



Agriculture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Region of Peel is reviewing and updating its Regional Official Plan (ROP). The Region is required to review its ROP every five years to reflect changing needs and priorities as well as to conform to Provincial plans, policies and legislation (including the *Provincial Policy Statement 2005*, *Greenbelt Plan 2005*, and *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006*).

Agriculture is one of the fifteen focus areas that form part of the Peel Region Official Plan Review (PROPR). The objective of this Agriculture Discussion Paper is to build upon the input received at the public meeting held by Regional Council in February 2007 on the overall Official Plan review, and stakeholder consultations held since then. The Peel Region Official Plan Review process is an opportunity to engage area municipalities, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the farming community, agricultural organizations, agro-industries and other stakeholders in discussions on how the Official Plan policies can address the challenges facing the agriculture industry, ensure the long-term protection of agricultural lands and resources, and improve the financial viability of the agricultural industry in Peel. Also to be determined are, what policies and strategies should best enable the industry to benefit from new and emerging opportunities, while improving the Region's agricultural competitiveness in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

This paper is structured into six main sections. The first section describes the purpose of this paper, presents the state of agriculture in Peel and considers the Peel agricultural industry in a broader context. The second section describes connections between agriculture and the other PROPR focus areas, outlines the PROPR agriculture consultation process and the agricultural governance structure for Peel. The third section presents the vision, objectives and principles that could guide future agriculture operations in the Region, provides a summary of the Town of Caledon's Official Plan Amendment 179, and reviews the Region's Official Plan in terms of the Provincial policy directives in the Provincial Policy Statement 2005, the Greenbelt Plan 2005, and the Places to Grow Plan 2006. Section Four examines some agricultural best management practices in other municipalities. In Section Five, a number of important issues and questions are raised for your consideration and input that will help ensure that the agriculture focus area of the PROPR addresses the policy directives that the ROP must conform to. The final section sums up the purpose of this discussion paper and underlines the important role played by stakeholders in the PROPR consultation process.

1.0 PURPOSE

The Region of Peel is currently reviewing and updating its Regional Official Plan (ROP) in order to conform to the Province of Ontario's *Planning Act* and to comply with new Provincial Conformity directives contained in the *Provincial Policy Statement 2005*¹, the *Greenbelt Plan, 2005*² and the *Places to Grow Plan 2006*³. The ROP provides Regional Council with a long-term regional strategic policy framework for guiding growth and development in Peel through the year 2031 while having regard for protecting the environment, managing its renewable and non-renewable resources and outlining a regional structure that manages growth in the most effective and efficient manner. The Region is required to review its Official Plan every five years to reflect changing needs and priorities as well as to conform to provincial plans, policies and legislation.

Fifteen different focus areas are being considered in this review, including agriculture. The purpose of the agricultural review is to ultimately build upon policies for the long-term protection of agricultural lands and resources and to ensure the financial viability of the agricultural industry in Peel. The long-term protection of agricultural land is also a key recommendation of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan released in 2005⁴. Against this background, the Peel Regional Official Plan Review (PROPR) will consider policies, which reflect the need of the agricultural industry to be more self-sustaining, and to have the capacity to adjust to emerging circumstances that make farming relevant, attractive and

¹<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1485.aspx>

²<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page189.aspx#greenbelt>

³http://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=9&Itemid=14

⁴ GTA Agricultural Action Plan, 2005, p 16

financially competitive well into the future. This in turn, will help to ensure a thriving agriculture sector, which helps to satisfy consumer demands for locally grown, fresh and nutritious food, including ethnic varieties, to meet the rising demand due to the rapid increase in population fuelled by strong immigration.

The objective of this paper therefore, is to draw attention to the various options available and challenges facing the industry in Peel and to initiate a discussion on the broad spectrum of questions related to agriculture. In order to accomplish this we need your contribution.

2.0 STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN PEEL

This section will report on the statistical data related to the state of agriculture in Peel.

2.1 Number of farms and area of farmland

According to the 2006 Census of Agriculture⁵, the number of farms, the area of farms and the number of farm operators between 2001 and 2006, decreased in every GTA municipality. Within the GTA, the number of farms decreased by 4%, from 3,870 farms to 3,707 farms. There were 483 farms in Peel in May 2006, representing a 7% decrease compared to 2001. Peel's decrease was 7% and its share of farms in the GTA was 13%. Caledon had the largest share of Peel's farms with 80%, or 389 farms, followed by Brampton with 16%, or 76 farms and Mississauga with 4%, or 18 farms. Of the 95,000 acres used for farming in Peel, over 85% (or 82,000 acres) are located in Caledon, 11% (or 10,000 acres) are located in

⁵<http://www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm>

Brampton and 4% (or 3,000 acres) are located in Mississauga.

The total area of land used for farming in the GTA in 2006 was 678,000 acres. This was a decrease of 31,000 acres or 4.4% from 709,000 acres in 2001. Over two-thirds of all farms in the GTA were less than 130 acres in size. Most farms in Brampton and Mississauga were smaller than farms in Caledon. Over 80% of Mississauga's farms were smaller than 130 acres. Almost 70% of Brampton's farms fell into this size range. However, in Caledon, more than one in three farms were larger than 130 acres. The percentage of farmer-owned land in Peel was 47%, and the remaining farmland is either rented or leased 49%, crop shared 1% or used through other arrangements 3%. Almost 70% of the land used for farming in Mississauga is leased or rented. Half of Brampton's farmland falls into this category. In Caledon, 49% of the land is owned, while the rest is rented or leased.

2.2 Farm operators

From 2001 to 2006, the number of farms, the area of land used for farming and the number of farm operators decreased across the GTA. Though the total number of farm operators decreased in the GTA as a whole, the number of female farm operators increased 3% from 1,530 to 1,575, between 2001 and 2006. Almost 30% of all 2006 farm operators in the GTA were female, and the percentage of farm operators aged 55 years and older in Peel was 50%. There were 700 farm operators in Peel in 2006 and almost 30% or 200 of the farm operators were female. Caledon had the largest percentage of female farm operators 31% followed by Brampton 26% and Mississauga 20%. None of the farm operators in Mississauga and Brampton were under the age of 35 years, while

only 5% of Caledon's farm operators fell into this category. Mississauga had 80% of farm operators over the age of 55 years, followed by Brampton with 60% and Caledon 47%.

2.3 Farm market value

Peel had the highest average farm market value in the GTA. Though Caledon had 80% of Peel's farms and over 85% of the land used for farming in Peel, only 78% of Peel's farm capital was located in this area municipality. The average market value of farms in Caledon (\$3.8 million) was also significantly lower than the average market value of farms in Brampton (\$4.3 million) or Mississauga (\$5.7 million)⁶. Caledon also recorded a disproportionately lower share of gross farm receipts only 77% of Peel's total, but had lower than average annual operating costs \$133,000 compared to \$145,000 in Mississauga and \$174,000 in Brampton.

2.4 Agricultural industry groups

Agriculture in the GTA is very diverse. In 2001, the most common industry group in the GTA was cattle ranching, dairying and farming. From 2001 to 2006, the number of farms in this category decreased in each GTA municipality. The largest decrease of 40% occurred in Halton, while Durham recorded the smallest decrease 24%. Only 33 GTA farms reported producing organic products, of which four were located in Peel. In 2006, the most common agricultural industry group in the GTA was the production of animals other than cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep and

⁶ Statistics Canada did not provide data from the 2001 Census of Agriculture for the area municipalities because the boundaries used to disseminate these data changed in numerous places between 2001 and 2006. Source: Peel Data Centre Bulletin 2006, Census of Agriculture, p 2

goats. This group includes the production of horses, bees and fur-bearing animals. More than 20% of all farms in each GTA municipality fell into this industry group. The top three agricultural industry groups in 2006 in Peel were the production of animals other than cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep and goats, dairy cattle and farming. The major farming activities are cash cropping – fruits and vegetables, oilseed and grain farming – soybeans and corn. In Mississauga and Brampton, about 45% of farms practised oilseed and grain farming or green house, nursery and floriculture production. In Caledon, over half of all farms practised livestock operations – dairy and horses, and farming or the production of animals other than cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep and goats.

The average market value of a farm in the GTA recorded during the census was just over \$2.0 million – a 29% increase compared to 2001. Farms in Peel had the highest average market value in the GTA (\$3.9 million). From 2001 to 2006, average farm business operating expenses fell in Peel by 29%. During the same time period, gross farm receipts increased in every GTA municipality except in Peel, where this figure fell by nearly 25%.

To conclude the discussion above, it will be useful to find out how much of the prime agricultural lands are being productively farmed at present, the extent of farmland out of production, underutilized or unproductive, and how much of this land is readily available to prospective farmers looking for farm lots to engage in farming. It will also be important to know the reasons for this situation and how such lands can be transformed into gainful production. It is also necessary to examine existing lease, rental, farm taxation structure and other forms of land sharing arrangements to know if they hinder

access by new farmers to land, and how they could be adjusted to facilitate the business of farming.

Despite the steady urbanization that the Region of Peel continues to experience, agriculture remains an important economic activity and way of life for the farming community as has been described above. In the next section, Peel's agricultural industry in a broader context will be considered.

3.0 THE PEEL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN A BROADER CONTEXT

Not only does Peel have an established agricultural sector; its landscape and nature are also of immense aesthetic and cultural value. A financially viable and secure agricultural industry could contribute in maintaining the landscape diversity and dual economy in Peel. This could strengthen the Region's economy; provide employment and preserve a way of life for its residents; maintain a readily accessible food source, as well as making the Region attractive for residents and businesses as a tourist destination. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan calls for maximizing the unique strengths of agriculture in Peel and across the GTA and proposes the implementation of a wide range of conventional, non-traditional, and agro-industrial activities. Secondary uses and value added products on agricultural lands could open up possibilities for community-supported agriculture and new revenue sources for farmers. Without permitting further severances, existing small farm parcels in near-urban agriculture areas present immense potential for diversifying the farming sector.

Contribution of the agricultural economy in Peel is vital in terms of its proximity to a growing and diverse market for the production of fresh, locally grown produce that can contribute to better

nutrition and reduced health risks. The Region through the Peel Agricultural Rural Water Quality Advisory Committee (PARWQAC) is preparing a report on a proposed Peel Region Food Policy Council and discussions are ongoing on how this initiative will be accomplished in Peel.

3.1 Environmental and social benefits of agriculture

The value of agriculture to the natural environment has increased during the last two decades. Many environmentally friendly forms of farming are being used in the GTA. Farmers practise stewardship as a tool for land management and encourage responsible land care and sustainable resource use. Sustainable farming integrates the main goals of environmental stewardship, farm profitability, and prosperous farming communities. This type of farming maintains the ability of a farm to produce food indefinitely, without causing irreversible damage to ecosystem health. Preserving essential soil properties for crop productivity and favourable socio-economic conditions could enable farmers to obtain inputs and manage resources over the long-term⁷.

The most common forms of soil conservation practices in 2006 were crop rotation followed by the use of windbreaks or shelterbelts. Woodlots and windbreaks help to reduce soil erosion and provide wildlife habitat. Farmers are adopting beneficial management practices that minimize and mitigate impacts and risks to the environment, by maintaining or improving the quality of soil, water, air and biodiversity; ensuring the long term health and sustainability of natural

resources used for agricultural production; and, supporting the long-term economic and environmental viability of the agriculture industry⁸.

Plants absorb carbon dioxide and generate oxygen. According to the Ontario Corn Producers Association, a hectare of corn produces enough oxygen in a mid-summer's day to meet the annual respiratory needs of about 325 people⁹. Protecting and preserving farmland and large tracts of woodlots and open space lands is therefore very essential in improving air quality and reducing environmental pollution thereby improving the health of residents in Peel.

3.2 Land Resource and Economic Capability

According to Statistics Canada, apart from the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine, most of the remaining rural area of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is prime agricultural land, with good Class 1 to 3 soils and a favourable climate for agricultural production. Of the approximately 1.8 million acres of land in the GTA, approximately 760,000 acres [307,561.1 ha] are classified as farmland, of which 95,000 acres [38,445 ha] or 12.5% is situated in Peel. Caledon accounts for 85% or 82,000 acres followed by Brampton with 11% or 10,000 acres [4,047 ha], and Mississauga with 4% or 3,000 acres [1,214.1 ha].

The agricultural economy in the GTA contributes about three per cent of the GTA gross domestic product and comprises about 7.5% of agricultural production in the province. The GTA accounts for almost 50% of the Ontario

⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_agriculture

⁸ www.4.agr.gc.ca/; www.ontariostewardship.org
⁹ www.ontariocorn.org/envt/envview.html

economy and 20% of Canadian economy. Closeness to a market of almost 5.6 million people in the GTA and good soils, are the general reasons given for the outstanding performance of GTA farmers. "In addition to the \$585 million direct farm receipts, about \$742 million of indirect sales can be credited to agriculture in the GTA economy. In total, agriculture is estimated to contribute over \$1.3 billion to the GTA economy¹⁰.

3.3 Secondary uses and value added businesses

Secondary uses and value added businesses could be categorized under two groups, namely: (i) Small scale on farm enterprises ranging from agri-tainment, eco-tourism, horse and pony rides to smoking, drying, freezing, extracting or preserving farm produce; and, (ii) Large-scale agri-food industries, which would best be located in industrial areas, but support the farms. Collaboration between Caledon's Economic Development Office, the agro-industrial and manufacturing sectors is necessary for success in the agricultural industry. Mississauga and Brampton possess major industrial hubs, and the food and beverage industry in Brampton continues to expand¹¹. There are extensive food-processing networks and farm-oriented dealers that could support a strong agriculture base and contribute toward strengthening the Region's economy. Strong support services and enabling agricultural policies are essential for developing a vibrant agri-food business in Peel.

¹⁰<http://www.durhambusiness.ca/keysectors/agri/profile.htm>

¹¹http://www.greatertoronto.org/investing_reg_04.htm

The preceding sections have set the contextual framework within which, the agricultural industry in Peel could be viewed. In the following section, connections between agriculture and other PROPR focus areas are described.

3.4 Agricultural diversification and changing demographics

Between 2001 and 2006, Peel's population increased from 988,948 to 1,159,405, representing a population change of 17.2%. The immigrant population is growing rapidly and the Region now has the second highest proportion, after Toronto, of new immigrants among Canadian municipalities. Between 2001 and 2006 the immigrant population as a percentage of the total population in Peel increased from 43% (424,820) to 49% (561,240) and outpaced total population growth rates in every GTA municipality. There are more than 93 distinct ethnic groups speaking 60 different languages in Peel¹².

This major demographic shift and growing prevalence of immigrants from Asia, the Indian sub continent, Africa, the Caribbean and South America over the traditional European countries serves to emphasize the need to understand the diverse preferences of the population, and how the farming community can respond effectively in meeting the demand for staple farm produce for new immigrants. This will have important impacts for the long-term viability of the farming industry, to reduce reliance on imports, reduce energy costs and ensure a safe and secure food supply in the future.

¹²www.peelregion.ca/planning/pdc/data/bulletins-brochures.htm

4.0 CONNECTIONS BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND THE OTHER PROPR FOCUS AREAS

There are important connections between agriculture and some of the fourteen focus areas being considered in this PROPR. Progress achieved in one area can have important, positive outcomes in one or more areas, and conversely, setbacks can have adverse impacts in other areas. For example, there are important linkages between agriculture, energy and transportation. The drive to combat green house gas emissions, reduce environmental pollution and combat global warming has increased in recent years. Agriculture offers certain possibilities that could help mitigate the problems caused by fossil fuels as well contribute towards the development of clean green energy. The production of ethanol from corn, switch-grass or fast-growing trees can potentially transform a declining agricultural economy and help boost the local economy. Automobiles using part ethanol or bio-fuel, discharge fewer pollutants into the atmosphere and contribute towards better community health. It is important to note however, that the production of ethanol could create shortages in the supply of farm produce such as corn and soy for food and lead to an increase in commodity prices. Moreover, the shift in emphasis from food to fuel production can have huge impacts on the stewardship of soils, resulting in the loss of nutrients and putting lesser quality farm lands, which could be better stewarded as natural heritage lands, into production.

This connection between agriculture and transportation is particularly significant, as the world will reach a “peak oil” condition around 2010, when the world’s annual oil demand reaches world’s annual production capacity. Post “peak oil”, the world’s oil production is

projected to drop drastically, while the demand continues to grow. By 2025, the world shortfall in oil supply is estimated at 35%¹³. There is therefore an urgent need to extensively develop alternative energy sources to offset part of this shortfall, and the agriculture sector could contribute towards meeting this challenge.

Agriculture areas also provide options for alternative renewable energy. Wind turbines can be installed on farms after completion of required feasibility studies and environmental assessment, which will ensure minimal negative impacts on farming operations and nearby communities. Solar panels can be mounted in appropriate locations after necessary requirements have been met and biomass energy can be produced from plants and organic wastes. The net benefits from these renewable energy sources include; reducing GHG emissions and demand on the provincial electricity grid, as well as providing new sources of income for farmers and strengthening or revitalizing local economies.

The Ontario Small Town and Rural (OSTAR) Development Initiative, a component of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs provides funding to assist economic growth in rural Ontario. The program addresses barriers and promotes the exploration of new technologies and processes for non-traditional uses of agricultural commodities and waste products¹⁴.

There are also important connections between managing growth, agriculture

¹³ Internal correspondence from ETPS staff, CUI Breakfast Seminar, Proceedings from ‘Living with less oil: Can Canada’s transportation systems adjust, March 4, 2008

¹⁴ www.energy.gov.on.ca/

and natural heritage. As Peel continues to experience unprecedented population increase, accommodating this growth has to be appropriately balanced with that of preserving our unique natural heritage and valuable agricultural lands.

The growth pressures facing Peel require a long-term growth management strategy with designated patterns of growth to ensure that loss or damage is not done to finite and irreplaceable resources that add beauty and character to our environment and provide a means of livelihood for sections of our community. The challenges which growth can sometimes create, make it imperative to identify where, when, and how future population and employment growth should best happen. An employment lands review is also part of the PROPR. Recognizing this connection therefore contributes in effectively and efficiently meeting the objectives of this review.

The Region, as part of the Natural Heritage PROPR focus area, is also studying significant woodlands and wildlife habitat across the Region to further understand their importance to the biodiversity of natural heritage systems along with updating the criteria for their identification and protection. The technical component of this study is being done in partnership with the Town of Caledon.

The connection between agriculture and public policy, especially with regards to immigration and ethnic diversity is crucial for inclusive community development. The policies in the Provincial plans and the GTA Agricultural Action Plan provide direction, which the Region is pursuing.

The section above shows the critical interrelationships between a number of different focus areas. The public

consultation process and what the participants are saying will be presented in the following section.

5.0 THE PROPR AGRICULTURE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Public consultation forms a major part of the PROPR process as it allows for a range of concerns and concepts to be critically discussed and decisions reached. Consultation also provides staff and our key stakeholders a better understanding of the challenges facing the agricultural industry and helps to advance the formulation of policy.

Stakeholders include the Area Municipalities, Peel Agricultural Rural Water Quality Advisory Committee (PARWQAC), Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Advisory Committee (GTA AAC), Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA), Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT), Caledon Countryside Alliance (CCA), and Peel Planning staff.

The Region has held the following consultations to date:

- PROPR Public Open House, Town of Caledon, January 22, 2007
- Regional Council PROPR public meeting, February 15, 2007
- Stakeholders meeting with Area Municipalities and representatives from agricultural organizations, June 25, 2007;
- Focused consultation meeting with Town of Caledon staff, September 13, 2007
- PROPR presentation to PARWQAC meeting, November 29, 2007
- PROPR Public Open House, Town of Caledon, March 6, 2008

In addition to the above, the following are upcoming consultations:

- Focused consultative meeting, April 9, 2008
- Focused consultation meeting, Summer, 2008
- Workshop, Fall 2008

The April 9 meeting is a PARWQAC initiative to explore agricultural issues with members of this group and other key stakeholders. More consultative meetings are planned and contributions received at this and future meetings will be highly appreciated. The discussion paper will be posted on the Region's website and this will allow for the widest possible coverage and comments. Below are highlights from the consultations held to-date.

The following sections provide specifics of what we heard at different meetings.

5.1 What we heard at a public meeting on February 15, 2007

Participants at the Regional Council PROPR public meeting in February 15, 2007 made the following submissions:

- Support land use policies that ensure the protection of prime agricultural lands for agricultural purposes and support distinct urban and rural areas defined by firm urban boundaries.
- Promote land use planning for the countryside as a place of employment, agri-tainment, and small-farm enterprise zones in near-urban agriculture.
- Encourage secondary uses/ value-added products, accessory and farm-related uses that are compatible with agriculture and increase farm income.
- Promote uses that support the agricultural industry and the viability of the business of farming.

- Improve road signage on routes used by slow moving large farm machinery for the safety of users.
- Promote energy self-sufficiency projects on farms as a permitted use as of right.

5.2 Key Stakeholders meeting on June 25, 2007 and focused consultation meeting on September 13, 2007

These meetings focused on the technical aspects of PROPR, as well as the agriculture focus area. Topics considered included:

- Confirm scope of policy topics, issues and implementation requirements for the policy review.
- Address issues and concerns facing Peel's agricultural industry within the broader GTA agricultural context.
- Build upon policies in the Peel Regional Official Plan for the long-term protection of agricultural lands and resources based on conformity with the Provincial policy directives.
- Loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base.
- Energy self-sufficiency projects on farms.
- Diversification opportunities, agri-tainment and eco-tourism.
- Land use planning and small-farm enterprise zones in near-urban agriculture.

5.3 What we heard at the PROPR presentation to PARWQAC meeting on November 29, 2007

- How do we protect prime agricultural lands over the long-term from competing uses and discourage land fragmentation?
- How could compatible value-added activities and secondary uses on farms be promoted to help maintain the financial viability of the industry?

- How could urban sprawl and land use development pressures be effectively contained?
- How could farm diversification be promoted and appropriate farm sizes determined?
- How could changing demographics and increasing demand for ethnic produce be addressed?

5.4 What we heard at the PROPR Public Open House in Caledon on March 6, 2008

This Public Open House provides staff the opportunity to interact with, and gain firsthand information at the grassroots level from the farming community and the public. Specific comments are outlined below however; they can be summarized as (i) geographic and (ii) financial:

- Geographic: Native soils are not well suited for vegetable growing in the prime agricultural area and the lack of water limits the growing of certain crops. Comparatively better farmlands are found elsewhere, yielding better returns per capital input.
- Financial: The economics of land productivity for farming is unfavourable for farmers and strong financial incentives by real estate developers compel farmers to sell their farms. High investment costs impede farmers and affects profitability. Caledon is crisscrossed by out of town traffic, thereby increasing traffic load on the roads with the concomitant air pollution and traffic hazards.

The above submissions and questions can be summarized as four pivotal questions around the identified agricultural issues, which require discussion. These are:

- **What role does the agricultural industry have in improving the health and social wellbeing of residents, maintaining reliable food supplies, strengthening the economy and ensuring the overall sustainability and liveability in Peel?**
- **How do we protect prime agricultural lands in Peel over the long-term to provide the farming industry with certainty in the use of such lands for agricultural and related purposes?**
- **What approach would best support farmers in remaining viable?**
- **Where is the most appropriate land for agricultural activity i.e., greenhouse, orchards, livestock and near urban agriculture, to occur in the Region of Peel.**

These are critical matters that would help in shaping the Region's thinking and approach in formulating policies that address the needs and concern of the agricultural industry in Peel. The contributions made at the earlier meetings form part of this discussion paper. Exploring answers to these and other questions will be crucial as we move forward with the official plan review.

The next section will describe the involvement of levels of government in agriculture and what Peel is doing to achieve policy conformity.

6.0 AGRICULTURAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN PEEL REGION

Federal and Provincial Governments, Regional and Area Municipalities, and agricultural organizations formulate agricultural policies and regulations.

6.1 The Federal Government

Canadians have historically been an agrarian society and agriculture provided the prime means of support and sustenance for communities. Before 1000 BC, Native peoples practised slash-and-burn farming and seed selection, and planted Native corn, squash and beans. Early European settlers established new settlements with the development of new resources, expanded agriculture and exported fish, furs, forest products, and minerals. Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and other towns and cities thrived on agriculture, and port cities such as St. John's, Halifax, and Vancouver also grew quickly because of trading activities¹⁵.

