



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Risks to the Future Viability of Agriculture in Ontario Imminent *Ontario Farmland Trust submits comments on proposed Provincial Planning Policy 2023*

Guelph, ON. –

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT), on the heels of an unanswered Open Letter to the Premier of Ontario, is not slowing down in its efforts to bring awareness of what they believe to be worrying policy changes in the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2023, to the public.

“The proposed policy changes will lead to significantly higher rates of farmland loss”, OFT’s Executive Director, Martin Straathof, states. “These policies indicate that this government is not interested in protecting agriculture and is overly focused on housing, which while important, is too narrow of an interest for the policy framework for land-use planning to focus on across our vast province.”

While recognizing that the housing supply issue needs to be addressed, OFT emphasizes that the housing issue would simply be replaced by food insecurity and the undermining of rural economies.

The rate of farmland loss in Ontario has increased dramatically since the 2016 Census of Agriculture, from 175 acres to 319 acres of farmland being lost every single day. Straathof indicates that with the increased rate of farmland loss, Ontario’s 11.8 million acres of **today’s farmland will be gone within the next 100 years.**

“What we see in these policy changes is the ability to indiscriminately develop on Ontario’s best land for food production. Prime soil for food production is a finite resource. Agriculture cannot simply be moved elsewhere,” Straathof said, while noting Ontario’s agri-food sector currently employs 1 in 10 Ontarians and contributes \$47 billion to the province’s GDP.

OFT has raised several concerns about the proposed changes, including mandatory allowance of up to three lot severances per parcel in prime agricultural areas. Straathof comments, “Additionally, the government removed the requirement to plan for an agricultural system, municipal comprehensive reviews, and reduced or eliminated density targets in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). This will lead to inefficient land use in settlement areas, leading to unnecessary and premature boundary expansion on prime farmland.” OFT also noted the weakening of policy language, inconsistencies, and contradictions riddled throughout the proposed PPS.

The agricultural system approach, unique in North America, supports both the protection of farmland and the viability of the agri-food sector. Several rural and agricultural land use planning experts have already noted that these policies will lead to farmland fragmentation, undermining an agricultural system approach, as well as lead to land-use conflicts between agricultural and residential uses, and increase the price of farmland making.

Straathof shared, “By adding your voice to the concerns we have of the proposed Provincial Planning Statement 2023, the public can continue to support our farmland and natural areas which provide not only food, fuel, fibre, and flowers, but a range of integral ecosystem services to surrounding communities.” Straathof added that flood mitigation, water filtration, and carbon sequestration are essential to maintain in the fight against climate change, and farmlands also are relied upon by many species at risk for food and shelter.

OFT is focused on empowering community members through education, enabling civic engagement and bolstering involvement at the local municipal levels. To support this, a [Take Action campaign](#) has been launched by OFT to show the provincial government that the proposed PPS is not in the best interest of Ontarians. OFT is asking the public to:

- 1) Reach out to the Ontario Farmland Trust and other conservation groups to support their work;
- 2) Contact your local MPP and let them know you disagree with PPS;
- 3) Submit a Letter to the Environmental Registry of Ontario;
- 4) Join a local rally in support of farmland and natural habitat; and
- 5) Share with friends, family, and coworkers and encourage them to join in these activities.

Template letters have been made available to the public at <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/get-involved/take-action/>.

OFT supports farmers who wish to ensure that their farmland remains farmland, forever. Farmland conservation easements are the strongest tool available to protect farmland, ensuring that any future non-agricultural use remains prohibited because of the permanent easement on title. More information on easements

can be found at www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/what-we-do/farmland-protection/farmland-easement-agreements/.

About the Ontario Farmland Trust

The Ontario Farmland Trust is a non-profit, charitable organization that works across Ontario to protect farmlands and associated agricultural, natural and cultural features of the countryside for the benefit of current and future generations. Since 2004, OFT has been facilitating Farmland Conservation Easement Agreements with land owners, currently holding 22 agreements across Ontario. OFT will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2024, and aims to increase the number of agreements exponentially over the next five years. Donations are necessary to fund this work, and are gratefully accepted at www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/donate. Businesses wishing to make an impact to protect farmland are encouraged to inquire with OFT about ways to partner.

For More Information contact:

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