

PAC - August 6, 2025

Summary of Group Break out Discussions

Group One

1. Interprovincial Trade:
 - Performance Report card
 - political issue now, regulations to be removed unless proven they are needed,
 - Political therefore our responsibility as a lobby organization
 - Winners and losers from different sectors
 - A lot of unknowns, uncertainty
 - Keep pushing for a resolution so we have certainty, right now we are in limbo
 - Niagara Wine doesn't want BC wine coming in
 - Meat inspection federal vs provincial – local abattoir would be put out of business due to regulation costs to be federally inspected
2. Duncan Survey
 - 1/3 response wasn't that bad but should be better
 - Locally
 - MDS calculation for greenhouses and grain dryers – municipalities are circumventing MDS requirements in favour of estate housing in Bruce County.
 - Previous municipal boundary expansion was not subject to MDS at the time.
 - Municipality should not allow exceptions
 - MDS 1 is the calc that the development (ie house) must abide by
 - MDS 2 is when the farm wants to expand its operation
 - Many municipalities do not have a planner on staff
3. Greenbelt plan amendments and changes
 - No one in the area
4. Natural Heritage Feature and how it affects agricultural operations
 - A significant woodland /wetland and the connection area between
 - means different things in different areas
 - Restricts where you build an agricultural building and may require AIA
 - May need an AIA to build
 - Does not restrict single family residential homes in connection area
5. Official Plan Review
 - Need to be part of the review and provide input
 - Need to see it before it's publicized
 - Regional planning is now handled by lower tier municipality
 - Designate all farmland as prime agriculture land
6. Agriculture Impact Assessments
 - Is only good if the rules are followed
 - Ministerial Zoning Order overrides AIA
 - Needs to be completed independently – peer review
7. Revive Project - Halton
 - Useful for other areas to replicate
8. Local Issues
 - Roundabout design – to narrow for farm machinery

Group Two

Wellington Centre has a lot of urban pressure; WFA has consulted regularly throughout upgrades of policies throughout official plan reviewing to align with PPS. Urban boundary determination delayed Official Plan approval. About 1000 acres around boundary have developers taking municipal to Tribunal appealing boundary. BESS going on prime ag 5000-person subdivision across road from project. Wellington FA developed a tool for local municipalities to incorporate into their Bylaws as well as the County for definition consistency

<https://www.wfofa.on.ca/internal-documents/wellington-county-zoning-bylaw-guide-and-template?download=43:wfa-zbl-template-and-guide-summary-february-2025-1>

Nipissing, in new Official Plan municipality supportive of 5000 hectares for ag future. Current in between time seeing rush of applications (severances etc.) to beat the Official Plan changes coming. Could be 3-6 months before approval and see loss of land in mean time, would like to see measures/tools available to mitigate

Waterloo 1973 to Region from County, Provincial changes allowing lower municipal changes – Wilmot – Grow or Die for municipalities

Brant - Brantford in middle of County, transportation issue and considerations. Official Plan review 2023. Capacity concern for how people get where and how, impacting how farmers must work around the city.

Frontenac (City of Kingston, Frontenac County, Howe and Wolfe Islands). South Frontenac Official plan has been passed in May with changes to some rural areas being changed to Prime Ag Development is being directed to hamlets and villages. These changes were provincial directives

Developers are not working with planning staff They are going straight to the province. Special Economic Zones, and Minister Zoning Orders use – concerns

Lanark – OP – “SCOP” amendments to 2024 Natural Heritage System focus including a committee of stakeholders discussing, process ongoing. Lanark County and LFA work well together. Cut back on subdivisions, increase of single lots, working on farmland preservation Lanark, lower are covered under County plan but a couple are not, some conflicts with BESS projects continue to see increased land base. Home township has liberal lot severances, feel many areas are letting a lot of individual lot severances through.

Arnprior “harbour” energy project proposal, city sees need for project to proceed forward despite community opposition.

We need to be able to provide a reason for municipalities and counties to be more restrictive with the prime ag lands to include classes 1-7. If we have only 5% of Canada's land suitable for farming and 1% CLI 1-3 we need to show the "business case" to preserve the productive land in Southern Ontario. Can OFA provide production and economic impact value of the ag system for Ontario's portion of Canada GDP to support local federations.

Does OFA have a document to support County Feds on consistent figures for local discussions (i.e. CLI and prime ag land)

Group Three

Does your Region have an official plan

Have your local federation commented on a plan

Status of the plan.

