Committee in response to the concern over the proposal of Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018 and the negative environmental impacts that will result if Bill 66 is passed.

Municipal governments recognize the importance of the natural environment, clean water and clean air, not only for human health but for the ecosystem services they provide to our community. Municipalities play an important role in environmental conservation, particularly through the development of municipal official plans and by-laws that can protect the physical environment and wildlife within their jurisdiction.

The stated purpose of the Bill is to "stimulate business investment, create jobs, and make Ontario more competitive by cutting unnecessary regulations that are inefficient, inflexible or out of date". The proposed changes would permit a municipality to pass an "open-for-business by-law" for a "streamlined" process, removing the requirements for public consultation and not requiring consistency with municipal official plans, the Planning Act or provincial plans.

The revisions proposed in Bill 66 would greatly weaken and even remove our current protections on water, wildlife, agricultural lands and greenspace, where in many instances the Region of Waterloo has been a leader with strong official plan policies that make this Region desirable to live in. The proposed changes would weaken the critical protections that were put in place after the Walkerton tragedy, where contaminated drinking water killed seven people and thousands more became ill. For over a decade, Cambridge is still dealing with the negative effects where Trichloroethylene (TCE) was found to have contaminated the groundwater, which has come at a great expense to our community and the taxpayers. We should not risk any further threats to our drinking water sources by relaxing the current common sense rules for big businesses and development.

The passing of Bill 66 would undermine a municipality's ability to protect the environment which ultimately impacts the health of the people who live in our community. Now is not the time to turn a blind eye in the face of climate change, creation of "heat islands" and flooding. Our environment should be conserved based on a precautionary approach while using the best available science, information and traditional ecological knowledge in our decision making processes. It is also not the time to ignore the lessons where we gained much knowledge so as not to repeat these mistakes.

The Cambridge Environmental Advisory Committee urges Cambridge Council to not support Bill 66, but to continue adopting strategies, policies and by-laws that make strong commitments to the environment and the protection of the water, wildlife, greenspaces and rural agricultural communities that make Waterloo Region unique. Environmental protection is vital to the health of our community and not only offers a healthy place to live, but also encourages physical activity and improves mental wellbeing. Without the oversight of official plan and provincial policies in the development process, the environment and the health of the residents of our community could face severe impacts and increase losses of natural resources with economic value.