

Thank you to the Gatineau City Council, city administrators and the Environment Committee for undertaking a consultation process for the development of an Environmental Policy for Gatineau. It is a difficult procedure, but one which is necessary and will be more than worthwhile for our future, if it is done correctly.

I would like to offer some comments on part of the Environmental Policy, specifically, on the objective of **Preserving Soil Resources**, and especially within the theme of Sustainable Development to *Protect Farmland and Appreciate its Value*.

As you may know, my husband and I are farmers. We raise beef cattle and horses in North Aylmer. Our farm is directly adjacent to the Cook Road Dump.

I am pleased to see that protecting farmland is one of the stated objectives in the draft of the City's Environmental Policy. This is positive, but it must be more than words on paper. Concrete action and concrete demonstrations by the City need to take place to protect farmland.

The City's Agricultural Committee needs some teeth. Its recommendations must be heeded, and not only when it is convenient for other City Committees. A perfect example of this is the current debate about installing cell phone towers on agriculturally zoned land. The Agriculture Committee recommended that the cell towers not be installed in the agricultural zone of North Aylmer. The Urbanisme Committee decided that it would be fine for the cell towers to be placed on North Aylmer's farmland. This is not consistent Policy and it certainly does not demonstrate that the City is serious about protecting and appreciating farmland. Let the farmland stay as farmland. There is not enough farmland; do not allow industrial, commercial or residential projects to be developed in the agricultural zone.

Close the old Cook Road landfill site. This former dump is located within the agricultural zone. It is situated right next door to a registered agricultural producer (us). The Cook Site is still receiving material. How can this be? How can a dump that was "closed" 20 years ago still be accepting waste material? Protect the farmland surrounding the Cook Site. Close the dump for good.

The City's engineering projects, such as ditching and installation of culverts, need to be harmonized with agricultural activity. An example of this is a recent installation of a Canada Post Mailbox along North Aylmer's Baillie Road. This Mailbox serves about ten households. A culvert was placed in an existing ditch, and the Mailbox was placed on top of it. The culvert was not sunk deep enough to provide proper drainage through the ditch. As a result, the hay field and pasture that the ditch used to drain is now not draining properly. The fence posts have begun to float out of their holes, causing the fencing to collapse. This has caused a lot of unnecessary work and headaches for the farmer working that field. It was a preventable problem. If the City is truly committed to protecting farmland and appreciating its value to the community, simple projects such as the Canada Post Box example would be done in consultation with the farmers that are affected by the outcome.

The themes, objectives and directions of Gatineau's draft Environmental Policy seem to be on the right track. The Proposed Actions need to be more than words on paper. They need to have some new, creative approaches to solving our City's environmental problems, and they need to incorporate the citizens now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Sitzberger