

May 2023

## CONCERNS REGARDING PROPOSED PROVINCIAL PLANNING FOR HOUSING

The proposed provincial planning initiatives for housing fails to ensure strong protection now and in the future for two critical elements: our food security and our climate/environment.

### Concerns about Food Security

What the pandemic has taught us, or should have taught us is that food security and supply line security are critical concerns. We must plan to ensure that we can feed our population ourselves, both now, and in the future, and especially during times of crisis. It is clear that climate challenges, future pandemics and other crises are inevitable. We need to protect our farms and farmland to ensure food security. The proposed provincial planning statement does not ensure our food security because it does not protect our farmland, and it impedes our farmers' ability to farm.

- Ontario's prime agricultural land is a finite, non-renewable resource that comprises less than 5% of Ontario's land base.
- 
- Currently farmland is being lost at a rate of 319 acres per day on top of the 20% of farmland already lost to urban development.
- The proposed planning statement degrades and reduces Ontario farmers' ability to farm by increasing fragmentation between farming areas, increasing pollution, increasing competition for water, and increasing the conflicting interests and needs between farmers and non-farming residents.
- Degrading our ability to farm impedes our food security and our supply line security making it hard to respond to local food demand during crises by making us increasingly dependent on other countries for food, as well as greatly increasing the cost of our food.
- Our food production is currently the envy of many parts of the world and in fact feeds many nations outside our own borders. Degrading our ability to farm affects the food security of other nations as well as our own.

### Concerns about the impact on our Climate and the Environment:

In any sustainable planning process three priorities are non negotiable:

Air quality

Water quality

Soil quality

You can live for three minutes without air, three days without water and seven days without food. Once these three priorities are secured in perpetuity, then one can plan to site areas such as commercial areas, residential areas, industrial areas, transportation corridors and so on. The

current proposed Provincial Policy Statement, 2023 (PPS 2023) and Bill 97 undermine air, water and soil protection and fail to address the need for a non-carbonized future.

- Degrading or reducing farmland will result in a rapid decline in environmental diversity which is essential for the well-being of all living things, including humans.
- Weakening regulation for farmland use encourages building large numbers of houses on farmland. This will reduce the infiltration of water required for farming, increase the need for irrigation and increase the competition for adequate water supply for both farms and residences.
- Farms are integral to a healthy human ecosystem. Farm crops provide a sink for carbon and provide increased oxygen levels where they are placed.
- Encouraging the sprawl of housing on farmland increases vehicle traffic, further degrading soil, water and air quality, and increasing pollutants on food and other crops.

Our housing plan in Ontario, should protect our ability to farm if we are to have a secure food supply and a healthy climate. Housing at the expense of farmland is dangerous. Historically villages, towns and cities were built where it was also possible to farm. Just because that is where our houses, towns and cities initially sprung up should not dictate that we continue to build on or adjacent to prime farmland.

We, the undersigned object to these housing policies as written. While it is true that we do need housing, if we degrade air, water, and soil quality, and severely limit our ability to farm, it is infinitely more expensive, if not impossible to get these back.

## REFERENCES

The above information was gleaned from several sources including:

Ontario Federation of Agriculture, online Dec 5, 2022

Sustain Ontario, online Earth Day 2023

TVO.org May 30, 2022

Ontario Farmland Trust, online May 17, 2023

Webinar May 17, 2023 hosted by Ontario Farmland Trust and HomeGrown

"Farmers say Bill 97 imperils the 'the future of agriculture in Ontario", Colin Butler, [CBC News](#),

Posted May 22, 2023