

## News

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# Joint Statement from Ontario's Farm Leaders on Bill 97 and Proposed Provincial Planning Statement

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The leadership of Ontario's agricultural organizations, named below, are united in asking the Ontario government to take pause on its recently released Proposed Provincial Planning Statement and newly proposed Bill 97.

We stand in strong opposition to the 3 lot severances per farm parcel proposed in prime agricultural areas as well as other measures that weaken local farmland protection. We request that the limited circumstances permitting residential lot creation in prime agricultural areas under the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, be retained in the new Proposed Provincial Planning Statement.

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. Any policies that might open land for speculative purchase and investment need to be discouraged.

As farm leaders and organizations, we have worked diligently to manage and mitigate conflict between farming and non-farming neighbours in all types of agriculture. The proposed changes will exacerbate conflict between farming and non-farming neighbours for all aspects of farming including application of crop nutrition and crop protection products, wildlife control and more. We support Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) and see it as a valuable tool to minimize conflicts between farm operations and residential areas with respect to livestock operations. Additional lot severances proposed will make it difficult or impossible for farmers to operate, expand and grow their farms.

We do not support policies that will increase residential lot creation in prime agricultural areas or in rural areas that are actively farmed. Ontario boasts some of Canada's richest and most fertile farmland and these policy changes put the sustainability of that land and the food system it provides at great risk.

Ontario's agri-food sector is an economic powerhouse, fuelling rural communities, generating nearly 750,000 jobs and contributing more than \$47 billion to Ontario's annual GDP. The province's agri-food strategy, **Grow Ontario**, aims to strengthen the agri-food sector, support economic growth and ensure an efficient, reliable and responsible food supply. Ontario's farmers are positioned to seize opportunities and rise to the challenge of an ambitious growth strategy, allowing the agri-food sector to drive the economy forward. To farm, we need farmland.

Ontario's productive farmland is a scarce resource, making up less than five per cent of all the land in the province. It is our unwavering position that agricultural production is the most valued and best use of this land. We believe in the importance of a healthy, viable and sustainable supply of food products grown, harvested and processed right here at home. We are confident that long-term food system security for the people of Ontario, Canada and the world is a shared priority with the general public and our governments.

Collectively, we seek your commitment to preserving Ontario's farmland and specialty croplands across the province. The implications of Bill 97 and the Proposed Provincial Planning Statement for Ontario agriculture are significant and concerning for the agriculture and agri-food sector. These decisions will have long-term, intergenerational implications for Ontario farmers, food security, water resources and the agri-food economy.

Directing growth to settlement areas, urban and rural is better for both agriculture and municipalities. Housing needs can be met in serviced settlement areas on a much smaller land base. This reduces farmland loss and potential land use conflicts while encouraging ongoing investment in farm and farm-related businesses. It also ensures efficient use of municipal infrastructure investments and reduces costs to provide services. Responsible land-use planning is critical to balancing the needs of our growing communities and to ensure that our agriculture and agri-food sector survives and thrives.

We ask for the opportunity to work together with the government to develop a way forward to support and create the framework for needed housing and development while ensuring the long-term success and viability of the agriculture sector.

Sincerely,

Peggy Brekveld, President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Max Hansgen, President  
National Farmers Union-Ontario

Ed Scharringa, President  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

William Bearss, Chair  
Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg & Chick Commission

Jack Chaffe, President  
Beef Farmers of Ontario

John DeBruyn, Chair  
Ontario Pork

Scott Helps, Chair  
Egg Farmers of Ontario

Phil Kroesbergen  
Veal Farmers of Ontario

Murray Opsteen, Chair  
Chicken Farmers of Ontario

Bernard Pope, Chair and Martin Straathof, Executive Director  
Ontario Farmland Trust

Brian Ricker, Chair  
Turkey Farmers of Ontario

Murray Sherk, Chair  
Dairy Farmers of Ontario

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