Agriculture was the way of life for most Canadians and up until the beginning of the 20th century about 66% of the population lived in rural areas. By 2006, this number had dropped to 20%, with 80% of the population now residing in urban areas¹⁶.

The Federal Government has largely directed agriculture from the colonial era to the present. The Federal Government has the responsibility to create a national approach to agriculture and provide an agriculture and agri-food policy that will lay a lasting foundation for profitability throughout the value chain¹⁷. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada helps Canada's agricultural producers develop and implement environmental farm plans (EFPs) through provincially delivered EFP programs, and ensures that agricultural resources are managed in a sustainable

¹⁵ <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0000077>

¹⁶ <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/popdwel/Table.cfm?T=703&PR=35&S=0&O=A&RPP=25>

¹⁷ <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/FederalGovernment/MinisterialResponsibilities.aspx>

fashion. It also helps to create better opportunities for farmers through agricultural research and innovation and provides support programs and services for farm families facing severe challenges and adjusting to new market realities¹⁸.

6.2 The Government of Ontario

The Province of Ontario works with the farmers and the food industry to strengthen the agri-food sector now and in the future. The Federal and Provincial Governments work jointly through the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), to promote food safety and quality, environmentally responsible production and innovation. They are also committed to working together on the development and adjustment of programs, services and tools. They have also adopted measures that will help the agri-food sector strengthen businesses, increase prosperity and meet the demands of consumers at home and abroad, and ensure that agriculture continues to be a valuable contributor to the quality of life of all Ontarians¹⁹.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) helps build a stronger agri-food sector by investing in the development and transfer of innovative technologies, retaining and attracting investment, developing markets and providing effective risk-management tools.

The ministry consults extensively with stakeholders and works collaboratively with many partners in industry and all levels of government to deliver programs which enhance the sector's

¹⁸ <http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-fficher.do?id=1173969168670&lang=e>
<http://news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=381839>

¹⁹ http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/policy/apf/apf_backgrounder.htm

position on environmentally sound production of safe, high-quality agri-food products. OMAFRA also works closely with several other ministries to develop policies and deliver programs in areas such as nutrient management, investment attraction, economic development and food safety. Much of this work involves partnering with municipal governments as well.

OMAFRA works with specialized organizations to better serve the agri-food industry. For example, The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission develops and implements policy, and provides strategic leadership and education programs to marketing boards and their industry partners. Agricorp administers crop insurance programs to provide farmers with protection against natural hazards, and delivers income stabilization payments. The role of the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal is to provide an accessible, efficient, independent, fair appeal process and responsible decisions, to anyone aggrieved by a decision that is appealable to the Tribunal under its legislative mandate²⁰.”

The release of the Provincial policy directives in the Plans being considered is indicative of the government’s determination to enhance agricultural opportunities and the well being of farmers and the public in general.

6.3 The Region of Peel

At the Regional level, the central purpose of Peel’s Official Plan is to “provide Regional Council with the long-term regional strategic policy framework for guiding growth and development in Peel while having regard for protecting the environment, managing the

²⁰<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/annual.html>

renewable and non-renewable resources, and outlining a regional structure that manages this growth within Peel in the most effective and efficient manner.” The Plan further recognizes that agriculture continues to play a significant role in Peel and directs that “There must be a balance between the use and protection of resources, and the preservation of Peel’s natural and cultural environment, while allowing for growth. In this regard, the Region is taking the following steps to meet these requirements.

6.3.1 Policy Conformity – What the Region is doing

- Review submissions and contributions we are receiving from participants at public consultation meetings and open houses.
- Examine Peel’s agricultural systems and policies within the broader GTA agricultural context.
- Consider policies to ensure the long-term protection of agricultural lands and resources.
- Consider policies to increase the financial viability of the agricultural industry in Peel; and,
- Examine potential to allow a broader range of compatible uses in agricultural areas.

6.4 PARWQAC

Regional Council established PARWQAC, formerly the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) in 1998, to create a closer link between the agricultural community and Regional government. The committee promotes healthy, rural communities and assists the Region in its efforts to protect agricultural lands as a natural resource. Through PARWQAC, the Region also supports Peel’s farmers and agricultural organizations as valuable contributors to both the community and economy of Peel.

6.4.1 What PARWQAC is doing

Other responsibilities carried out by the committee include the following;

- PARWQAC reviews environmental assessment applications and provides comments on issues with potential impact on farming and agriculture.
- PARWQAC serves as the approval authority for funding applications under the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP). A total of 25 projects were approved by August 2007, at a total value of \$590,035 of which PRWQP eligible funding was \$109,451 or 18.6% of the total²¹.
- PARWQAC in collaboration with Peel Health and the area municipalities launched the very successful 'Grown In Peel' Guide and website in 2005 to promote buy local, buy fresh. The third edition of the guide will be released in Spring 2008.
- PARWQAC undertook a farm tour in October 2007 to a municipal wellhead facility, dairy farm and wellhead protection area to raise awareness about groundwater protection, rural water quality, and agricultural best management practices. This tour signifies the importance of stakeholder consultation with the Peel agricultural community as an essential part of the Official Plan review process.

6.5 The Area Municipalities

The Regional Plan requires area municipalities in their official plans to conform to policy directives such as designating prime agricultural lands and to allow primary agricultural uses in the

Prime Agricultural Area, and where deemed appropriate by the area municipality, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses; so long as all new uses are compatible with surrounding agricultural activity, and meet the requirements of the minimum distance separation formulae, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, as appropriate²².

Both the Town of Caledon and City of Brampton Official Plans have agricultural policies, which support the Region and the Provincial Policy Statement.

Town of Caledon

Owing to the significance of agriculture in Caledon and to effectively cope with emerging issues, the Town of Caledon has updated its Agricultural and Rural policies through Official Plan Amendment No. 179 - Agricultural and Rural Area Policies. OPA 179 provides a policy framework to better manage, preserve and protect good agricultural lands and rural areas, and prevent conflicts between agricultural and adjoining uses in the town.

The Town of Caledon established the Caledon Agricultural Advisory Committee (CAAC) in 2007. CAAC's goal is to identify and maintain a permanently secure, economically viable agricultural industry as a source of employment for Caledon's rural communities, through consultation, stewardship and outreach. The committee also works to ensure that the Agricultural and Rural Areas are planned for safety, sustainability, health and heritage for the benefit of present and future generations²³.

²¹ Toronto and Region Conservation, and Credit Valley Conservation, PRWQP Approved Projects, 2007

²² Region of Peel Official Plan, 2005, p 49

²³ www.town.caledon.on.ca/.../planningdevelopment/

City of Brampton

"No lands within the City of Brampton are designated "Agriculture" on Schedule "A" to [the Official Plan]. However, agricultural activities and related uses outside the Greenbelt Plan will be permitted to continue operating as long as possible. Given the inevitable decline of agriculture in North West Brampton, the city's Official Plan under section 4.15.1 Agriculture provides for the promotion of agriculture where feasible and for the phased and orderly transition of this area from agriculture to urban use by ensuring that "lands with high agricultural capability which are designated for urban purposes remain available for agricultural purposes as long as is practicable"²⁴.

City of Mississauga

The City of Mississauga's Official Plan does not address agriculture issues directly because of the minor role played by agriculture in that jurisdiction. However, relevant matters are covered under conserving the environment and strengthening the sustainability planning framework to manage the challenges and opportunities of growth in future.

6.6 The GTA Agricultural Action Plan

The GTA Agricultural Action Plan was launched in 2005. It provides practical strategic directions to be advanced and implemented by key agricultural interests.²⁵ "The purpose of the Action Plan is to keep the GTA Agricultural industry competitive given the economic, land use and labour pressures faced by farmers." The Plan contains 37 action items, which address the themes of economic development,

education/marketing, land use/policy; and, accountability and responsibility. The Plan proposes an implementation strategy that "capitalizes on the area's competitiveness and opportunities, addresses policies that deter agriculture, and attracts new business, investment and farmers."

Peel Region is working collaboratively with the other GTA Regions to implement the actions in the Action Plan and is currently involved in developing a population profile to identify the emerging consumer groups in the GTA.

The foregoing discussion has considered the governance structure and the interrelated roles played by different levels of government in the agricultural industry. It is important that agricultural policies are coordinated and comprehensive across the GTA, to provide a sound basis for protecting the vital interests of the agricultural industry in Peel and encouraging sustainable agricultural practice over the long-term.