- Halton – got rid of agriculture liaison advisory, natural heritage, agriculture uses heavily restricted. Constant changes with Province and powers and changes.
- Perth – went through meetings and got a county plan together, lack of understanding between natural heritage and official plan. Council agreed on official plan, submitted to province, 6 months ago. Council listened to farmers and what their needs were, listened to the farmers. Under constraints. Constant changes with Province
- Simcoe – two-tiered system. Province called and pulled expansion off the agenda. Nobody on town council is a farmer. Ag liaison committee was voted down. County did a review and then County level was told to back away from the government and now they are dealing with each county individually. Mayor keeps dealing with strong mayor powers at the local level. City of Barrie is broke. MP/MPP's hiding. Nobody has come out now since the three-let fight with Doug Ford. Land is being lost. Big cost loss in assessments. Messy. Barrie wants the development for industry. Visited all municipalities with new council members and now have a pretty good relationship with federations.
- York – Like Peel, so much development over the years. Constant growth. York Region has no control, all to the municipalities. York Region still trying to give input – trying to support prime agriculture. White belt for future development is being used up. Pushing it forward because they can. Federation feels there are other means. They are going up but because of wiping out green belt session. Constant changes in the government. Not sure how long they can hold onto the prime agriculture land. On paper it seems like they are trying to support but actions show different. Strong mayor powers. Provincial government has not mentioned greenbelt – becoming silent. Push to plant forests on Class 3 farmland. York Region Forest.
- Temiskaming/Cochrane – Simple OP plans in townships. Not real big issues with them. Not ag people but understand. Big operators are clearing land because land is cheaper. Tile draining which is important. Development of airport association – Township of Armstrong – now regional airport. Bills are dispersed with population. Land clearing in local townships with bigger lots, now they don't have money, and are now looking for anything that will give them funds for their municipality. Agriculture is good. Local boards are hurting, less people, Amish coming in, not joining. Larger dairies and larger operations are finding it hard to get help.
- Grey County – Ag advisory board. Problem in Blue Mountains – Thornbury, want to build 200 acres to have a community to live in. Meaford needs work.

- Middlesex well developed Official plan and updated in 2023 with consultation with the agriculture community. Middlesex does spring visits to local councils just to let them know what agriculture is and why it matters.
- On farm sales have been huge and Agri-tourism. Include farming in policies

AI Assessments' information was excellent. Margaret should be doing presentations to everyone involved. OSUM, AMO, Good Roads, ROMA, Planning Association.

In Summary

It's all very confusing and messy

Relationships with municipal councilors helps being consulted on Official Plans – important to be involved.

Strong Mayor powers is an issue

Yearly visit with all municipalities to education; breakfasts, tours, council visits

Pushing to plant forest over Food

Constant Changes from Province makes it hard

Relationships with Ontario MPPs have become quieter, not showing up, not being a part of the federations like before.

Hire Margaret or someone to teach new planners what farming and agriculture is all about.

Group Four

Discussion on what is an upper tier and lower tier municipality?

Tiers were explained, and then we discovered that we had both municipalities that were two tier and single tiers at the table.

Upper tier municipality PAC at the table confirmed they have an official plan, and all know where to find it. Ag advisory committee at one lower tier has commented.

Ag Advisory Committees

Applications to apply to Ag advisory committee, to be approved by council. Some of the issues with the ag advisory committees, is that they are a committee of council and fall under their rules so have less latitude for an objective agricultural voice.

Additionally, when there is an ag advisory committee there is less willingness for a municipality to interact with County Federations on municipal issues and are more reluctant to come to a Federation for advice. That said, with a lack of volunteers and a small ag community—there tends to be overlap in Ag Advisory committee members and County Federation Directors (i.e. some Directors *may* be also on an Ag Advisory committee).

Ag advisory committee members can also have personal agendas (like making money, not long-term sustainability of farming), whereas County Federations follow their mandate. So, there is good and bad with an ag advisory committee and requires monitoring at County level.

One county at the table had no specific ag committee in upper/lower tier, but planners do ask for Federation input and they (the planning staff) do listen. So, this was noted as very positive interactions between the County Federations and municipal staff and Council where the County Federation is seen as the leading advocate/authority for farmers in the area.

Land Use Planning

One on one interaction—relationship building outlined as perhaps the most important approach to land use planning that supports agriculture.

Noted that publication 851 (guideline to permitted uses) and other provincial guidance documents should be updated. Dealing with an old document and minimum distance separation.

Official Plans

One PAC member commented that their Federation has not commented on the Official Plan as it is too big of a document to comprehend. They organize a bus tour instead and try to involve politicians with what they think is important. Planning overall can be very confusing with multiple layers/mapping/overlays. County Federations could use more support to be able to comment.

OFVGA representative from Oxford has an Official Plan with specific appendices specific to agriculture, does not believe that there is a committee that advises.

Some planners being invited to attend functions/ tours to see what farms all are about and economic importance, needs etc.

Try to make it a council priority to have staff attend agricultural tours/ info sessions to enable an understanding of agriculture. (sometimes staff are unwilling to, but if established as a council priority, they are much more likely to participate)