

## **Resolution**

Moved by: Spring

Seconded by: Fisher

Whereas The Township of Springwater Agricultural Advisory Committee has reviewed the Proposed Provincial Planning Statement amendments relating to Development of Agricultural lands; and,

Whereas the more concerning section of the proposed policy is 4.3 which in effect will allow for hamlets to be built on every agricultural zoned property. This will be disastrous for the agriculture industry and could lead to the outright destruction of the 'family farm' in Ontario.

The Committee hereby advises that it does not support the Proposed Provincial Planning Statement amendments and that the Committee further recommends that the Council of the Township of Springwater support the Committees position against the proposed amendments.

Further that the comments provided by the Agricultural Advisory Committee, be received; and,

That planning staff include the committee's comments in the staff report to council, and

And that the following points be highlighted and prioritized for Council's consideration.

1. There are ample opportunities to increase housing density without encouraging sprawl and encroachment of residential development into farmland and the greenbelt.
2. Under the proposed amendments many of the non-agricultural uses suggested under 4.3 specify that they will not affect prime agricultural land. This, of course will be open to interpretation by the government, developers, industry, and whoever has the ear of the planners/government.
3. The proposed amendments will result in conflict between working farms and new rural residents.
4. The proposed amendments present concerns relating to the drilling of wells on unsupervised water.
5. The proposed amendments will present additional strains on the existing infrastructure.
6. There are unproductive nonagricultural parcels of land that would be more suitable to residential development.

7. The proposed amendment could appeal to the developers looking to turn a profit with little consideration being given to the existing farming community.
8. That the amendments should consider requiring evidence that development would be on land that is poor yielding such as reforested land and other land with low agricultural value.
9. Slow moving/wide vehicles used by the farming community present safety concerns with increased traffic where there is poor visibility and commuters often attempt to pass the vehicles. The rural community expects these amendments would see increased accidents as a result.
10. These parcels of land offered for sale will not assist in providing affordable housing. In fact, it will be some of the most expensive. Without existing infrastructure and services new housing on Agricultural land will not be affordable.
11. Increased traffic on 'back roads' will force roads to be upgraded (ie. where no shoulders exist) and a need to pave current roads are not designed to allow farm equipment and traffic share the roads.
12. Placement of restrictions on farming operations will result in intrusive and incompatible residential uses such as the ability to expand Agricultural operations and complaints from residents (dust, odor, etc.).
13. If this policy comes into effect the value of farmland will be artificially increased out of reach of farmers hoping to expand the size of their farm business. Section 4.3.3.1 will allow for the creation of 3 lots on any existing agricultural zoned property. The price of 3 building lots, which can each hold 3 dwellings (sections 4.3.2.5), will be built into the price of any farms which haven't already been subdivided stalling growth of farms and putting more farmland into the hands of land speculators rather than farmers. Farmland will not be priced as farm land.
14. The proposed amendments do not achieve the purpose of the amendments, affordable housing. Without development charges the, the loss of land to the farming industry being significant to the economies of rural communities and with the additional burden of the existing tax base and municipal infrastructure new housing resulting from the proposed amendments will not create affordable housing.
15. The proposed amendments do not consider uneconomical expansion of services where the demands on the Hydro grid, natural gas services, internet service availability, and other infrastructure do not currently meet the needs that would be imposed by development in these areas.

The April 6 Proposed Provincial Planning Statement as written would cause irreversible damage to the Ontario agriculture industry. Allowing multi-lot development on any rural zoned land (section 2.6) is not feasible and will be detrimental to farm businesses. Government funded programs promising to provide access for farms to modern basics including natural gas and broadband internet have been focused on bringing these services to rural developments rather than the agriculture community they were promised to. Adding more multi-lot development to these areas will undoubtedly push farms further down the priority list to be serviced by much needed resources to succeed.

The more concerning section of the proposed policy is 4.3 which in effect will allow for hamlets to be built on every agricultural zoned property. This will be disastrous for the agriculture industry and could lead to the outright destruction of the 'family farm' in Ontario.

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Rural infrastructure may meet requirements to allow new homes, but is not designed to accommodate them, especially with modern farm machinery sharing the roads. Conflicts with dust, noise light and odors generated by current best farming practices are unavoidable and will only be multiplied by shoehorning up to 9 dwellings on land that is presently a farm field.

Some parts of the proposal can be beneficial to farmers. More freedom and flexibility to create new lots can certainly help farmers if done in a way that keeps agriculture uses front of mind and reduces potential conflicts. The ability to sell a building lot will help financially, with drawbacks of losing control of a part of the farm. As written the proposal does not have flexibility for where new lots can be created, stating they must be beside existing residences, which may not be the best spot of a farm to take out of production, be the most desirable building location or may create issues with other buildings near the existing house (shops, livestock pens, barns, grain bins, etc.) possibly leading to conflicts in the future. Allowing municipalities to have more flexibility would be essential to making this proposal work as written.

The stated goals of this proposal can all be achieved by focusing growth in settlement areas and encouraging density in urban areas. The best way to maintain a vibrant and productive agricultural industry is to keep farmland as farmland.

*Mark Priest*

The Proposed Provincial Planning Statement that is being discussed would have a devastating effect on farmers and the land that currently produces food in Ontario. Allowing residential lots to be severed from farms for Residential Dwellings to be built, does nothing more than create urban sprawl and permanently takes food producing land out of production. Allowing severances such as this does nothing to solve the current housing shortage. Affordable housing belongs in urban centers where proper infrastructure currently exists.

The current proposal to allow three severances off agricultural land will enable small hamlets to begin lining rural roads. Allowing this proposal will create substantial challenges for existing farm businesses to conduct normal agricultural practices, thereby inhibiting growth of livestock through minimum distance calculations and current regulations. The long-term viability of farm businesses is being threatened by this proposal.

This proposal circumvents the many years of planning and policies put in place for sustainable long-term growth. These severances will do nothing more than increase the cost of farmland. This will only make it harder for farmers to expand their agricultural scope of production for our current and growing population. What will happen if this proposal passes are non-farmers will purchase this land meant for agriculture, with the idea of subdividing the land for future development.

Services in Rural Ontario, such as roadways, hydro and traffic management, are not equipped to handle the increase in traffic that will be brought on if proposals such as this are let through. The current proposal shows total disregard for the current planning procedures currently in place with rural municipalities across Ontario.

Allowing these proposals to continue will have an everlasting and crippling effect on family farms in Ontario. Good food producing land is already being lost at an alarming rate. Subdividing Rural Ontario does nothing to solve the affordable housing crisis.

*Dave Spring*

The allowance planned for new lots on farmland is short sighted and will result in planning chaos and further removal of land for agricultural use.

It will also result in conflict between working farms and new rural residents.

This is just another erosion of the protection of agricultural land.

It is also unnecessary as there are ample opportunities to increase housing density without encouraging sprawl and incursion into farmland and the Greenbelt.

Sewage and water will soon become an issue under this model of "planning".

Many of the non-agricultural uses suggested under 4.3 specify that they will not affect prime agricultural land. This, of course will be open to interpretation by the government, developers, industry, and whoever has the ear of the planners/government. We've seen in the past (ie Midhurst) that prime agricultural land is not protected... why would they start now?

*Jim Drury*

## Positives

1. More houses along rural roads will increase the need or want to put natural Gas lines down concession roads.
2. Farmers will have the ability to access funds by severing off lots from their land and selling, thus giving them funds to invest in other ways.
3. Making more spots to put houses.
4. Can now sell off undesirable spots of farms that are not profitable for high return.

## Negatives

1. By allowing more severances off each Agriculture zoned parcel of land, you are accelerating the destruction of Canada's Grade A farmland. Cities and towns consume farmland by the day in our provenience. By allowing each farmer to cut off parcels seemingly at their discretion, you will realize a massive increase in lost high production land.
2. These parcels of land offered for sale will not assist in providing affordable housing. In fact, it will be some of the most expensive and sought after lots as they offer the ability to live in rural areas with fewer neighbors. We have watched our neighboring houses fetch ever increasing prices so people can live in the country.
3. Increased traffic on "back roads" will force roads to be upgraded (i.e., where no shoulders exist) so a tractor can let a car pass safely.

## Possible solutions or alternatives

1. My intent is to preserve farmland. However, every farmer has an unproductive spot on one farm or another. A spot we continue to work mostly because it is available and is easy. These spots present an opportunity. Force a farmer to show that spot is unproductive and should qualify for the ability to be sold off as a severed piece of land. If it is too sandy, too rocky, or just does not hold onto fertility and never produces, come up with a procedure to qualify specific grounds for the ability to be sold off for a building lot.
2. Grow up not out. Having a minimum of 50 job producing households per Hectare is extremely low in my opinion for "Fast Growth" cities. Focus should be on more households per square meter not Hectare. Apartment buildings are needed before destruction of farmland is considered.
3. Promoting building in the north and on ground not suitable for agriculture would be my suggestions.

PAGE 21

1.a. 4.v. Houses must be built against non-Agricultural land? If that is case, I believe here we must push for it to say the severances must be taken from low production or unproductive land. Not that I like it, but it must go to Council, and you must prove low production or bush ground. I.e., bring in yield maps and soil tests for example.

4. Lot adjustments in prime agricultural areas may be permitted for legal or technical reasons.

I don't like this one but there must be some reason for it, specific examples.

*Matt Ververs*

Legislation related to Bill 97 adds increased challenges on farmers. It will be difficult to get machinery around because of traffic. The roads can not stand traffic as they now stand prior to increased usage. Increased dependency on snow ploughing throughout the winter season. Local farmers will receive more complaints related to smell, noise, lights, dust, and the time-of-day work is conducted. There is land available for development, not on prime agricultural lands.

*Colin Elliott*