Against the background discussed above, staff consider it important to set out the vision and broad objectives for protecting prime agricultural land and encouraging the business of agriculture in future. We have also developed principles as outlined in the next section, which could guide agricultural policy and operations, and help to ensure their successful implementation. These ideas are presented to the stakeholders for consideration.

7.0 VISION, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Vision: To create a sustainable, financially viable and innovative agricultural industry that manages opportunities in responding to market demands and contributes to the health and well being of Peel residents.

²⁴ City of Brampton Official Plan, 206 p 4.15 – 2-3

²⁵ <http://www.rpco.on.ca/RPCO+GTA+Caucus/Agricultural+Action+Plan+for+GTA.htm>

Objectives: To build upon policies in the official plan to keep the agricultural industry competitive in the face of growing economic, land use and environmental pressures.

Principles: The success and financial viability of the agricultural industry could depend on three main principles.

- **Adaptation:** The agricultural industry should be capable of continually adapting to innovative practices and changing market circumstances to improve the competitiveness of goods produced and service delivery.
- **Collaboration:** There should be active collaboration between the agricultural industry and federations of agriculture, levels of government, the agri-food and agri-based products sector, and other interested stakeholders.
- **Cooperation:** The Region and the agricultural industry should work cooperatively to foster good stewardship of land, water and resources.

The next section describes the salient characteristics of the 2005 Peel Region Official Plan (ROP) and the Town of Caledon's Official Plan Amendment (OPA 179).

8.0 BACKGROUND POLICIES AND REPORTS

The purpose of this ROP review is to build upon the existing policies in the Plan, to make it possible for farming to continue as a viable industry in Peel Region over the long-term. As noted in the GTA Agricultural Action Plan, "as the agricultural industry changes over time, new opportunities need to be defined and promoted in a coordinated

fashion²⁶." A positive impact of combining conventional farm practices with emerging farming technologies will contribute towards strengthening the local economy and benefit the farming communities, as well as preserving the environment. Existing policies in the Regional Official Plan could be strengthened to encourage diversity as well as continuous adaptation and improvements as occasioned by consumer preferences and changing demand.

8.1 Agriculture provisions in the 2005 Peel Region Official Plan

Policies for Agricultural Resources, written in the mid 1990's are set out in Section 3 subsection 3.2 of the existing Official Plan (see Appendix II for full text). The Plan notes "There must be a balance between the use and protection of resources, and the preservation of Peel's natural and cultural environment, while allowing for growth²⁷."

Under Section 3.2.1 Objectives, the Region is mandated:

- To protect the Prime Agricultural Area as a natural resource of major importance to the economic viability of the Region, and to support Peel's farmers and agricultural organizations as valuable contributors to the community and the economy of Peel.
- To protect agricultural uses in the Prime Agricultural Area from incompatible activities and land uses which would limit agricultural productivity or efficiency or result in fragmentation of the agricultural land base.
- To support a healthy and productive agricultural industry as an important

²⁶ GTA Agricultural Action Plan, 2005, p10

²⁷ Region of Peel Official Plan, 2005, p 47

component of Peel's economic base and heritage²⁸.

It is noteworthy that Section 3.2.2.8 of the Plan directs area municipalities to allow primary agricultural uses, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses in the Prime Agricultural Area so long as the new uses are compatible with surrounding agricultural activity and satisfy relevant conditions.

The above directives empower the Region and area municipalities to implement policies that ensure the long-term protection and financial viability of the industry, but the Plan does not specify the nature and types of non-agricultural activities that may be permitted in agricultural areas and the conditions that could be attached if these were permitted.

Similarly, though the Plan underlines the need to protect valuable resources including agriculture "from incompatible uses to maintain their integrity"; there has been a gradual loss of Prime Agricultural Land to urban expansion and development. This trend threatens to minimize the agricultural industry as an important sector of the Region's economy. Moreover, it could undermine the Region's ability "to support Peel's farmers and agricultural organizations as valuable contributors to the community and the economy of Peel", and importantly, the livelihood of communities dependent on farming.

8.2 Town of Caledon Official Plan Amendment No. 179 – Summary of Policy Direction

Section 5.1 Agricultural Area and Section 5.2 Rural Area in the existing Caledon Official Plan date to 1979. On October 6, 2003, The Town of Caledon Council adopted Official Plan

Amendment No. 179 (OPA 179)²⁹ - Agricultural and Rural Area policies. "The purpose of this Amendment is to provide an updated policy framework for the Agricultural and Rural Areas in the Town of Caledon. This amendment sets out land uses, policies and requirements to guide activities and to serve as the basis for the evaluation of development proposals within these areas³⁰." The lands subject to this Amendment, apply to the Prime Agricultural Area, General Agricultural Area and Rural Area within the Town of Caledon.

The goal of the OPA 179 is "To protect prime agricultural lands by encouraging the business of agriculture, by providing for innovation and diversification within agriculture, by providing additional economic opportunities through secondary uses, and by limiting non-agricultural uses and non-agricultural severances³¹."

As a policy instrument, OPA 179 supports opportunities to diversify on-farm income as a way of protecting the land for the future farming community, promoting economic development within the agricultural community and encouraging development of compatible tourism.

OPA 179 provides varying opportunities for farm operations on different farm parcel sizes, as well as secondary uses and retail sale of secondary uses subject to relevant planning criteria and the zoning bylaw being met. The provision to permit farm operations on different farm parcel sizes, without the need for further severances, is important. It addresses one of the main concerns of some farmers during our

²⁹ <http://caledonlive.neuropia.com/townhall/departments/planningdevelopment/opa179.asp>

³⁰ Official Plan Amendment No. 179 to the Official Plan for the Town of Caledon Planning Area, 2003

³¹ OPA 179, p 7

²⁸ Region of Peel Official Plan, 2005, p47-49

consultations, that there is a shortage of small sized farm lots for prospective farmers interested in doing small scale farming and or, limited livestock on small lots.

Table 1: Farm parcels within the Prime Agricultural Area

Size	Number of farm parcels
Less than 10 acres	216 (19.76%)
10 to 24.99 acres	285 (26.08%)
25 to 49.99 acres	213 (19.49%)
50 to 99.99 acres	277 (25.34%)
100 to 149.99 acres	81 (7.41%)
Over 150 acres	21 (1.92%)
Total	1093 (100%)

(Source: Planning Policy & Research Division, ETPS, October 2007, derived from MPAC Assessment Data)

Available data show that there is a broad range of farm sizes in the Prime Agricultural Area in Caledon to accommodate a variety of farming types. Almost 46% of farm parcels are below 25 acres and a further 20% farm parcels are less than 50 acres as shown in Table 1.

OPA 179 discourages severances for new lot creation so as to limit fragmentation and conserve large parcels of land for agricultural uses. However, the OPA makes allowance for cases in which severances of 40 hectares (100 acres) farm lots may be permitted on condition “that both the severed parcel and the retained parcel will be not less than 19.6 hectares (48.5 acres)” and subject to other criteria. These are important issues in the context of providing suitable farm lots of different sizes to meet varying demand. It is important to point out that Caledon will be deferring this issue until after the conformity review due to the difficulty of restricting land use to farming, and OMAFRA is undertaking its review of minimum farm lot sizes.

It is important to note that the Regional Official Plan will not duplicate provisions of OPA 179 but will support the Town of Caledon planning policy framework. The Region will work closely with the Town of Caledon in strengthening the Regional agricultural policies so as to minimize land use conflicts, protect the prime agricultural lands over the long-term and conform to the Provincial policy directives.

The Peel Region Official Plan will be reviewed in the following section to see which policies match the Province’s policy directives and where action is necessary to bring about conformity.

9.0 PROVINCIAL POLICY DIRECTIVES AND THE PEEL REGION OFFICIAL PLAN

The following is a summary of relevant policy directives in the Provincial Policy Statement attached as Appendix I to this paper.

9.1 Provincial Policy Statement

2.3.1 *Prime agricultural areas* shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.

2.3.3.1 In *prime agricultural areas*, permitted uses and activities are: *agricultural uses, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses.*

STATUS: The above directives are already in Section 3.2.2 of the ROP.

