

July 19, 2021

Mayor and Councillors of Township of Woolwich
Attn: Alex Smyth, Council and Committee Facilitator
Administration Office
24 Church Street West
P.O. Box 158
Elmira, Ontario
N3B 2Z6

Dear Mr. Smyth;

Re: Farmland Protection and Aggregate Extraction in Ontario

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members across the province. OFA has a strong voice in representing our members and the agri-food industry - on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government – that impact them. We are passionate and dedicated to ensuring the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability and growth of our farm businesses and in turn Ontario's food security and supply.

Ontario's diverse and innovative agri-food sector is a powerhouse for the province – growing and producing more than 200 farm and food products, fuelling our rural communities, and driving the provincial economy by generating more than 860,000 jobs and contributing over \$47 billion to Ontario's annual GDP. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses, their communities and Ontario's food security and supply as a whole.

We would like to take this opportunity to outline our position with respect to farmland protection and aggregate extraction in Ontario. We understand this information may be timely as the Council considers aggregate extraction within the Woolwich area. However, we note that our provincial policy positions are not meant to speak directly to any specific local matter or application before Council. We would defer comment on local matters to our respective affiliate organization, in this case the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture.

OFA wishes to emphasize that there is only one Ontario landscape, meaning that the full range of landforms and land uses found across Ontario; urban, rural, agricultural, natural heritage, cultural heritage, aggregate extraction, etc. must share this one landscape. Inherent in this is the recognition that our agricultural areas not only provide us with food, fibre and fuel, but also a broad range of environmental and ecological goods and services that benefit all Ontarians.

Maintaining our agricultural lands to produce food, fibre and fuel is critical. It must be recognized that there is a finite and shrinking amount of agricultural lands. To this end, OFA recommends

that aggregate extraction be prohibited on prime agricultural land (classes 1-4), and specialty crop lands.

Aggregate extraction is touted as an interim use. While the resource in pits and quarries will eventually be exhausted, meaning that the lifespan is finite, and the site will be rehabilitated to some end use, these uses are not short term. Removing parcels of land from agricultural use and indefinite duration of pits and quarries, impacts not only the farmer who farms the land, but also impacts neighbouring farm operations, as well as the businesses and services that serve them and rely upon agricultural output. Extraction puts land out of farm use for a decade or more; forever in the case of below water table sites.

In areas where agriculture is the predominate land use, rehabilitation must be to restore the site to an agricultural end-use. The rehabilitation goals and objectives for rehabilitated area and soil fertility must be achievable and measurable.

Licensed aggregate sites often exist for a long period of time. The loss of agricultural land from aggregate extraction has a detrimental effect on an area's agricultural economy. Even in situations where the land will eventually be rehabilitated back to an agricultural use, the rehabilitation lag has a detrimental effect.

OFA believes the highest and best use of Ontario's arable land is for agriculture. In fact, a motion passed recently with the recommendation of the majority of OFA-members, supports the designation of all lands in Ontario that are outside of current urban boundaries as Greenbelt. OFA has been in conversations with the Ontario government to consider a holistic, systematic, province-wide approach that identifies the most appropriate areas for growth with justifiable criteria and a comprehensive analysis. OFA has recommended to the Ontario government that sound public policy to create economic opportunities must be paired with thoughtful land use policies to protect water and soil for future generations.

Land capable of supporting agricultural activities is a finite, strategic, non-renewable resource worthy of preserving for its ability to provide safe, affordable, and sustainable food/fibre/fuel. The world's population is projected to rise to 9.8 billion by 2050, underlining the need to keep Ontario's highly productive agricultural land producing food for Ontario, Canada, and the world.

OFA appreciates this opportunity to provide our comments.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors
Waterloo Federation of Agriculture Board of Directors
Gord Grant, OFA Member Service Representative