



July 27, 2023

Honourable Nina Tangri
Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

Parliamentary Assistant Rob Flack
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

Dear Ministers Tangri, Thompson and PA Flack:

On behalf of the below-noted organizations, please accept our sincere appreciation for taking the time to host a roundtable of farm and municipal stakeholders last week to discuss the proposed Provincial Planning Statement.

By way of this correspondence, we would like to share with you common positions and recommendations of our groups.

Partnership

We support and embrace the government's objective to getting 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years in order to address a housing supply shortage that affects all Ontarians including the farm and agricultural sector. We seek to ensure that policies and proposals to increase housing supply are balanced with a focus on the Grow Ontario strategy objectives of strengthening the agri-food sector, supporting economic growth, and ensuring an efficient, reliable and responsive food supply for Ontarians.

Right to Farm

In order to achieve these goals, it is important to protect the right to farm. Quoting from Ontario's *Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998*:

"Because of the pressures exerted on the agricultural community, it is increasingly difficult for agricultural owners and operators to effectively produce food, fibre and other agricultural or horticultural products. It is in the Provincial interest that in agricultural areas, agricultural uses and

normal farm practices be promoted and protected in a way that balances the needs of the agricultural community with provincial health, safety and environmental concerns.”

Protect Prime Agricultural Land, Ensure Flexibility

We strongly support the existing 2020 Provincial Policy Statement agriculture policies that require municipalities protect their prime agricultural areas for long-term agricultural use. We support the flexibility afforded to farmers to engage in on-farm value adding of primary farm products, as well as agriculture-related, on farm diversified, and agri-tourism uses.

Lot Creation and Lot Adjustment

We believe that the limited circumstance permitting residential lot creation in prime agricultural areas under the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 adequately meets the severance needs of farmers while protecting our finite farmland. We recommend maintaining the current restricted residential lot creation as worded within the PPS, 2020.

Definition of Prime Agricultural Lands

We believe that prime agriculture lands should be defined as Class 1-6 plus speciality crop lands. Classes 4-6 support agricultural activities such as grazing livestock, growing crops for biofuels, and the agriculture sector has demonstrated that the productivity of this land can be improved through activities such as tile drainage, stone picking, and addition of lime. Provincial policy must continue to protect speciality crop areas because they are scarce and unique; if lost, they cannot be recreated. They are important economically and represent some of Ontario's highest earning agricultural lands. In addition, they provide many value-added and agri-tourism opportunities.

Not all agricultural land in Ontario is zoned as prime agricultural land, and there are many farms and agricultural lands that municipalities have zoned as rural land. The proposed change to add multi-lot residential development as a permitted use on rural lands within section 2.6.1 is very concerning and we believe unrestricted growth in rural areas will have negative consequences, especially for the preservation of agricultural lands. Land use planning in Ontario must balance opportunities for growth with the need to preserve our agricultural lands regardless of whether it is zoned rural or agricultural. Focusing growth in existing settlement areas will support local economies, reduce farmland loss and reduce land use conflicts.

Fixed Urban Boundaries

We support fixed permanent urban boundaries to limit the loss of agricultural land, thereby focusing future growth within existing urban boundaries. Urban growth should be focused on redevelopment of vacant and underused lands and higher density development. We further believe that higher density development should be mandated province-wide to take advantage of existing infrastructure and protect agricultural land.

We recommend maintaining the requirements for planning authorities outlined in PPS, 2020 1.1.3.8. It is important to demonstrate and not just consider (as it is presented in the Proposed PPS, 2.3.4), whether creating new and/or expanding current settlement areas will negatively impact prime agricultural areas, and whether there are reasonable alternatives within current urban boundaries through “intensification, redevelopment, and designated growth areas.”

Additional Residential Units (ARU)

We support additional residential units on farm to support government and sector goals of addressing succession planning and additional farm family housing needs and as an option for worker housing. No future severance should be possible for these additional residential units. We recommend a government/industry working group be established to develop the needed clarity and criteria for ARUs to ensure they are practical and compatible with existing agricultural operations.

Provincially Mapped Agricultural Systems

We support maintaining and expanding a provincially-mapped Agricultural System to ensure we still have farmland to produce farm products for future generations of Ontarians. This will ensure specialty crop and prime agricultural lands are consistently mapped across Ontario, and will support economic development and job creation across the whole agri-food value chain.

Conclusion

Again, on behalf of the organizations below, thank you for your sincere efforts to address the concerns brought forward by the agriculture and food sector and for working together with us to ensure that our rural and agricultural farmland across Ontario can be promoted and protected for long term viability of the sector while addressing immediate and urgent housing goals both on and off the farm.

Sincerely,



Jack Chaffe, President
Beef Farmers of Ontario



Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario



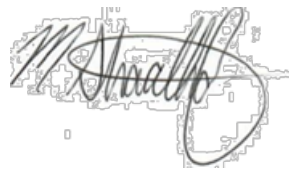
Murray Sherk, Chair
Dairy Farmers of Ontario



Janet Horner, Executive Director
Greater Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance



Max Hansgen, President
National Farmers Union-Ontario



Martin Straathof, Executive Director
Ontario Farmland Trust



Peggy Brekveld, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Tara Terpstra, Vice Chair
Ontario Pork

John Hemsted

John Hemsted, Chair
Sheep Farmers of Ontario

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Kroesbergen', with a stylized, flowing script.

Phil Kroesbergen, Chair
Veal Farmers of Ontario

cc: Honourable Steven Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing