



(DATE)

To the Attention of _(YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL)

I am writing to you as a member of the National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O), an accredited farm organization representing thousands of sustainable family farms and local food eaters. I am a (TYPE) farmer in (LOCATION). I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Greenbelt Expansion, ERO-019-3136.

The Greenbelt Plan prioritizes: “Protecting agricultural lands, water resources and natural areas, supporting the achievement of complete communities that are compact, ... reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work towards low-carbon communities, and the long-term goal of net-zero communities.” This vision is in alignment with our values, however there are some key points of concern that we would like to raise as the plan moves forward.

Farmers contribute to the necessary food production and land stewardship that is essential to the larger economic and environmental goals of the Greenbelt plan. Poorly planned development, and the use of land for aggregate extraction within and around the Greenbelt area, all undermine the plan’s goals. It is often repeated by the government that no single priority outweighs the other, but economic growth, viable communities, and the health of natural resources, cannot exist if farmland and natural landscapes are not prioritized. “Compact communities,” as the plan states, should not be dependent on external imports of food and agricultural products.

In the Ontario Local Foods Act, 2013, it states that the prime objective is, "to foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario". Expansion of the Greenbelt, with farmland as a priority, directly supports the intent of this legislation that emerged from a strongly supported movement. Expansion also supports the Greenbelt’s plan to provide a diverse range of economic and social activities in rural communities. It is crucial to understand that the province’s goals will not be achieved if farmland continues to disappear.

In 2018 the NFU-O requested that all farmland be “greenbelted” until further studies are done. We stand by this as farmland continues to disappear. Without this protection industries will simply move outward instead of planning for long term viability. Short-term, nonrenewable land use such as gravel pits will destroy farmland and rural communities. The members and their families are very concerned about the changing nature of our climate and the ability of farmers to feed the people of Ontario and Canada. The potential economic benefits of extractive industry and highways do not matter when farmland and ecosystems do not exist.

We urge you to extend strong protections to farmland in and around the Greenbelt.

Sincerely,

(YOUR NAME)