2.3.3.2 In *prime agricultural areas*, all types, sizes and intensities of *agricultural uses* and *normal farm practices* shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards.

2.3.3.3 New land uses, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding livestock facilities shall comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae.*

2.3.4.1 Lot creation in *prime agricultural areas* is discouraged.

2.3.4.3 The creation of new residential lots in *prime agricultural areas* shall not be permitted, except in accordance with policy 2.3.4.1(c).

2.3.5.1 Planning authorities may only exclude land from prime agricultural areas for expansions of or identification of settlement areas; extraction of minerals; and limited non-residential uses.”

2.3.5.2 Impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands should be mitigated to the extent feasible.

2.5.4.1 In *prime agricultural areas*, on *prime agricultural land*, extraction of *mineral aggregate resources* is permitted as an interim use provided that rehabilitation of the site will be carried out so that substantially the same areas and same average soil quality for agriculture are restored³².

STATUS: The Region is required to strengthen existing policies in the ROP to conform to the above directives.

9.2 The Places to Grow Plan

The Places to Grow Plan directs that “a balanced approach to the wise use and management of all resources, including natural heritage, agriculture, and mineral aggregates, will be implemented.”

The following are policy directives in the Places to Grow Plan³³ under Section 4.2.2 Prime Agricultural Areas.

1. Through sub-area assessment, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and other Ministers of the

³² <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1485.aspx>

³³ <http://www.placestogrow.ca/images/pdfs/Final-Plan-English-Web.txt>

Crown, in consultation with municipalities and other stake holders, will identify prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), and where appropriate, develop additional policies for their protection.

STATUS: The Province is taking the lead on this. This task is in the ministry’s work plan but no progress has been made to date.

2. For lands within the Greenbelt Area, all policies regarding agricultural areas set out in provincial plans, applicable to lands within the Greenbelt Area, continue to apply.

STATUS: The Region has to ensure conformity to this directive and ensure that nothing conflicts with the policy in the Plan.

3. Municipalities are encouraged to maintain, improve and provide opportunities for farm-related infrastructure such as drainage and irrigation.

STATUS: The local municipalities are responsible for municipal drains.

4. Municipalities are encouraged to establish and work with agricultural advisory committees and consult with them on decision-making related to agriculture and growth management.

STATUS: The above directive is already in place with PARWQAC in Peel, and CAAC in the Town of Caledon.

9.3 The Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use in the Greenbelt. It also provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism,

recreation and resource uses. The goal is to enhance our urban and rural areas and overall quality of life by supporting long-term agricultural production and economic activity (Section 1.2)

On a related subject, the Province recently released draft criteria to expand the Greenbelt boundaries and further protect countryside areas³⁴. Once finalized, the criteria will be used to consider requests from different levels of government to expand the Greenbelt's boundaries. An expanded Greenbelt will help reduce the impact of global warming affecting the Province and contribute towards meeting the goal of sustainable development.

"The Greenbelt Plan supports infrastructure, which achieves the social and economic aims of the Green Belt and the Growth Plan while seeking to minimize environmental effects³⁵."

The following are highlights of the goals and policy directives in the Greenbelt Plan³⁶ for agricultural protection within the Protected Countryside.

1. Protection of the *specialty crop area* land base while allowing supportive infrastructure and value added uses necessary for sustainable agricultural uses and activities;

STATUS: This directive does not apply to Peel, as specialty crop areas have not been identified in the Region.

2. Protection of *prime agricultural areas* by preventing further fragmentation and loss of the agricultural land base caused by lot creation and the re-

designation of *prime agricultural areas*;

STATUS: The Region is required to strengthen existing policies in the ROP to conform to the above directive.

3. Provision of the appropriate flexibility to allow for *agriculture, agriculture-related and secondary uses, normal farm practices* and an evolving agricultural/rural economy;

STATUS: The Region is required to strengthen existing policy in the ROP to conform to the above directive.

4. Increasing certainty for the agricultural sector to foster long-term investment in, improvement to, and management of the land.

STATUS: The Region is required to conform to the above directive in the ROP.

5. Within prime agricultural areas, as identified in municipal official plans, *normal farm practices* and a full range of *agricultural, agriculture-related and secondary uses* are supported and permitted.

STATUS: The Region is required to strengthen existing policy in the ROP to conform to the above directive.

The Provincial policy directives have been identified in this section and the status noted for existing policies in the ROP that already conform, and where policies are needed to achieve conformity.

The discussion in the next section will examine agricultural best practices in other jurisdictions with a view to obtaining information about effective policies that could be relevant in dealing with the agricultural challenges facing Peel Region.

³⁴ www.greenbelt.ontario.ca

³⁵ GTA West Corridor, Environmental Assessment – Terms of Reference, June 2007, p1

³⁶ www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page189.aspx-159k

10.0 POLICY APPROACHES TO PROTECTING AGRICULTURE IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

British Columbia and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)

In 1973 the Province of British Columbia introduced the *Land Commission Act* and established a special land use zone, the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) between 1974 and 1976. This action was in response to the loss of between 5000 and 6000 ha of prime agricultural land to urban uses each year. The ALR takes precedence over, but does not replace other legislation and bylaws that may apply to the land. Local and regional governments, as well as other provincial agencies, are expected to plan in accordance with the provincial policy of preserving agricultural land³⁷.

The ALR program is based on a number of principles that may be instructive for this discussion and could be adapted to suit Peel's own needs.

1. The principal purpose of the ALR program is for preserving the non-renewable farmland base and maintaining the ability of the land and the farm community in the ALR to produce food, not to balance competing land uses or to negotiate the use of farmland for non-farm uses. Agriculture is the priority use and non-agricultural uses are controlled.
2. Urban growth is directed away from the zone, in recognition that the ALR is not a land reserve for future urban uses.
3. The ALR has fundamental, long-term implications for regional sustainability- economic, social and environmental, and in particular food security.

³⁷ www.alc.gov.bc.ca/; www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/

The Regional Municipality of Niagara-Agriculture and the Niagara Economy

A study commissioned by The Regional Municipality of Niagara in 2003 presents a broad perspective for understanding the current and future role of the agricultural industry³⁸. It states

"The loss of farmland is, to some extent, a consequence of economic growth, especially when (as in Canada) much of the prime agricultural land is located proximally to large urban centres. To make truly informed (i.e., "rational") choices about protecting the resource while accommodating competing uses, the contribution of these lands to the regional economy must be understood and measured. Once the economic contribution is understood, the costs of losing the land (e.g., the added cost of imported fruits and vegetables, the dislocation of farmers and farming families, the loss of socioeconomic spin-offs associated with agriculture etc.) can be compared with the benefits of conversion (e.g., property tax revenues, jobs, and spin-offs associated with that activity which replaces agriculture etc.)

This view is important in terms of how the Province and the Region assess the relative importance of the agriculture industry in Peel in particular, and the GTA in general, and how to manage growth in the future. As mentioned earlier, the number of farms in the GTA decreased by 4%, from 3,870 farms in 2001 to 3,707 farms in 2006³⁹. The number of farms in Peel was 483 farms (13%) a decrease of 7% compared to 2001. Evidence suggests that this trend may continue if far reaching and concrete measures are not put in place to reverse this decline.

The need to permanently protect agricultural lands as a resource in Peel thus assumes even greater significance, as this could allow the Region to

³⁸ Regional Agricultural Economic Impact Study, Chapter 5 Agriculture and the Niagara Economy, Planscape, July 2003

³⁹ <http://www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm>

proactively think of the future of the Whitebelt Lands and its role in providing for a permanent agricultural reserve in Peel and in ensuring the financial viability of the farming community.

From the foregoing discussion, it is crucial that the Region, together with all key stakeholders in the agricultural industry, develop a long-range agriculture strategy. Such a strategy and policy framework is essential as a basis for protecting the vital interests of the agricultural industry and encouraging sustainable agriculture practices over the long-term.

The City of Niagara Falls- Good General Agricultural Area

In order to protect the continuation of farming operations in the City of Niagara Falls, the city's Official Plan, Section 7 – Good General Agricultural, “restrict the establishment of non-farm uses and minimize land use conflicts in favour of agriculture wherever possible⁴⁰.” The Plan directs that farm related small-scale commercial and industrial uses may be considered where such uses are directly related to and require close proximity to the farm operation which they serve, and if it is not possible to locate these uses within the designated urban area. The location of such uses must satisfy that impact on adjacent uses is minimal and meet zoning and site design provisions. The Plan does not permit uses of land and creation of lots not related to agriculture, except with Council approval and only after very precise policy requirements have been satisfied.

