

Agricultural Impact Assessments... What You Need to Know and Where to Find It.

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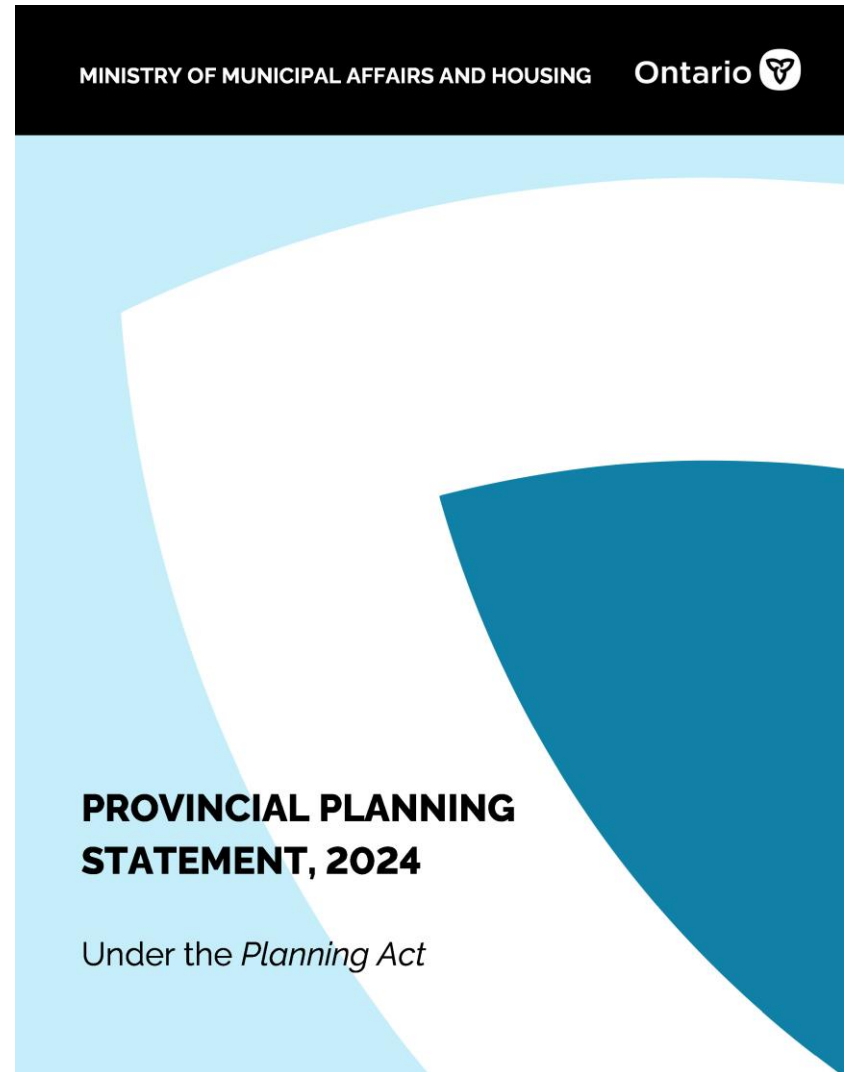


Presentation Outline

- What is an Agricultural Impact Assessment?
- Provincial policy requirements
- Municipal Requirements
- Current status of resources
- AIA study content
- Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts
- AIA Tenets

Provincial Policy Statement 2024

replaced PPS 2020 in
October 2024



2.3.2 New Settlement Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

In identifying a new settlement area or allowing a settlement area boundary expansion, planning authorities shall consider the following:

- c) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;
- d) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;
- e) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae;
- f) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance; and
- g) ...

4.3 Agriculture

4.3.1 General Policies for Agriculture

1. Planning authorities are required to use an agricultural system approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base and support and foster the long-term economic prosperity and productive capacity of the agri-food network.
2. As part of the agricultural land base, prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, shall be designated and protected for long-term use for agriculture.
3. Specialty crop areas shall be given the highest priority for protection, followed by Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, and any associated Class 4 through 7 lands within the prime agricultural area, in this order of priority.

