



The fight to protect Ontario's finite farmland continues: We need you to join the fight!

Once again, farmland is under attack in Ontario. On April 6, 2023, the Ford Government announced another round of legislative changes that prioritize irresponsible growth and development.

The changes are proposed in Bill 97 (*the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act*) and in a new Proposed Provincial Planning Statement (PPS). Much like Bill 23 and the legislated amendments to the Greenbelt Plan passed in late 2022, these new changes will line the pockets of developers and land speculators, at the expense of all Ontarians.

Included in the proposed PPS is a policy that would **allow farm lots to be subdivided up to three times** and lead to significant fragmentation of Ontario's already scarce remaining agricultural land base. Currently in Ontario most municipalities with an approved official plan have specific policies and requirements for land severances to prevent the indiscriminate division of land without planning review and approval and to avoid any long-term, negative impact on the community. By abandoning the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the current Provincial Policy Statement (2020), and weakening regional planning, **these changes will undermine essential policies designed to reduce urban sprawl and protect natural heritage and agricultural lands.**

The National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O), Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), along with numerous commodity and agricultural organizations, are united in their opposition to Bill 97 and the proposed PPS. Together, we are encouraging our farmers and supporters to add their voice and speak up against these short-sighted legislative proposals by sending letters and submitting comments on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO). Our

unanimous opposition is working.

On May 24 and 25, one week after we launched our collective letter writing campaign, the Premier's office met with farm leaders to discuss farmers' concerns around the proposed PPS. In response, the Government sent a letter to all of the agricultural organizations that promised that Bill 97, if passed into law, would not automatically initiate the changes outlined in the proposed PPS. The Government promised to "continue working with the agricultural sector to look at alternatives that would assist farm families in succession planning, but that do not involve additional severances". The Government's concession is not insignificant. It proves that the Government heard Ontario farmers. By continuing to stand together, we can produce real results; we must continue to fight to protect Ontario's dwindling farmland.

To date, over 600 members and supporters have used the action tool on the NFU's website to send a letter in opposition to Bill 97 and the policies outlined in the proposed PPS. While we celebrate the early successes of this opposition campaign, the fight is far from over. We must continue to push the Government to abandon its proposal to allow for the severing of farmland parcels, in recognition of the current and future value of agriculture to the province's economy, to our long-term food security, and to long-term vibrant rural communities.

Our united opposition campaign also successfully extended the comment period for the proposed PPS on the Environmental Registry of Ontario to Friday, August 4, 2023. This is a promising window of opportunity that will allow more consultation with the farm community. But it will only be a victory if that extended time is used by farmers like you to speak up and oppose these short-sighted legislative proposals.

Residential lot creation in

agricultural areas has long been controversial and the detrimental impacts for agriculture are well demonstrated, including fragmentation of the agricultural land base, increased conflicts between neighbouring land uses, risk of inflating farmland prices and increasing costs to municipalities. In addition, we have significant concerns regarding the speculative investment that this proposal will drive, resulting in farmland values that make farming even more unattainable for the next generation.

We encourage you to voice your opposition to these proposed changes before August 4. You can do so by calling or sending a letter to your MPP, to Housing Minister Steve Clark, or submitting an online comment on the Environmental Registry of Ontario. A template letter is available on the NFU website or can be requested from the office by emailing office@nfontario.ca.

Ontario boasts of having some of Canada's richest and most fertile farmland and these policy changes put the sustainability of that land and our local and long-term food security at risk. The Government wants to hear from farmers. Tell Minister Clark and Premier Ford, that neither farmers nor their land will be divided.

Local News/Events

Local 320 (Bruce) will be hosting our Annual Summer BBQ on Sunday, July 9, 2023 at noon at the Saugeen Paddlers Club Trailer (Saugeen River Access Site 9B). All NFU members and their families are welcome for a time of local food and fellowship! Food, drinks, and dessert will be provided. Please bring your own chairs (and bathing suits if you'd like to swim in the river!)

PLEASE NOTE: Children must be supervised at all times. For more information and to RSVP, please email local320@nfontario.ca by July 7, 2023.