The Plan may grant permission for ancillary uses as home industry and home occupation or a bed and breakfast facility on condition that they are

compatible with and retain the agricultural or rural character of the agricultural area, as well as satisfying specific policy requirements.

This City of Niagara Falls Official Plan is specific and precise in terms of its policy requirements and direction and could provide useful input to Peel's review process.

York Region–Regional Structure and Growth Management

The Region of York places a high premium on preserving agricultural lands as an integral component of the Regional Structure and Growth Management Plan⁴¹. The Plan promotes a sustainable natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities. It establishes firm growth patterns for locating agriculture and natural areas, and defines the configuration of communities and the infrastructure needed to service them. A central feature in this Plan is that it identifies and protects a system of greenlands and natural environment features, agricultural lands and rural and resource areas, while accommodating significant growth. The mechanism adopted by York is to define clear edges between urban and rural areas together with detailed criteria to create diverse, self-contained communities that promote economic activity, are transit-supportive and are developed in a way that respects the natural environment. The Plan also proposes a system of centres and corridors for urban areas that will make efficient and compact use of urban areas by focusing on mixed-use development in areas that can be serviced effectively by transit.

York Region's Plan like the plans considered above, emphasizes the

⁴⁰ Official Plan, City of Niagara Falls, 1993, p 52-55

⁴¹ yds.cenet.ca/uploads/Website_Assets/Official_Plan_web.pdf?

important inter-linkages between different land uses and the need for certainty and careful long-term planning, to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan's objectives. Peel could model its regional structure and growth management along similar lines to benefit the business of agriculture as well as the residents of Peel.

Durham Region Official Plan

The Durham Region Official Plan includes a range of activities that are permitted in agricultural areas with specific conditions and arrangements. Section 11.2.13 states "Notwithstanding the provisions of this [Durham] Plan with respect to the permitted use within the General Agricultural Area designation, the following may be permitted: a motor vehicle repair garage and ancillary uses. Such use will be subject to satisfactory arrangements..." The Plan details other uses i.e., a furniture manufacturing use of a "dry" nature; a warehouse for the storage of sporting goods and equipment and ancillary use, subject to the site being zoned in the respective restricted area by-law in a special zoning category for that use. Generally, non-agricultural uses are permitted so long as the use is of an "attractive and unobtrusive nature" and "no outside storage being permitted"⁴². This idea may be too detailed for the Region, and is open for discussion.

The above discussion has examined some best management practices in other jurisdictions that could be employed in Peel to minimize land use conflicts in favour of agriculture and improve the long-term protection of agricultural land.

The discussion in the preceding sections of this paper has raised some

issues that are considered in the next section to get a better understanding of the dynamics of the agricultural industry in Peel, and to gauge the farming community's perceptions of the future role of farming in the Region. In addition, the section contains a set of issues and questions drawn from the Provincial Policy Statement, the Greenbelt Plan and the Places to Grow Plan. The contributions provided to these questions at this consultative meeting will help ensure that the agricultural industry focus area of the ROP addresses the policy directives that were released.

11.0 ISSUES AND INPUTS

Issues and Questions arising from the Provincial Plans

- i. The Greenbelt Plan aims to protect against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and also to provide for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses.*
 - What role can the Regional Official Plan play in protecting against loss and fragmentation of prime agricultural land and keep the agriculture industry in Peel viable and competitive?
 - What role can the Regional Official Plan play in promoting diversity in farming for near urban agriculture, market gardens, ethnic produce, and locally grown produce?
 - What are the policy implications?
- ii. The Places to Grow Plan notes that "Urban sprawl contributes to the degradation of our natural environment, air quality and water resources, as well as the consumption of agricultural lands and other natural resources so critical to the future economy."*

⁴² The Regional Municipality of Durham Official Plan, March 31, 2004

- Existing measures have checked urban sprawl with limited success. What more should the Regional Official Plan do to deal with urban sprawl, and what are the policy implications?
- iii. *The Provincial Policy Statement directs that planning authorities shall support energy efficiency and improved air quality through land use and development patterns.*
- How should the Region's Official Plan address this and encourage area municipalities to develop renewable energy systems in settlement areas, rural areas and prime agricultural areas?
- iv. *The Provincial Policy Statement directs that all types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected in prime agricultural areas.*
- What factors should be taken into account to accomplish this and what are the policy implications?
- v. *Would the proposed expansion of the Greenbelt's boundaries, be a way of protecting agricultural lands in Peel?*
- Should the Greenbelt Plan area north of Mayfield Road, be expanded to cover more of the area below the Oak Ridges Moraine?
- vi. *The Greenbelt Plan notes, an Agricultural System that provides a continuous and permanent land base is necessary to support long-term agricultural production and economic activity.*
- Where should agricultural land be protected in the Region of Peel?
 - What can the Regional Official Plan do to protect agricultural lands from competing non-agricultural uses, and how can this be achieved by the Regional Official Plan?
- What can the Regional Official Plan do to encourage secondary uses and value-added products in Peel encouraged?
 - What are the policy implications?
- vii. *The Places to Grow Plan addresses the challenge to enhance the conservation of natural systems and prime agricultural areas.*
- What are the drawbacks to sound conservation of these two land uses and what can the Regional Official Plan do to surmount the problems?
 - What are the policy implications?

12.0 CONCLUSION

This paper has presented information on the major challenges confronting the agricultural industry in Peel at present and are likely to continue if appropriate policies and strategies are not adopted. The progressive loss of prime agricultural lands due to urban development pressure poses major questions to the Region in terms of maintaining the agricultural industry as a financially viable sector, and ensuring that the industry contributes towards supporting a vibrant economy and sustaining healthy communities.

The Region's Policy Planning and Research Division is seeking comments from agriculture stakeholders and the community in general about the challenges facing the agricultural industry in Peel Region and how we can develop effective policies to tackle them. Staff will use these comments in their review and update of the agricultural industry component of the Regional Official Plan.

You have a central role in determining what the agriculture and agri-food industry in Peel would look like in the future and what policies would best serve the interests of the farming

community and the agricultural industry in general.

We would greatly appreciate your comments on these and other related questions. Thank you.

Please send your comments to:
David Wright, MCIP, RPP
Region of Peel
David.wright@peelregion.ca
Phone 905-791-7800 x4350

Endnotes (see page 4)

Provincial Policy Statement, 2005

Bring ROP into conformity with Section 2.3 of the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Greenbelt Plan, 2005

Section 1.2 The Greenbelt Plan protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use. It also provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses. The goal is to enhance our urban and rural areas and overall quality of life by supporting long-term agricultural production and economic activity

Places to Grow Plan, 2006

This Plan directs that farming across the GTA will be productive, diverse and sustainable and, that unique and high-quality agricultural lands are to be protected for future generations. Plan implementation would be based on a balanced approach in the use and management of all resources, including natural heritage, agriculture, and mineral aggregates (pp. 9 & 30).

APPENDIX I Provincial Policy Statement 2005

2.3 Agriculture

2.3.1 *Prime agricultural areas* shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.

Prime agricultural areas are areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. *Specialty crop areas* shall be given the highest priority for protection, followed by Classes 1, 2 and 3 soils, in this order of priority.

2.3.2 Planning authorities shall designate *specialty crop areas* in accordance with evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time.

2.3.3 Permitted Uses

2.3.3.1 In *prime agricultural areas*, permitted uses and activities are: *agricultural uses*, *secondary uses* and *agriculture-related uses*.

Proposed new *secondary uses* and *agriculture-related uses* shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations. These uses shall be limited in scale, and criteria for these uses shall be included in municipal planning documents as recommended by the Province, or based on municipal approaches, which achieve the same objective.

2.3.3.2 In *prime agricultural areas*, all types, sizes and intensities of *agricultural uses* and *normal farm practices* shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards.

2.3.3.3 New land uses, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding

livestock facilities shall comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae*.

2.3.4 Lot Creation and Lot Adjustments

2.3.4.1 Lot creation in *prime agricultural areas* is discouraged and may only be permitted for:

- a. *agricultural uses*, provided that the lots are of a size appropriate for the type of agricultural use(s) common in the area and are sufficiently large to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations;
- b. *agriculture-related uses*, provided that any new lot will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use and *appropriate sewage and water services*;
- c. *a residence surplus to a farming operation* as a result of farm consolidation provided that the planning authority ensures that new residential dwellings are prohibited on any vacant remnant parcel of farmland created by the severance. The approach used to ensure that no new residential dwellings are permitted on the remnant parcel may be recommended by the Province, or based on municipal approaches which achieve the same objective; and
- d. *infrastructure*, where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights-of-way.

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

2.3.4.3 The creation of new residential lots in *prime agricultural areas* shall not

be permitted, except in accordance with policy 2.3.4.1(c).

2.3.5 Removal of Land from Prime Agricultural Areas

2.3.5.1 Planning authorities may only exclude land from *prime agricultural areas* for:

- a. expansions of or identification of *settlement areas* in accordance with policy 1.1.3.9;
- b. extraction of *minerals, petroleum resources* and *mineral aggregate resources*, in accordance with policies 2.4 and 2.5; and
- c. limited non-residential uses, provided that:
 1. the land does not comprise a *specialty crop area*;
 2. there is a demonstrated need within the planning horizon provided for in policy 1.1.2 for additional land to be designated to accommodate the proposed use;
 3. there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid *prime agricultural areas*; and
 4. there are no reasonable alternative locations in *prime agricultural areas* with lower priority agricultural lands.

2.3.5.2 Impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands should be mitigated to the extent feasible.

Appendix II: Region of Peel Official Plan Office Consolidation November, 2005

CHAPTER 3: RESOURCES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 Purpose

This chapter addresses those components of the natural environment, which are actively utilized in Peel, such as agricultural lands, mineral aggregate resources and water resources. Also addressed are recreation and cultural heritage resources used and enjoyed by Peel residents and visitors.

There must be a balance between the use and protection of resources, and the preservation of Peel's natural and cultural environment, while allowing for growth. Natural features and human communities coincide with valuable resources and require protection from incompatible uses to maintain their integrity. Non-renewable resources will continue to be consumed for urban and economic growth purposes, and require sound management to allow for their use and protect their availability. Renewable resources must be utilized in a sustainable manner to ensure their viability for future generations.

3.1.2 Goal

To have the renewable and non-renewable resources of Peel protected, managed and utilized in an efficient manner that conserves and protects environmental features and functions, and the character of rural Peel including its social, heritage, cultural, community and economic aspects.

3.2 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture represents one of the more important sectors of Ontario's economy and continues to play a significant role in Peel. The Prime Agricultural Area in Peel Region generally has a Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Soil Capability for Agriculture rating of Class 1, 2, or 3,

meaning they have few constraints for agricultural production. Currently the majority of lands in the southern part of the Town of Caledon and on the east and west side of the City of Brampton outside the urban area have soils which are rated as CLI Class 1. In addition to the CLI classifications, certain lands support the local production and sale of market vegetables or fruits and/or have specialized farm investments, such as greenhouses. The Prime Agricultural Area excludes existing settlement areas as identified in the area municipal official plans.

3.2.1 Objectives

3.2.1.1 To protect the Prime Agricultural Area as a natural resource of major importance to the economic viability of the Region, and to support Peel's farmers and agricultural organizations as valuable contributors to the community and the economy of Peel.

3.2.1.2 To protect agricultural uses in the Prime Agricultural Area from incompatible activities and land uses which would limit agricultural productivity or efficiency or result in fragmentation of the agricultural land base.

3.2.1.3 To support a healthy and productive agricultural industry as an important component of Peel's economic base and heritage.

3.2.2 Policies

It is the policy of Regional Council to:

3.2.2.1 Protect the Prime Agricultural Area for agriculture as shown on Schedule B.

3.2.2.2 Promote and protect agricultural operations and normal farm practices in the Prime Agricultural Area.

3.2.2.3 Require all uses in the Prime Agricultural Area to comply with the minimum distance separation formulae.

3.2.2.4 Encourage the phasing of development and continued agricultural production on agricultural lands that lie within the 2021 Regional Urban Boundary.

3.2.2.5 Support programs of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and other organizations, which encourage farmers to develop and follow conservation measures and sustainable farming practices (such as Environmental Farm Plans) that will protect the long-term productivity of agricultural lands and minimize impacts on the environment.

3.2.2.6 Support the identification and protection of localized prime agricultural areas in the area municipal official plans.

3.2.2.7 Direct the area municipalities, in their official plans, to designate the Prime Agricultural Area as shown on Schedule B.

3.2.2.8 Direct the area municipalities in their official plans to allow in the Prime Agricultural Area, primary agricultural uses, and where deemed appropriate by the area municipality, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses; provided all new uses are compatible with surrounding agricultural activity, meet the requirements of the minimum distance separation formulae, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, as appropriate.

3.2.2.9 Direct the area municipalities, in the Prime Agricultural Area, to consider only permitting a non-residential use, which would be subject to an area municipal official plan amendment provided that:

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- there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid the Prime Agricultural Area;
 - there are no reasonable alternative locations in the Prime Agricultural Area with lower priority agricultural lands;
 - there is a demonstrated need for the use; and
 - impacts from any new non-residential use on surrounding agricultural operations and lands are minimal or will be satisfactorily mitigated.

This policy may not be used to address a proposal that has the effect of adjusting the 2021 Regional Urban Boundary, or a 2021 Rural Service Centre boundary. Such applications must continue to be addressed in the context of Section 7.9 of this Plan.

3.2.2.10 Direct the area municipalities, in their official plans, to recognize, as appropriate, in the Prime Agricultural Area existing non residential uses, the residential use of existing and approved vacant severed lots, and the residential use of lots that may be approved in accordance with provincial policies.

3.2.2.11 Direct the Town of Caledon to protect farms in the Rural System from incompatible uses.

3.2.2.12 Prepare, in consultation with the area municipalities and other affected agencies, new Land Division goals and policies on land severances, in conformity with provincial policy, for future incorporation by amendment into this Plan. In the interim, consents to sever lands in the Prime Agricultural Area shall only be permitted in accordance with Provincial Policy.

Appendix III: Issues and Questions

Please provide answers to the following questions.

Issues and Questions arising from the Provincial Plans

- i. *The Greenbelt Plan aims to protect against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and also to provide for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses.*

- What should be done to best protect against loss and fragmentation of prime agricultural land and keep the agriculture industry in Peel viable and competitive?

- How should the agricultural industry be restructured from a traditional primary producing sector to a modern, technologically superior agro-industrial enterprise?

- What should be done to promote diversity in farming for near urban agriculture, market gardens, ethnic produce, and locally grown produce?

- What are the policy implications?

- ii. *The Places to Grow Plan notes that "Urban sprawl contributes to the degradation of our natural environment, air quality and water resources, as well as the consumption of agricultural lands and other natural resources so critical to the future economy.*

- Existing measures have checked urban sprawl with limited success. What should be done to effectively control urban development pressures and what are the policy implications?

iii. *The Provincial Policy Statement directs that planning authorities shall support energy efficiency and improved air quality through land use and development patterns.*

- How should the Region's Official Plan address this and encourage area municipalities to develop renewable energy systems in settlement areas, rural areas and prime agricultural areas?

iv. *The Provincial Policy Statement directs that all types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected in prime agricultural areas.*

- What factors should be taken into account to accomplish this and what are the policy implications?

v. *Would the proposed expansion of the Greenbelt's boundaries, be a way of protecting agricultural lands in Peel?*

- Should the Greenbelt Plan area north of Mayfield Road, be expanded to cover more of the area below the Oak Ridges Moraine?

vi. *The Greenbelt Plan notes, an Agricultural System that provides a continuous and permanent land base is necessary to support long-term agricultural production and economic activity.*

- Where should agricultural land be protected in the Region of Peel?
- How much land should be protected from competing non-agricultural uses, and how can this be guaranteed?
- How can secondary uses and value-added products be encouraged?
- What are the policy implications?

vii. *The Places to Grow Plan addresses the challenge to enhance the conservation of natural systems and prime agricultural areas.*

- What are the drawbacks to sound conservation of these two land uses and how can they be surmounted?
- What are the policy implications?