Agricultural system:

means a system comprised of a group of interconnected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agri-food sector. It has two components:

- a) An agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas. It may also include rural lands that help to create a continuous productive land base for agriculture; and
- b) b) An agri-food network which includes agricultural operations, infrastructure, services, and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.

4.3.4 Removal of Land from Prime Agricultural Areas

1. Planning authorities may only exclude land from prime agricultural areas for expansions of or identification of settlement areas in accordance with policy 2.3.2.

4.3.5 Non-Agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas

1. Planning authorities may only permit non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas for:
 - a) extraction of minerals, petroleum resources and mineral aggregate resources; or
 - b) limited non-residential uses, provided that all of the following are demonstrated:

4.3.5 (1)Non-Agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas con't

1. the land does not comprise a specialty crop area;
2. the proposed use complies with the minimum distance separation formulae;
3. there is an identified need within the planning horizon identified in the official plan as provided for in policy 2.1.3 for additional land to accommodate the proposed use; and

4.3.5 (1) Non-Agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas con't

- 4. alternative locations have been evaluated, and
 - i. there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas; and
 - ii. there are no reasonable alternative locations in prime agricultural areas with lower priority agricultural lands.

4.3.5 (2)

2. Impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on the agricultural system are to be avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance.

4.4.4 Extraction in Prime Agricultural Areas

1. Extraction of minerals and petroleum resources is permitted in prime agricultural areas provided that the site will be rehabilitated

Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIA)

improve compatibility between agricultural and non-agricultural uses

A study that evaluates potential impacts of non-agricultural development on the Agricultural System (farmland, farm operations and the agri-food network). It determines how to

- avoid adverse impacts (e.g., through site selection)
- minimize and mitigate adverse impacts (e.g., through site design, use of buffers)



For aggregates, an AIA addresses rehabilitation to an agricultural condition where that is required.

In Summary

- PPS policy requires the following for redesignation of prime agricultural areas and for all non-agricultural uses in the prime agricultural area
 - avoidance of specialty crop areas
 - compliance with MDS
 - demonstrated need
 - evaluation of alternative locations that avoid prime agricultural areas or be located on lower priority agricultural lands
 - impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations are to be mitigated to the extent feasible

In Summary When are AIAs required?

AIAs are **required** by the Provincial Policy Statement for:

- settlement area boundary expansions
- mineral aggregate applications (also required by Aggregate Resources Act)
- infrastructure projects
- other non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural area

Recommended for

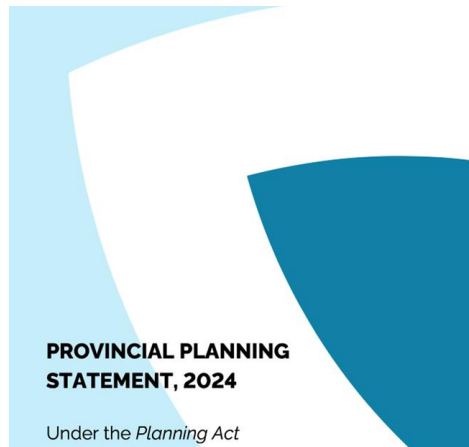
- rural lands
- **OMAFRA's AIA guidance document** provides useful ideas on how to avoid, minimize and mitigate the impact of development on agriculture

Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, 2017

Niagara Escarpment Plan, 2017

Greenbelt Plan, 2017



AIA or Equivalent Analysis

Impacts to the Agricultural System may be documented in an AIA report or as part of another study as an “equivalent analysis”

- In the GGH, impacts to the Agricultural System (agricultural land base and agri-food network) would be considered
- Reference can be made to other studies rather than duplicate work (e.g., noise, traffic, hydrogeology studies)
- Agricultural System impacts may be one of several considerations/priorities (e.g., growth management/complete communities, need for aggregate resources or infrastructure) but the aim is to find opportunities to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts

Examples of Equivalent Analyses

- **Environmental Assessment (EA)** for infrastructure projects such as transportation systems, water and wastewater treatment plants, landfill sites
- **Environmental Report** to satisfy Ontario Energy Board’s Environmental Guidelines for the Location, Construction and Operation of Hydrocarbon Pipelines and Facilities in Ontario
- **Planning Justification Report** that addresses several land use planning matters related to a development proposal

AIA Reviewers



AIA or equivalent analyses are completed by proponents or their agents/consultants.

AIA preparers must be qualified professionals



Approval authorities of a development or infrastructure proposal **review AIAs for completeness and merits of the proposal** based on potential impacts to the Agricultural System and other priorities



AIA checklist included in the guidance document will help reviewers assess whether an AIA or equivalent analysis is complete

Process for Proposed Settlement Area Boundary Expansions in Prime Agricultural Areas (GGH)

- Municipalities or their consultants complete an AIA and other analyses as part of their official plan review
- Province is approval authority for upper-tier official plans
 - MMAH may request OMAFA's review of the AIA under one-window
- Upper-tier municipalities are approval authority for lower tier official plans so they would assess AIA completeness and merits of the OPA



Process for Proposed Mineral Aggregate Operation in Prime Agricultural Areas (GGH)

- Aggregate company is proponent
- AIA is one of several technical studies supporting an application
- Proponent is required to circulate license application to OMAFA if an AIA is required
- OMAFA may comment on the AIA for completeness or raise items for the proponent to consider
- Municipalities or MMAH are the approval authority for official plan amendments.
 - MMAH may request OMAFA's review of the AIA under one-window
- MNRF administers the ARA license application and ultimately is the issuer of a license or permit if all regulatory requirements are satisfied



Process for Proposed Infrastructure in Prime Agricultural Areas

- Who the proponent is depends on type of infrastructure:
 - Municipalities for water or wastewater treatment facility
 - MTO for transportation project
 - Oil or gas company for pipeline project
 - Hydro One for electrical transmission
- AIA analysis is one of several elements considered
- EAs are proponent driven but MECP oversees the EA process and is sometimes the approver (e.g., for comprehensive EAs); MECP may request technical review by partner ministries



AIA Content

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Section 1 : Introduction

Section 2 : Study Areas

Section 3 : Assessment of Impacts

Section 4 : Measures to Address Impacts

Section 5 : Recommendations and Conclusions

Section 6 : Appendices

AIA Content

1. Introduction

Description of:

- proposed non-agricultural use
- policies to be satisfied,
- methodology including consultation process
- coordination with other studies
- AIA logistics

2. Study Area

If location alternatives are required, identification, description and comparison of primary and secondary study areas; rationale for preferred study areas

If location alternatives are not required, identification, description and rationale for primary and secondary study areas

Baseline information on primary study area if site is to be rehabilitated to an agricultural condition

Explanation of how consultation influenced the study areas

3. Assessment of Impacts

Consideration of potential impacts and the degree of impact, whether short- or long-term, limited to the study areas or beyond

Explanation of how consultation influenced the assessment of impacts

Primary Study Area – area considered for the proposed non-agricultural use

Secondary Study Area – area that may be impacted by the proposed used; area may vary depending on type of impact

AIA Content

4. Measures to Address Impacts

Consideration of the hierarchy of measures with the priority on avoidance, then minimization, then mitigation

Measures to address impacts, in combination where appropriate

Explanation of how measures are proportional to potential impact or risk

Description of consultation influenced the identification of measures

Net impacts

5. Recommendations and Conclusions

Explanation of how AIA objectives have been fulfilled

Net impacts to the Agricultural System

Recommended implementation plan to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts

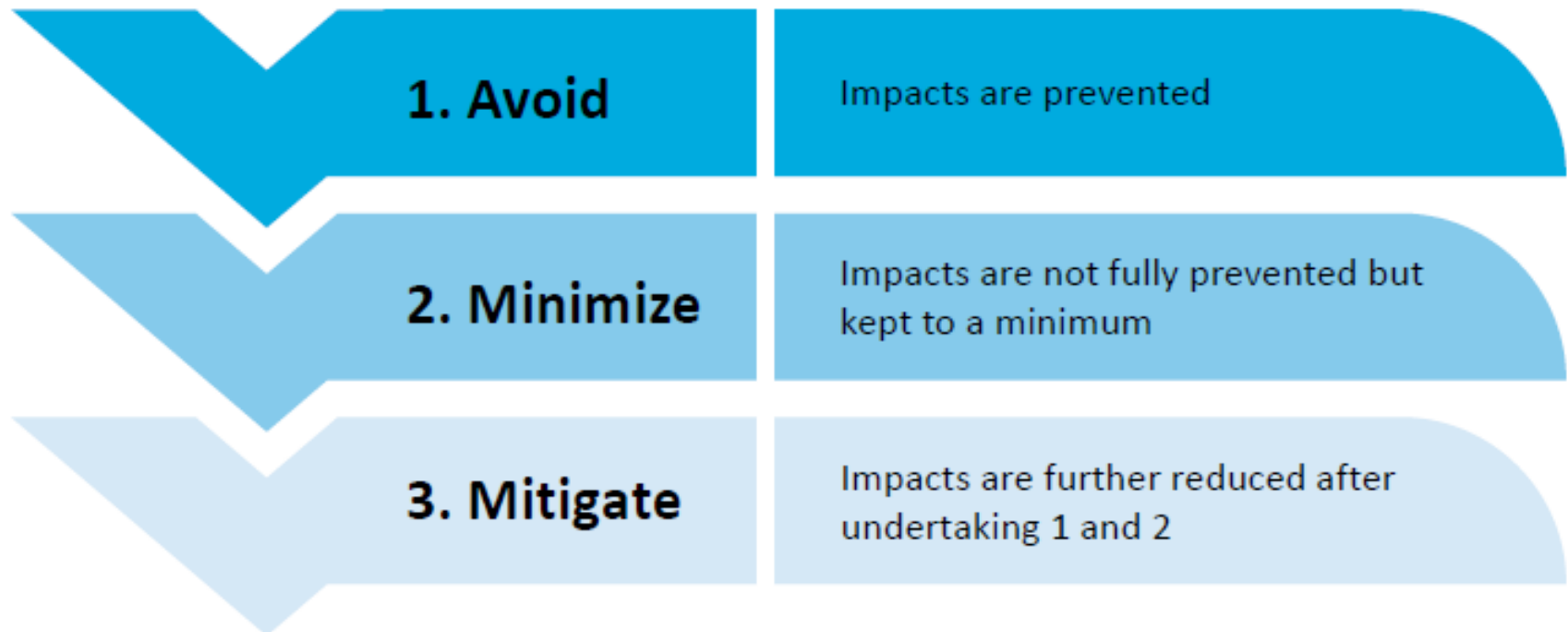
Demonstration that AIA recommendations have been incorporated into the ARA site plan, if applicable

Appendices

Examples include:

- CVs of study team (excluding municipal staff)
- references for information used
- MDS calculation forms
- Consultation list
- List of Abbreviations

Hierarchy of measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to the Agricultural System



Examples of measures

1. Avoid

- give preference to sites outside of prime agricultural areas and without elements of the agri-food network

3. Mitigate



Vegetative screens and buffers



Setbacks and fencing



Alternative access to farm fields



Rehabilitation to an agricultural condition



Dust control



Road/roundabout design



Clear urban — agricultural boundary



No trespassing signage on farm property

2. Minimize

- give preference to sites that minimally impact lower priority agricultural lands and/or elements of the agri-food network
- locate access points and haul routes where impacts to agriculture will be minimal.

Agricultural Impact Assessment Tenets

AIA Guidance does NOT create new policy

- The guidance simply explains how existing provincial policy and legislation can be satisfied.

AIAs are NOT new

- Many municipalities currently request AIAs, along with other studies (e.g., natural heritage, hydrogeology) to support development applications.

AIAs do NOT prohibit development

- They encourage development to avoid where possible, minimize and mitigate impacts to the agricultural system.

The AIA process is flexible

- The process is proportional to project size and potential impacts.
- AIA analysis may be documented in a stand-alone report or rolled into another report.

AIAs are required

- The provincial plans for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Aggregate Resources Act require AIAs for settlement area boundary expansions, mineral aggregate applications, and infrastructure projects in prime agricultural areas.

AIAs are NOW required by the PPS across the Province



Thank you!

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