



November 16, 2022

The Honourable Steve Clark  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Provincial Planning Policy Branch  
777 Bay St., 13th Floor  
Toronto, ON  
M5G 2E5

**RE: ERO Registry #019-6174 for input on the proposed revocation of the Central Pickering Development Plan**

Dear Minister Clark

Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect and preserve Ontario farmlands and associated ecological lands through direct land securement, stewardship, policy research, and public education. Our goal is to ensure a safe and sustainable food supply for future generations in this province by protecting farmland in perpetuity.

With growing food insecurity in the province and the world, it is more important than ever before that we protect the finite and non-renewable resource that is our agricultural soil. Ontario's farmland directly supports the agri-food sector, which is the largest economic sector in the province, employing more than 860,000 Ontarians along the supply chain and annually contributing over \$47 billion to the province's GDP<sup>1</sup>. In order to preserve the viability of Ontario's agri-food sector, it is crucial that the province's finite supply of agricultural land is protected.

In the past, OFT has commended the Province's commitment to the policies that strengthen agriculture in Ontario. We recognize the need to address issues of housing availability and affordability, however, OFT would like to encourage the Province to continue showing a strong commitment to Ontario's agri-food sector by making policy decisions that protect agricultural systems, agricultural land and food security and support the continued production of local food.

**The housing crisis facing Ontario is a real and wide-spread problem, however, OFT is concerned that the provincial policy changes in Bill 23 will not provide an effective solution. If this crisis is not addressed effectively, it will only exacerbate the other challenges Ontarians have to face, such as rising food insecurity, rising land prices, and the destruction of the agricultural system in Ontario.**

**OFT believes that the Central Pickering Development Plan should not be revoked.**

The Central Pickering Development Plan (the Plan) was created to guide planning in the creation of a sustainable urban community in Seaton, and to aid in the integration of this community with the agricultural community in the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. The establishment of such a preserve was ground-breaking, and is still unique within the province.

While the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve lands are protected with easements, it is still important to consider the greater regional agricultural system they belong to. In order for farmlands to remain part of



an economically viable farming operation, it is critical that they are part of a larger base of connected farmland. This can allow farmers to travel from one farm to another with farm equipment safely, for both the farmers and the other people that are on the road. Permanent protection of this large block of land provides area farmers the opportunity to expand their operations through access to an inventory of Class 1 farmland that is secure.

Commitment to the protection of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve adheres to the Haudenosaunee philosophy that **the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.**

So far, as noted in the Province’s proposal, the plan has been “successful in achieving its objective”, and has helped protect ample natural habitat in the plan area as well. As such, it is not clear why the Province is seeking to revoke such a successful piece of land use planning policy.

**OFT urges the Province to reconsider the revocation of the Central Pickering Development Plan, and instead, to take this opportunity to reinforce the local agricultural system and economy and protect this resource for future generations.**

**Ontario needs an increased housing supply, but what is proposed in Bill 23 is not an effective solution.** Ontarians need affordable, high-density housing solutions that provide residents with easy, walkable, access to public transit and amenities<sup>2</sup>. New development built upon annexed farmland and natural areas are not an equitable solution to the housing crisis, and will only serve to magnify both the climate crisis and food insecurity.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our recommendations and feedback on ERO 019-6174. We sincerely hope you take our suggestions into consideration when reviewing the feedback you receive. If you have any questions or would like to speak further on these issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We look forward to continuing to work with the Province to strengthen the agricultural system and protect the viability of the agricultural sector.

Most Sincerely,

Martin Straathof  
Executive Director  
Ontario Farmland Trust

Bernard Pope  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Ontario Farmland Trust

Margaret Walton  
Chair, Policy and Education Committee  
Ontario Farmland Trust



References:

- [1] Ontario Federation of Agriculture. 2020. Agriculture Matters – A Guide for Municipal Councillors and Staff. <https://ofa.on.ca/resources/guide-for-municipal-councillors-and-staff/>
- [2] Jacobus, R. (2019). Inclusionary housing: Creating and maintaining equitable communities. *Lincoln Institute of Land Policy*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep22075.pdf>