

October 17, 2023

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor,
777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario,
M7A 2J3

Sent via email to: minister.mah@ontario.ca and PlanningConsultation@ontario.ca
and submitted online through the Environmental Registry of Ontario

Dear Minister Calandra

RE: ERO # 019-7561: Proposal to return lands to the Greenbelt (Amendment to the Greenbelt Plan) & ERO # 019-7562: Proposal to return lands to the Greenbelt (Amendment to Greenbelt Boundary Regulation O. Reg. 59/05)

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I wish to extend our appreciation of the decision to reverse the Greenbelt land swap. We look forward to working with the government to balance the need for housing with the protection of agricultural land without the removal of lands from the Greenbelt.

Today, we also wish to address the recent changes to the Greenbelt Plan and Greenbelt Act and reiterate our position on Greenbelt lands and the protection of the agricultural land base.

OFA proudly represents more than 38,000 farm businesses across the province, supporting our members and the agriculture industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses, and their communities.

OFA recommends the province take a holistic, systematic, province-wide approach that prioritizes protecting agricultural lands and identifies the most appropriate areas for growth with justifiable criteria and comprehensive analysis. OFA encourages the provincial government to listen to their experts and explore other avenues to address housing supply which do not sacrifice farmland or the agricultural system.

When agricultural land is developed, it is lost forever. Ontario is losing some of its most productive agricultural land to pressures for urbanization and growth enabled by provincial policies and tools. If our province plans to continue to grow and prosper, we must also have the plan to protect Ontario's position to produce food, fibre, fuel and flowers for the people of this province and beyond.

We would additionally like to address the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP) developments and question what will come of the Central Pickering Development Plan and the land intended to be developed. The DRAP lands were afforded three levels of protection and with

this reversal only one is being reinstated, OFA strongly recommends that consideration be given to reinstate the protections for the DRAP lands to further sustain protections for agricultural lands.

The provincial government has the opportunity to implement changes to build more homes faster that reflect that growth management and continues to feed Ontario, Canada and the world. Meeting housing demand and farmland protection are two sides of the same coin. More robust protection from development on agricultural land combined with fixed, permanent urban boundaries and mandatory compliance with urban density and intensification requirements will ensure that we achieve community development and farmland protection objectives.

The recently introduced Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act 2023 will certainly impact these two ERO postings. The GSLAA's goals to protect the Greenbelt more emphatically is important. Saying this, the comments presented here are a reflection of the EROs as presented.

OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide our feedback and agricultural perspectives on the Greenbelt policies and regulations. We look forward to working with the provincial government and our municipal counterparts to sustain our province's housing supply and communities while protecting our agricultural land base and supporting our agri-food sector as an economic powerhouse.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors