

June 1977

# CIVIC AFFAIRS

## Food for the Cities

Disappearing Farmland and  
Provincial Land Policy

JUNE 1977



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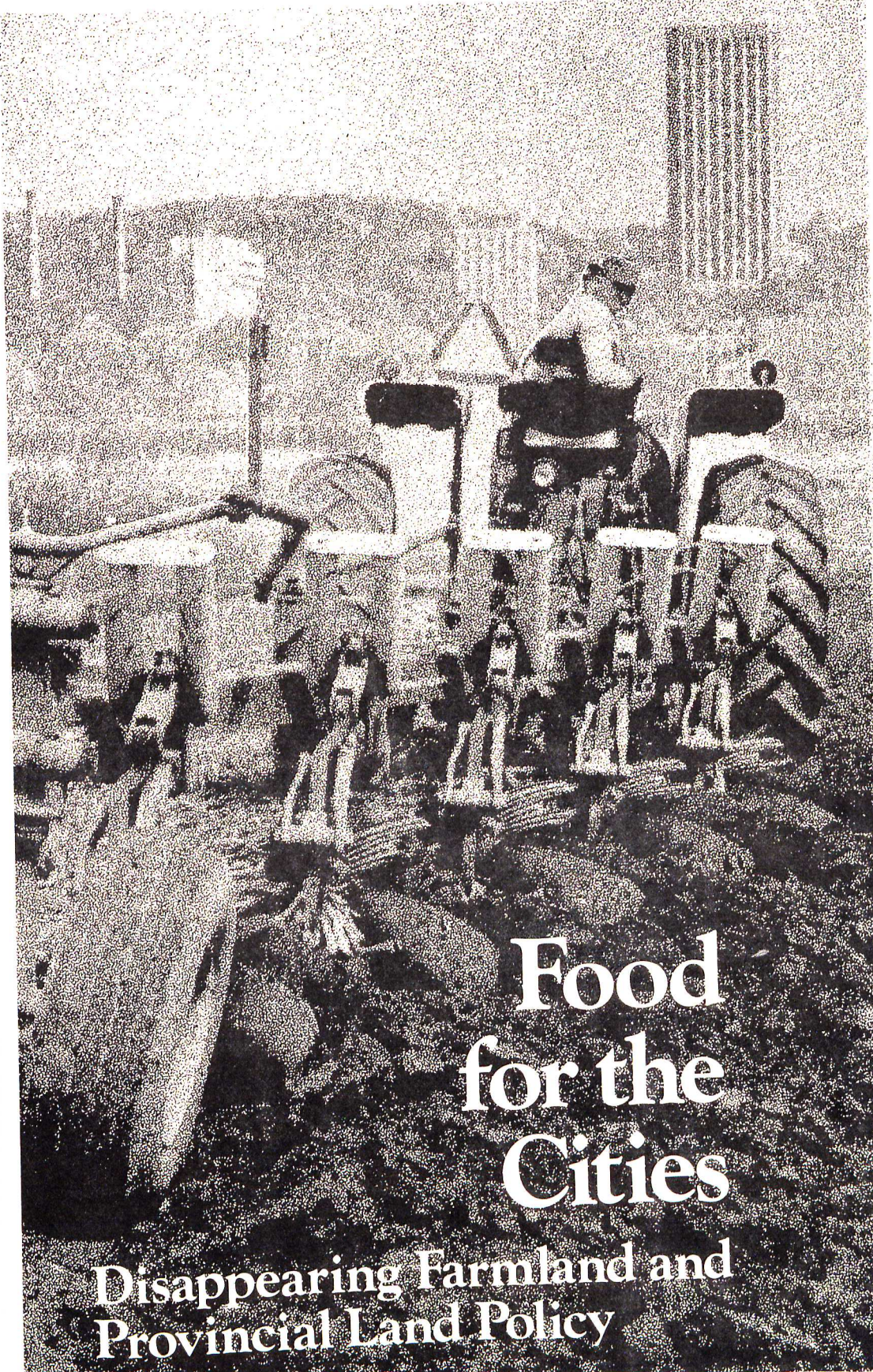
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*Finally, we thank our outside readers for their valuable comments on this concluding report.*



## THIS REPORT IN BRIEF

*This Civic Affairs is the outcome of an examination by the Bureau of the "disappearing farmland" problem in Southern Ontario and the Food for the Cities Conference held in Toronto, March 30th and 31st, 1977.*

*Our findings suggest that the **Food Land Guidelines**, proposed by the provincial government for the protection of farmland in Ontario, will not ensure that the better farming areas in Ontario are kept for agricultural purposes. Because the **Guidelines** are only suggestions designed to assist local municipalities, counties or regions in their planning, they represent intentions rather than a method for preserving our agricultural resource lands.*

*It is apparent from the material in this publication that the causes of the withdrawal of farmland are complex and subtle. The direct and indirect effects of the outward expansion of cities and towns constitute only a small part of the problem. A whole host of non-farm uses of rural land, including recreational and residential uses, or simply non-use (land purchased as an investment), are pushing up farmland prices, weakening the environment for farming and undermining the future prospects for Ontario agriculture.*

*We recommend that the Province adopt a land policy for agriculture which includes these key elements:*

- 1. a requirement that all municipalities with farmland resources make permanent agricultural designations within a specified time period, not exceeding two years. These agricultural priority areas would have legislative protection. (If municipalities fail to comply, the Province should impose a blanket hold until the necessary planning policies are developed.) These designations could differentiate between permanent agricultural areas and urban-rural fringe areas.*
- 2. a commitment by the Province to impose tougher restrictions where there is an obvious need — on land use changes or on severances — so that the main objective of saving the remaining farmland in Southern Ontario is not undermined while the planning is being done.*
- 3. the application of a joint provincial-municipal rural planning process which would help to ensure that municipalities with farmland resources would incorporate agricultural concerns into their day-to-day decisions as well as their official plans or development strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

In late 1976 the Bureau of Municipal Research decided to examine the problem of "disappearing farmland" in Southern Ontario. It was clearly an issue with ramifications for municipal as well as provincial planning. Our interest in the subject was aroused by the alarms which were being sounded about the loss of prime agricultural land in the province. The issue had become polarized with some politicians and farmer spokesmen claiming that Ontario farmland was going out of production at a disturbing rate, and with others denying that the province's foodlands were in jeopardy. At that time the Province's response to the demand for strong protective measures consisted of its *Strategy for Ontario Farmland* (March, 1976); this document promised a mixture of new policies, but in itself did not set out specific goals or a course of action.

We were also prompted to consider the farmland issue because of a longstanding and growing concern over the future direction of the Province's regional development and regional planning policies. Indeed, our initial intention had been to undertake a review of the decade-old regional development and planning programme, using the agricultural issue as one important perspective from which to scrutinize the more general planning policies. Since the trend toward unwise use of Ontario's physical resources, such as the waste of prime farmland, had provided one of the major incentives for the creation of the regional development programme in the first place,<sup>1</sup> the farmland issue seemed appropriate as a means of focussing the problems of planning in rural and urban fringe areas. Moreover, recent warnings about the implications of our current urban settlement patterns,<sup>2</sup> had directly linked the issues of protecting Canada's and Ontario's good agricultural land with the need for prudent and effective land use planning and resource management on a provincial and regional basis.

After several exploratory meetings to assess the viability of the research topic and our preliminary investigation of the available evidence, we decided to concentrate on the land component of the farmland issue, with reference to the much larger regional development issues for contextual purposes only. The *Food for the Cities* project had three stages: the publications in early March, 1977 entitled *Disappearing Farmland: So What?* and *Design for Development: Where Are You?*; the conference itself, which was held on March 30th and 31st; and this *Civic Affairs*.

The *Food for the Cities* title was a deliberate and provocative understatement of the theme. It was chosen because farmland protection became a political issue in Ontario only when it struck a responsive chord in the cities, where people were concerned about future food supply. Yet, we understood that the issue of "farmland withdrawal" had several dimensions. In addition to the stakes of future food production, and the economic and political implications of this, we were also talking about preserving farming as the basis of a rural way of life.

The main purpose of the conference was to assess the need for new provincial land use policies to protect Ontario's prime farmland. Our focus was on the provincial government because it has the constitutional responsibility for the overall planning process. The central question before the participants was: how far should the Province extend its control over the use of land in order to safeguard Ontario's farmland? While we planned the conference prior to the release of the provincial government's *Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture: Food Land Guidelines*, this Green Paper, published in February, 1977, inevitably became a central piece of the backdrop. Our prime objective, then, expanded to include an assessment of the adequacy of the proposed *Guidelines*. A prerequisite, of course, was to clarify our understanding of the problem since there seemed to be no clear agreement as to the nature, scope, and significance of the decline in farmland acreage.

We hoped that the conference would provide a forum where the essential points at issue would be discussed from all of the relevant viewpoints. Accordingly, we sought as guest participants a blend of provincial and local politicians, public and private sector planners, farmers, developers, and researchers of the farmland issue. We advertised the conference to an even broader range of interests, and set maximum registration at 200.



The conference programme (see Appendix A) was designed around the two objectives of clarifying the understanding of the problem and discussing the appropriate provincial government role. Session I dealt with the problem itself, the withdrawal or loss of prime Ontario farmland from agriculture. It presented five different viewpoints with a view to establishing the nature and significance of current land loss trends. Session II consisted of workshop discussions. Each of the four concurrent workshops examined one possible provincial approach to solving the problem. Session III reviewed the conclusions reached in each of the workshops with respect to two central questions: 1) to what extent would the provincial role outlined alleviate or solve the land loss problem? 2) what were the problems and political prospects of the given approach? The purpose of the informal post-conference session was to delineate the themes that had emerged.

In designing the programme our intention clearly was to take only a *partial* look at the agricultural issue. It was a partial look on two counts. First, our attention was confined to the role of the Province, even though we were cognizant of the very key role that the federal government can play in agriculture.<sup>3</sup> Second, our focus was provincial *land* policy. We did not attempt to deal with the economics of farming in the conference in a major way, although none would deny that marketing and farm income policies must be an integral part of any strategy to protect farmland and keep farmers farming. We made the assumption that the land base of agriculture could be treated as a separate though closely related policy area. This assumption was based on the reality that the Province will continue to establish policies and legislate as it has in the past — on a specific policy or programme basis, even as it affirms the need to solve both the income and land use sides of the problem. This proved to be a rather controversial assumption, as we explain in our summary of the conference results.

This *Civic Affairs* is divided into two parts. Part I consists of our background papers on the farmland problem and the Province's programme of regional development and planning. Part II contains major excerpts from the conference, including the three political addresses, the presentations and responses prepared for each of the four workshops, together with the chairmen's reports, and a summary of the themes that emerged. It also contains our conclusions and policy recommendations.

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1. See BMR Comment, "Design for Development: Where Are You?", included in Part I of this report.
  2. As issued by, for instance, the Science Council of Canada (*Population, Technology and Resources*, July 1976.)
  3. Ottawa recently announced that it would soon set out its long-promised national food policy dealing with food production, transportation, processing and marketing.

## **PART I: BACKGROUND PAPERS**



# 1. DISAPPEARING FARMLAND: SO WHAT?

## 1. Introduction

The government of Ontario's recent decision to draw in the boundaries for urban growth in the Niagara region,<sup>1</sup> and its simultaneous release of a Green Paper on guidelines for the preservation of foodlands, have brought to a head the longstanding issue of the declining land base for agriculture. The foodland problem was "discovered" over 15 years ago, at first by university researchers and then in nation-wide forums such as the Resources for Tomorrow Conference (1961). But it was 1972 before a joint federal-provincial study carried out by the University of Guelph sounded the first public alarm for agricultural land in Southern Ontario.<sup>2</sup> Since then the farmland question has become a matter of widespread public debate and a leading political issue.

A myriad of seemingly contradictory facts and figures complicates the task of sorting out political posturing from thoughtful analysis of the problem. Some experts and politicians are warning us that we have arrived at a crisis or turning point with regard to the reduction of agricultural lands and that, if we do not act decisively to protect our foodlands, we shall lose the opportunity to save them at all. Others deny that our farmland is endangered. They agree that our agricultural land base is declining but maintain that there is no cause for immediate alarm.

The purpose of this *Comment* is to define the issues in the farmland debate. Our intent is to show where there is consensus and, conversely, what are the critical unresolved points. We suggest that there are two sets of issues:

- 1) the scope, causes and significance of the problem; and,
- 2) the policy options and the role of the provincial government.

One might argue that the solution to a problem follows from the perception of that problem. The farmland question is more complex. Even if there were agreement as to the nature of the problem and its significance, one's view of the appropriate solution is inevitably tied to philosophical and ideological preferences as to the role of government, the use of resources, and the rights of ownership. Any search for solutions, therefore, should best begin by looking for the *minimum* steps necessary to maintain an adequate land base for agriculture. Our discussion of the second set of issues, which deals with the appropriate extent of involvement by the provincial government, proceeds with this in mind.

## II. The Nature of the Problem and Its Significance

"Disappearing" farmland refers to the loss from production, either temporarily or permanently, of lands that had previously been used for farming. The agricultural debate has centred on three issues: the scope of the problem, the causes, and the significance of farmland withdrawal.

### The Scope of the Problem

The rueful fact that the debate has so far generated much more heat than light can be attributed in part to the absence of a solid and integrated set of data. Facts can be plucked from three parallel streams of data, each providing a partial description of the farmland base.

The Census of Agriculture, conducted by Statistics Canada every five years, measures the amounts of improved and unimproved lands in Census farms.<sup>3</sup> Analogous to this Census but not the same, the provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Food compiles yearly figures on acreages in principal field crop and pasture.<sup>4</sup> These data are obtained by sample survey of farmers and from "agribusiness" personnel. Third, the Canada Land Inventory (CLI) measures the soil capability for the production of common field crops.<sup>5</sup> There are seven classifications for soil:

Class I	no limitations on range of crops that can be produced
Class II	minor limitations
Class III	moderate limitations
Class IV	suitable mainly for pasture
Class V and VI	suitable only for pasture, hence, for some forms of livestock production
Class VII	no value for agriculture

The performance of each soil class, either for crops or for forage, varies significantly; Table 1 shows that the yield from Class II land, for instance, is only 80% of Class I land.

**TABLE 1**

Performance Indices of Soil Classes<sup>6</sup>

Class	Common Field	
	crops	Forage
I	1.00	1.00
II	.80	.80
III	.64	.66
IV	.49	.58
V	no value	.53
VI	no value	.44
VII	no value	no value

Although soil capability information, OMAF data and Census figures are different kinds of measures and cannot be correlated acre by acre, a growing number of analysts are claiming that the observed rate of decline in acreage of improved farmland is unacceptable.

They argue first that, while improved land does not necessarily comprise the best soils, it is not unreasonable to assume that soils with the best productive potential in an area are improved first.<sup>7</sup>

They also point out that the productive farmland base is modest and strictly limited. From a national perspective, just 13% (294 million acres) of Canada's land area is suitable for agricultural production, and less than half of this is capable of sustained production of common field crops. Only 19% (55 million acres) of total agricultural land is prime farmland (Classes I and II), suitable for a wide range of crops.<sup>8</sup> It is important to remember that these data pertain to the capability of land for agriculture, not its availability; the CLI does not indicate net acreages exclusive of developed lands.

Ontario figures largely in the overall agricultural land picture, not only because of the quality of its soils (Ontario contains half Canada's 10 million acres of Class I lands and 1/6 of the nation's Class II lands) but also because it is favoured by climate<sup>9</sup> and so can produce some crops that cannot easily be grown elsewhere (eg. the high protein soya and white bean crops). The province also provides a number of urban markets. Yet it is in Ontario where the rate of improved farmland going out of production has accelerated. The ARDA report in 1972<sup>10</sup> expressed concern that progressively fewer acres were being farmed, particularly in the "urban arc" area of Southern Ontario (the band of townships some 30 miles wide stretching from Port Hope - Cobourg in the east around to the western end of Lake Ontario). At that time the 1971 Census final counts were not available, so that the decline in improved farmland was underestimated. More recent work has shown that, around 1966, a "remarkable" structural change occurred in the Southern Ontario rural land market. Whereas during the 15 years 1951 to 1966 farmers had decreased their acreages of improved land in production at a very slow rate, in the 5 years from 1966 to 1971 they gave up their improved farmland 6 times faster than in the previous period (Table 2). This means that about 200,000 acres of improved land per year was going out of production during the 1966-71 period.

**TABLE 2**

Annual Percentage Change in Land in Farms Southern Ontario. 1951-1966-1971<sup>11</sup>

Region	Improved Land		Unimproved Land	
	1951-66 %	1966-71 %	1951-66 %	1966-71 %
I. Urban Arc	-1.12	-2.91	-1.32	-1.60
II. Central & Southwest	-0.09	-1.32	-1.76	-1.23
III. Eastern	-0.49	-2.77	-1.44	-2.43
IV. Shield	-0.94	-4.02	-2.97	-4.28
Southern Ontario Total	-0.32	-1.85	-2.00	-2.10



In response to this type of finding, the Science Council of Canada recently took the position that Southern Ontario farmland (in all regions) is in greater jeopardy than anywhere else in the country. Pointing out that in general half the farmland lost is coming from the best one-twentieth of our farmland, the Council noted that decision makers have only begun to realize the implications of such "profligate retirement of prime agricultural land."<sup>12</sup>

Although the 1976 Census of Agriculture is not yet available to indicate the 1971-1976 trend, the yearly OMAF statistics between 1971 and 1975 show that the provincial grain acreage has risen (from 4.5 to 4.7 million acres), the drop in hay production has been stopped (stable at 2.7 million acres), and the decline in improved pasture has slowed (down from 2.3 million acres to 2.0 million acres, in comparison with 2.9 million acres in 1966). These crops account for almost 90% of total improved lands in Ontario's Census farms (1966 and 1971) and the observed changes can be attributed to the substantial price increases experienced during the 1972-1975 period in world markets for grain and fodder.<sup>13</sup> The trend toward the withdrawal of improved farmland has obviously slowed, although it does not mark a return to pre-1966 levels. It can even be argued that the world price rises (which are now starting to drop again) provided a weaker stimulus than one would have expected.<sup>14</sup>

The best available data show, then, that improved farmland, and probably some of our best soils, are continuing to be taken out of production. In past months, the provincial government has been developing a system whereby information on agricultural lands going into and out of production can be obtained from the assessment rolls. This could be a source of potentially more accurate data than any of the three mentioned earlier, but so far it reveals only the *current* situation in farming. Because no time series assessment data are available, it is misleading to compare this new information with the trends established using other sources.

### **The Causes of Farmland Withdrawal**

Although media attention has focussed on the gobbling up of farmland by the direct outward expansion of cities and towns (streets, houses, schools, industrial plants, etc.), in actual fact the cause is not so direct or simple. Indeed, there are several causes — urban expansion, the economics of farming, rural non-farm development — and interrelationships between these causes.

The media's failure to place the extension of urban boundaries into perspective as a cause of farmland withdrawal may reflect the preoccupation of many citizen groups with city growth. The Niagara fruitlands controversy, of course, has reinforced this perception of the issue; here, clearly, the actual or intended expansion of towns and cities has been a significant part of the problem.

The confusion is somewhat surprising in that analysts have consistently attributed urban expansion with only a small role in the general reduction of farmland acreage. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Science Council of Canada, and the ARDA study team, among others, have concluded that city growth is not the major cause of farmland retrenchment.

Analysts have been divided, though, as to the relative influence of two other causes: internal adjustments by the agricultural industry to changing farm economics and urban-oriented pressures on rural areas. Those who subscribe to the internal adjustment theory believe that land is being taken out of production mainly as a short-term response to the cost-price squeeze on agricultural operations. The cost-price squeeze refers to the pressure placed on farmers as costs of production (particularly energy and fertiliser) rise while the market prices for farm products remain stable, or even decline when supply exceeds demand. The response where farming is at best a marginal venture usually differs from the response where agriculture is reasonably profitable, but the general short-term effect, according to this argument, is declining acreage in active production. The implication of this view is that land comes back into production during periods of higher returns in farming.

Certainly there is much evidence supporting the idea that the economic vulnerability of agriculture gives rise to short-term losses in land and production. R. S. Rodd (1976), for instance, notes the fluctuating trends (by year and by region of the province) in farmland acreage in response to price changes. Yet some longer-term or more permanent reductions



also occur. Rodd interprets the existing data to mean that, around 1966, the response by farmers to the prolonged cost-price squeeze changed. Whereas previously they had "held out" by varying their acreage in production, they then began to sell entire farm holdings to non-farm buyers. This has been a province-wide tendency even in areas where, because of their advantage in agriculture (superior soils and climate, good access to markets, and a well-developed agricultural service support system), the traditional response was frequently to enlarge holdings and to spread fixed costs over larger productive acreages. Since 1972 market prices and farm incomes have been at record highs yet farmland retrenchment has continued, albeit at a lower rate. Clearly additional pressures are being felt.

Indeed, the weight of expert opinion is that *non-farm uses of rural land now are the predominant influence in farmland withdrawal*. In a paper to the Food Prices Review Board, E. C. Gray confirms that farmland losses in Southern Ontario have been substantial and argues that these losses are due to competing demands for the use of land rather than to an agricultural industry that is barely profitable.<sup>15</sup> This view holds that, although certainly the amount of farmland going into or out of production will vary from year to year, the overall trend for the long-term is a reduction, due to non-farm demands, in the land base for agriculture.<sup>16</sup> Non-farm demands for rural land are generally referred to as the "urban field influence". One of the influences is that non-farm buyers, many miles from an urban centre, are willing to offer more for land than even a highly productive and optimistic farmer could justify.

Factors underlying non-farm demands for rural land include the overall requirements of our economic system (for highways, or hydro lines, or pits and quarries), the increased use of the countryside as an interlude to or an escape from city life, speculative investment in land, and the purchase of land by individuals as a hedge against inflation. A complicating factor is the existence of a planning system that is almost totally urban-oriented, ignoring the needs of the countryside.

Non-farm demands for rural land are viewed as a problem not just because of the amount of land that is used up directly but also because of the process of deteriorating conditions for agriculture which they set in motion. That is, the effects go far beyond the actual acres consumed by the new uses. Non-farm residential uses, for instance, can place additional demands for servicing (school buses, garbage collection, water, sewers) on hard-pressed municipal coffers. They can make the daily operations of farming more difficult; the Agricultural Code of Practice, which was instituted to protect neighbouring non-farm residents from any obnoxious effects of intensive livestock operations is evidence of this, as are complaints against such practices as fertilising and crop-spraying. More importantly, non-farm uses intrude upon farming areas so that economically viable farming units are increasingly difficult to establish or maintain. They fragment the network of agricultural support services and have a disruptive effect upon the social and political structure of rural areas. The inflationary pressure they create on land prices is a critical influence. When farmland can be sold at development value, rather than at agricultural value, this discourages both new entrants to farming and additional investment by established farmers in farm buildings or land holdings. Non-farm demand therefore reduces both the long-term prospects for the continuation of agriculture as well as the scope for internal adjustments in the agricultural industry in response to short-term market fluctuations.

In view of the above, the recent report on the causes of farmland withdrawal by the Urban Development Institute is not convincing.<sup>18</sup> The overall message of the report is that only a small amount of farmland reduction (less than 3.2 acres per hour) is caused by "urban development". Urban development is defined to include both non-farm rural development as well as outward expansion of urban centres. The study ignores the indirect effects on the operating environment for farming that this development creates. Further, the methodology as explained in the report seems questionable.<sup>19</sup> This study proved to be of little help to us in clarifying the issue of the causes of farmland withdrawal.

### **The Significance of the Declining Land Base**

Turning to the third aspect of the problem, the significance of farmland withdrawal, the sides of the debate are clearly drawn.

Those who believe that the trend is a matter for concern point first to the loss of unique



agricultural lands in Southern Ontario. The well-documented diminution of the Niagara fruitlands is considered symbolic of the ways in which a non-renewable resource can be wasted. Some would argue that, even though provincial authorities have modified Regional Niagara's official plan (excluding some 3,000 acres from the proposed urban areas), this is an "unsatisfactory compromise."<sup>20</sup>

The possible short and medium-term economic impacts of a gradual disappearance of farming from Ontario are also considered important. Within the current Ontario economy, agriculture is a major generator of personal incomes, creating from three to five dollars of personal income in other industries for each dollar of net income generated within farming itself. Within Canada, Ontario creates, on average, 25% of the total net income generated by farming. The province has a higher proportion of improved land in farms than any other part of Canada, and its gross sales of farm products represent 33% of the national total (1971 figures).<sup>21</sup>

Most concern, however, has been directed to the long-range implications of farmland re-trenchment. The Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA), the body of scientists and other professionals involved in agriculture, has been the leading voice in the province arguing that, despite the surplus of food for our own needs now, we must be concerned with future food supplies for both domestic and world consumption.<sup>22</sup> The OIA calculates that, even if no further improved land went out of production, it would be difficult for Ontario farmers to produce enough food to satisfy Ontario's population 25 years from now. To do so another 2 million acres would have to be brought into production.<sup>23</sup>

The future ability of Ontario's farmers to meet at least the province's food needs might be extremely important in a political sense. Clearly, as the Agrologists note, the recent energy crisis and the resulting shortages or price increases in some foodstuffs have made Canadians more aware of their dependence on other countries for food which might be produced here. Moreover, in a world where the amount of land suitable for agricultural production is finite and the population is expected to double by the year 2,000, "food power" may acquire a new significance in international trade as well as in world politics.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the largest organization of farm producers in the province, acknowledged this importance of food power in its 1976 brief to the Provincial Cabinet, but also developed a second OIA theme of proper management of agricultural resources in a currently hungry world. The OFA suggested that self-sufficiency in food production be made a policy objective of the provincial government. Self-sufficiency would not mean producing everything that is consumed, but rather, producing the equivalent of what is consumed.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear from a reading of the provincial government's two statements on agriculture in the past year<sup>25</sup> that the concept of self-sufficiency has not been adopted. There does appear to be agreement among the Province, the OFA, the OIA, and university researchers that maintaining the productive efficiency of Ontario's farmers and not closing off options for the future are paramount concerns.

The Province's stand, however, reflects another significant body of opinion that, despite the current land loss situation, there remains a strong future for agriculture. The argument that the observed decrease in farmland acreage provides no particular cause for alarm rests on three assumptions:

- that farmers are well able to produce sufficient food now for both domestic and trade needs, despite the progressively smaller area of land in production. In fact, runs the assumption, we are in a position of surplus, so that food prices are unrealistically low; this pleases people who live in the cities, but it also keeps farmers' incomes low;
- that we can rely in the future on further technological advances and, hence, increases in productivity; and,
- that the land is *not* irreversibly lost: in fact "it is right where it always was, the breeze is blowing over it, the rain falling on it, and it is ready to be used again in the future for agricultural purposes if it is needed, if its use is economically justifiable."<sup>26</sup>

Are these assumptions too optimistic? Although it is undeniable that overproduction has been a traditional bane of the Canadian farm industry,<sup>27</sup> it is by no means certain that



farmers can continue to increase their efficiency, as they have in the past. The trend to more intensive farming per acre clearly will be constrained in the future by, among other factors, the rising costs of energy and by environmental concerns about the pollution resulting from fertiliser and pesticide use or the destruction of sensitive natural systems.<sup>28</sup> The experts also warn us that our climate is becoming more variable, so that the uncertainty and risk involved in choice of crops is increasing. We know too that each class of land has inherent limits, so that increasing the amounts of labour and capital applied to it will not affect the relative yield differences between classes. Class III land, for instance, is no substitute for Class I because it will always yield just under 2/3 of the higher grade. Thus, the agricultural capability of the land going out of production takes on added importance.<sup>29</sup>

The assumption that land which has gone out of production is available and in reserve until economic conditions justify its return to farm use must also be questioned. It was mentioned earlier that rural non-farm uses are now the prevailing influence in the decline of farmland. The spatial distribution of these uses in relation to remaining productive farmland has an effect beyond the actual acreage consumed. It can destroy some of the prerequisites of economic agricultural operations: sufficiently large or contiguous farm holdings, and the supportive network of agricultural services and rural institutions.

The rising land prices and changing ownership patterns associated with non-farm uses further help to undermine the farm community. Rising land prices not only discourage new entrants to farming, but also foster among practising farmers, particularly older ones, the expectation of a better return than could be obtained from maintaining or expanding current farm operations. Even when farmers sell to non-farm buyers and the land continues in full, or part-time production, the prospects for farming change: with new owners not fully committed to farming, the time frame for the continuation of the agricultural use is shortened and efficiency drops.<sup>30</sup> This phenomenon has been noted particularly in the fringe areas around Metro Toronto, where there has been a good deal of speculative land purchase.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore it appears to matter little whether farmland remains *physically* available, unbuilt upon. Once an uncertain environment for farming is created and the supporting service and institutional structures dismantled, it may be difficult if not impossible to rebuild a farm community. And changing ownership patterns further challenge the argument that land can be returned to farming when needed. They raise the economic and political questions of: *At what costs?*

### Summary Statement of the Problem

Although some myths about the nature and significance of the farmland problem continue to confuse politicians, bureaucrats and the public, we suggest there is enough evidence to grasp the real issues.

The scope of the problem is considered unacceptable because Ontario is endowed with a disproportionate share of Canada's best lands, which in total are modest and limited, and it is these lands which are being taken out of production.

The lands are valuable not only because of soil and climatic factors but also because there is easy access to urban market areas. These, of course, are the conditions that make the land desirable for uses other than agriculture.

Ironically, the lands that are best suited for farming are going out of production mainly because they can fetch a higher price in other uses or, simply, in non-use (as frequently occurs when an individual buys land solely as an investment or as a prestige purchase). This argument does not deny the fact that conditions favouring agriculture will vary from time to time or from region to region. Rather, it denotes general acknowledgement that rural non-farm pressures are widespread throughout the province and constitute the largest single cause of farmland loss, both direct and indirect.

Those who contend that there is no crisis in agricultural lands have failed to define what they mean by "crisis". The implied definition is that no one is starving. Yet the key point appears to be that what is happening to farmland now is affecting the whole agricultural industry so that our future flexibility and competitive advantage is becoming impaired.

Thus the problem is about much more than what some have termed "food for the cities". It concerns the social climate which determines how our resources are used: whether



they are regarded as commodities to be bought and sold to the highest bidder, or whether they are valued for the public benefits which they bestow and therefore must be used carefully, with minimum waste. The available evidence suggests that if the present pattern continues, Ontario will be using its farmland resources unwisely, and will be creating future economic, social, and political problems. The question looming before us is: what are the appropriate policies for changing this pattern?

### III The Policy Choices

Politicians have tended to stress two main policy choices: supports to the agricultural industry and land use planning.<sup>33</sup> The two are not mutually exclusive, but in any "policy package" the relative emphasis on the two varies, as does locus of responsibility for implementation.

The theory behind supports to the agricultural industry is that such programmes will make farming economically viable (or, improve the competitive position of the farmer) and therefore encourage farmers to stay on the land. Supports for the economic viability of farm operations are varied. They include broad tariff and marketing arrangements, preferential tax treatments, direct income supplementation plans, land leasing and inter-generational transfer schemes, and research and education programmes. Farm policy has been most extensively developed in this area.

The federal government is actively involved through its setting of tariff regulations and import controls, participation in shared-cost programmes (such as ARDA and the CLI), development of marketing strategies for selected farm products, and its Agricultural Stabilization Act.

In Ontario, the provincial government has also taken a direct role in ensuring the security of the individual farmer. It supports farm products marketing organizations, whose main concerns are with price stability and the bargaining strength of producers. The Province also recently passed its Farm Income Stabilization Bill which will provide a voluntary, contributory plan to guarantee a support price for selected farm products.<sup>34</sup> Since 1970 the provincial government has operated a programme of property tax rebates whereby 50% of total tax paid<sup>34</sup> is rebated to the owner of farm property which generates products valued at \$2,000 or more annually.

On the direct funding side, the Province operates various programmes of capital and other assistance to encourage the improvement of farm operations (improvements to land drainage, farm buildings, herds, etc.).

To ensure that new technology is developed and transferred to practising farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is involved in research and special education programmes and, in addition, maintains a field staff of regional agricultural representatives who offer advice and assistance on aspects of farm management.

In comparison, the land use side of policy pertaining to agriculture has been much less developed. This is not to say that there is no land planning system; on the contrary, Ontario has in place a quite elaborate planning system. The system is hierarchical. Responsibility for the drafting and implementation of official plans, secondary plans, and zoning by-laws rests at the municipal level, while the Province itself has opted for a monitoring, supervisory and approval role. Nevertheless, many critics have urged that, if Ontario's most productive farmland is to remain available for farming, a stronger, province-wide framework (and hence provincial government role) is required. They have based their recommendations on the track record of planning in Ontario.

First, the thrust of the Province's "Design for Development" strategy when it was announced 11 years ago was to create a balanced pattern of growth throughout Ontario, dispersing population and economic growth to the lagging regions of the province and structuring growth in the central Ontario region in such a way as to prevent sprawl. The protection of good agricultural lands was considered an advantage of the strategy. Yet to a large extent the objectives of this regional development programme are still to be achieved. In a companion report to this *Comment* (BMR *Comment* No. 166, "Design for Development: Where Are You?"), we have traced the evolution of regional development and evaluated its accomplishments to date. It is sufficient to note here that the pressures which appear to cause the decline in the agricultural land base still continue.



Second, the Urban Development in Rural Areas (UDIRA) policy, announced in ministerial statements at about the same time as Design for Development (1966) is now widely considered to have failed. The original intent was to enable local municipalities to direct non-farm residential development to areas where the servicing infrastructure was already in place or could be easily extended. Critics have argued that UDIRA was really just an accumulation of stop-gap measures devised as a quick, pragmatic answer to specific development pressures and that, in effect, it has provided official channels for non-farm development, particularly scattered residential development, in rural areas.<sup>35</sup>

The provincial government's reliance on the ability of local municipalities to cope with resource planning problems is a third area where criticism has been directed. The concern has been that, without an overall policy guide, local zoning and official plans are inadequate for the task; these planning tools are oriented first to controlling urban development, not to preserving agricultural land. They have traditionally treated rural land as a holding category for future development. There has been additional concern that municipal councils face social, political, and financial pressures that predispose them to look favourably on applications for severances and development of farmland.<sup>36</sup>

Two recent actions by the provincial government demonstrate that planning for agriculture has been recognized as an issue. First, the Food Land Development Branch was set up within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in 1974 to ensure that agricultural concerns were considered in land use decisions. This marked the first official recognition by the Ministry that the problems of its main client, the farmer, were tied to the ways in which land was allocated among competing uses.

Second, exactly one year ago, in March 1976, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food issued its policy statement "A Strategy for Ontario Farmland". This document set out the provincial government's intention to proceed with two broad initiatives: measures to ensure that the better lands were retained for agricultural purposes, and programmes to maintain the economic feasibility of using this land. But clearly, in relation to the first, the Province had decided that it would continue to rely on municipal planning and control. The direct involvement of the provincial government was confined to the second initiative, and here its role would be a permissive, enabling one, providing programmes for agricultural development that would support and create a "free enterprise rural development".

Some media commentators have interpreted the recently released Green Paper on Food Land Guidelines as a change in the emphasis of the Strategy. In our view, this is not the case; the Guidelines are an elaboration of one part of the earlier document. They have been presented in the form of a discussion paper and so are *not policy*.<sup>37</sup> The Green paper reaffirms the Province's commitment to maintaining "a permanent, secure and economically viable agricultural industry for Ontario, not only as a producer of food, but as an important component of our economic base, a source of employment, and as the basis of the rural community and the rural way of life". The paper restates the earlier assumption that the amount of land that is in production at any particular time is determined by the trends of the marketplace, and then focuses on local land use policies which "must assure that as much as possible of the land area with the *capability*<sup>38</sup> for agriculture is kept available for farming when needed". Accordingly, it sets out guidelines which outline the considerations necessary to incorporate agricultural concerns into municipal land use planning.

The government's approach to preserving the agricultural land base as seen in the Strategy and the Green paper helps to clarify the policy choices in the farmland debate. It raises two separate but related questions:

1. *How much can we rely on supports to the agricultural industry either to halt farmland withdrawal or to keep farmers farming?*

Because policies or programmes aimed at making the farmer better able to compete are based on a belief in the market system, it is useful to remind ourselves of the limitations of the marketplace when land is involved. The noted economist Barbara Ward cautions that "the unfettered market gives the wrong long-term answer simply because rising prices do not fulfill their classical function of making more of what is needed available".<sup>39</sup> The Science Council of Canada queries the notion that the marketplace is always the best means of determining priorities and states unequivocally that the market mechanism cannot be



counted on to protect the best agricultural land. In the Council's view, "the preservation of farmland (through land use policies) does not, by itself, guarantee its use for food production — but it is a necessary first step."<sup>40</sup>

On a practical plane, it seems highly likely that neither the market nor levels of public support for farm prices, incomes or productivity could ever be high enough to allow farming to pay prices for land equal to those which non-farm uses can command throughout most of Southern Ontario. For the government to provide such levels of support would require higher food prices, higher taxes, increased subsidies to low-income consumers, and unacceptable controls on imports of food from other provinces and other countries.

*2. Is reliance on local planning and control sufficient to ensure the retention of our farmland?*

Without discussing the Green paper guidelines point by point, it seems fair to say that they do represent a "new methodology"<sup>41</sup> for rural land use planning. It looks as if they have met one of the serious criticisms of Ontario planning, that it fails to understand how rural systems work.

It is also fair to note that several municipalities have laid the groundwork for the formulation of these guidelines by incorporating agricultural concerns into their official plan statements. In the development strategy of the Northumberland Area Task Force the agricultural priority is the general basis on which other priorities have been established.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Huron County has based its official plan and subsequent studies on a broad agricultural perspective. The regional municipalities of Durham and Waterloo have designated certain lands as more or less permanent agricultural areas and have outlined the other uses allowed in such areas and how these should occur.

Since only the Huron plan has so far been given official plan status by the Province, it remains to be seen whether in practice these new local policies provide more than the traditional holding function for agriculture. The Christian Farmers' Federation, in addition to critics mentioned earlier, does not believe municipal authorities will be able to successfully implement stronger protective measures.<sup>43</sup> Others feel municipalities can do so if they make the political commitment and if the provincial government stands consistently behind local decisions — through provincial staff support at the Ontario Municipal Board as well as through its normal course of plan and by-law review. Still others wonder how all the local decisions will add up in the absence of a province-wide strategy or plan that attempts to systematically reconcile the prospective needs for land for differing purposes with the available land resource.

Certainly an attempt to impose stronger land use controls through legislation rather than guidelines would meet with opposition. Municipalities would be sensitive toward further encroachment upon their autonomy by the senior level of government. Farmers, particularly those about to retire, would claim that they had been unjustly deprived of their only security.<sup>44</sup> But equally, even the guideline approach means that municipalities and their residents will have to accept a higher-density pattern of development and that the controversial issue of compensation will have to be dealt with.<sup>45</sup> The question remains: in order to safeguard productive farmland, is a permissive approach to land use control enough?

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1. Housing Minister John Rhodes announced on February 17, 1977 that the Region of Niagara's official plan proposals for the urban development of 7,000 acres of farmland had been reduced by 3,000 acres by the provincial government. The Minister suggested that the Region consider a strategy for redirecting growth south of the Niagara Escarpment, away from prime farmland. This statement was released at the same time as the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture, "Food Land Guidelines".

2. A.R.D.A. Report No. 7, *Planning for Agriculture in Southern Ontario*, Centre for Resources Development, University of Guelph, 1972. A variety of studies had been published prior to this time, but usually these dealt with specific aspects of the overall problem. L. Gertler's *Niagara Escarpment Study Fruit Belt Report* (Ministry of T.E.I.G.A., 1968) is an example.

3. Census farms are farms larger than one acre in size with products valued at \$50 or more. Improved land consists of the total areas reported for the following four agricultural land use categories: crop land, improved pasture, summer fallow, and other improved lying idle. Unimproved land consists of the total areas reported for woodland (but not commercial timber tracts), unimproved pasture or grazing, and marsh or rocky areas.
4. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, *Agricultural Statistics for Ontario*, Annually.
5. The CLI was developed by a joint federal-provincial study team during the 1960's to provide uniform standards of evaluation of land capability. The CLI does not take into account any special or unique types of soil (for example, those used for tobacco or fruit-growing). These are a separate classification.
6. A. Patterson and E. Mackintosh, "Relationships between soil capability class and economic returns from grain corn production in Southwestern Ontario", *Can. J. of Soil Science* (56), August 1976. From work by D. Hoffman and J. Anderson at University of Guelph (1971).
7. See ARDA Report No. 7, *op. cit.*, chap. 3.
8. Science Council of Canada, *Population, Technology and Resources*, Report No. 25, Ottawa, July 1976.
9. While Saskatchewan, for instance, has four times as much farmland as Ontario, its productive potential is only slightly higher than Ontario's.
10. ARDA Report No. 7, *op. cit.*
11. See R.S. Rodd, "A Remarkable Change in the Rural Land Market", *Notes on Agriculture*, University of Guelph, April 1974. The Ontario Institute of Agrologists, "Foodland: Preservation or Starvation", Guelph, 1975 and the Science Council of Canada, *op. cit.*, base their arguments on this finding.
12. Science Council of Canada, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
13. See R. S. Rodd, "The Crisis of Agricultural Land in the Ontario Countryside", pre-publication draft, August 1976. To be published in *Plan Canada*. The source of Rodd's data is OMAF, *Agricultural Statistics for Ontario*, various issues.
14. Rodd, *ibid.*
15. E. C. Gray, "A Preliminary Paper on Canadian Agricultural Land-Use Policy". Food Prices Review Board, Reference paper No. 3, February 1976.
16. See Alice Coleman, *Canadian Settlement and Environmental Planning*, Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, 1976.
17. This criticism has been made in the *Subject to Approval* report by the Ontario Economic Council (1973) as well as several more recent reports. Judging from the recent Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture, the provincial government agrees that some reorientation of the planning system for rural areas is required. The Province's approach is discussed in Section III.
18. *Development Goals - Employment, Housing and Food*, prepared for UDI by Bird and Hale Limited and M. M. Dillon Limited, February 1977.
19. For instance, we wonder about the use of a random, province-wide sample to obtain a provincial average. Clearly the decline that is of interest is occurring in Southern Ontario. Northern Ontario has relatively little valuable farmland.
20. See *Globe and Mail*, Building and Real estate page 11, March 1977.
21. See R. S. Rodd, 1976, *op. cit.* These figures are from Ministry of TEIGA, *Ontario Statistics* and *Ontario Economic Review*, and from Ministry of Agriculture and Food, *Agricultural Statistics for Ontario*.
22. Ontario Institute of Agrologists, *op. cit.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
24. "Equivalence" in terms of monetary valuation and in terms of energy requirements for production.
25. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, "A Strategy for Ontario Farmland", March 1976, and the Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture, *op. cit.*
26. Remarks by the Hon. Darcy McKeough, Treasurer of Ontario, to the Kinsmen Club of Blenheim, 17 January 1977.



27. Coleman, *op. cit.*, argues cogently that Canadian agriculture has been passing through a "prolonged period of acute dilemma" in which the short-term needs of the industry to respond to production surpluses have been diametrically opposed to its long-term needs. She finds, however, that "today the long-term view is being more clearly seen as holding the balance of truth".
28. The ARDA report, *op. cit.*, discusses limits to the reduction of land as an input at length.
29. The issue of productivity gains is further complicated by difficulties with the way in which productivity is measured. The commonly used index of physical production distorts the actual productivity of land because it contains a non-land dimension.
30. For instance, necessary capital investment for farm improvements may not be made, or top soil may be removed, or other poor farming practices followed.
31. See L. Martin, "Land Use Dynamics on the Toronto Urban Fringe", Land Directorate, Environment Canada, 1975. Martin distinguishes the land use exchange phenomenon as distinct from land use change, but notes that the overall trend is toward permanent conversion of rural uses to urban-oriented uses of land.
32. One policy approach not frequently discussed in relation to agriculture is density and policy design in urban areas.
33. This plan will guarantee a support price of 95% of the average price for the previous five years on farm products covered by a similar federal plan to the 90% level. That is, the Provincial contribution will be an additional 5%. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has declared that the level of support this plan offers will be inadequate.
34. Originally 25%, in 1973 the rate was changed to 50%. Some critics say that these rebates serve more as tax breaks than as bolsters to farmer security.
35. See, for instance, the recent report of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, *Report on Planning in Rural Ontario* (Revised), February 1977, and Ministry of Housing, *Countryside Planning: A Pilot Study of Huron County*, James F. Maclaren Ltd., 1976.
36. C. G. Runka, "Jurisdictional Rights: Who Has the Responsibility?", *Agrologist*, (4), Autumn 1975, pp. 19-21.
37. Although the Green Paper has not yet become official policy, the Ministry is basing its review of local planning decisions on these guidelines.
38. "Capability" is defined in the Green paper as the most suitable land in terms of unique characteristics, a concentration of the highest class soils, access to markets, or otherwise feasible for productive and efficient agriculture. It therefore differs from the narrower and more conventional soil capability definition.
39. Barbara Ward, "The Inner and the Outer Limits", *Canadian Public Administration* (Fall, 1976), p. 408.
40. Science Council of Canada, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 46, 48.
41. R. S. Rodd and W. van Vuuren, "A New Methodology in Countryside Planning", *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Workshop Proceedings, 1975, pp. 109-140.
42. Northumberland Area Task Force, *Northumberland Area Development Strategy*, Ministry of TEIGA, December 1975. The Strategy has not yet been drafted as an official plan statement.
43. Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario, Brief to the Hon. Wm. Newman, Minister of Agriculture and Food, November 1976.
44. Farmers as a group are very much divided, between the older and the younger producers and between regions of the province, as to the desirability of any further land use controls. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture itself reflected this tension at its annual conference last summer.
45. See W. vanVuuren, "Distribution of Gains and Losses Resulting From Planning Legislation: the Compensation-Betterment Problem", School of Agricultural Economics and Extension Education and Centre for Resources Development, University of Guelph, August 1976.



## 2. DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT: WHERE ARE YOU?

### I. INTRODUCTION

Two widely held convictions about government institutions are that public bureaucracies are intrinsically inefficient and that politicians, by and large, lack the courage and the will to make tough, long-range political decisions. Some who harbour such cynical beliefs find the history of regional development and regional planning in Ontario to be sadly reassuring. The record of the multi-phased *Design for Development*, which in 1966 launched the Province's regional development program, is an erratic one. It is a record replete with research activity, special studies, committees, regional councils, planning concepts, task forces and an impressive outpouring of policy statements. Yet, after more than a decade of trying to find a satisfactory method for effective large-scale regional planning, the real tasks of regional planning and regional development have yet to be accomplished.

The term "*Design for Development*" may be confusing unless one understands that it evolved over six years to become an umbrella title embracing three separate but interrelated provincial programs: regional development, regional government and local governmental fiscal reform. When the policy statement known as *Design for Development* was first introduced by Premier John Robarts in 1966, its central theme was that "all economic regions of the province should share in a purposeful development program."<sup>1</sup> Two years later, in 1968, a second stream of government action, which dealt with the reform of local government structure, was brought under the *Design for Development* umbrella. Phase II outlined the government's policy of establishing a series of regional governments across Ontario. In setting out the policy, Premier Robarts explained that both programs were closely associated and complementary to each other. In *Design for Development - Phase III*, announced by Premier Davis in 1972, a third prong was added to the policies of regional development and local government reform, namely provincial-municipal fiscal reform.<sup>2</sup> Each was affirmed as a "necessary link" to the success of the others. In addition, important modifications were introduced to both the regional development and regional government programs. A skeletal outline of the major government policy statements and reports which came under *Design for Development* is provided in the Appendix.

The purpose of this *Comment* is to attempt to clarify the current status of *Design for Development*. It concentrates on the regional development program, with only brief reference to either of the two related programs of regional government and fiscal reform.

There are three reasons why this clarification is needed:

i.) First and foremost, the fundamental problems which led the Province to embark upon regional development in the first place are still present.<sup>3</sup> Back in the 1960's, the government's move to a regional development program was a response to three major trends: the increasing tendency of Ontario's population to concentrate in the large urban centres in the central and southwestern portion of the province (at the expense of rural places and of the north and east), the tendency toward unstructured sprawl,<sup>4</sup> in the rapidly-growing areas, and the trend toward careless and unwise use of the physical setting (eg. waste of prime farmland, open-pit mining, air and water pollution).

All three of these trends are still creating serious problems. Growth has continued to concentrate in the so-called "Golden Horseshoe" of Ontario. Forecasts indicate that the other regions of the province will continue to receive a less than proportionate share of this growth. The population of Ontario is now expected to grow by 4 million people by the year 2001, from roughly 8 million to about 12 million. Over half of this new growth will be concentrated in the Toronto-Centered Region, contained within a ninety mile arc around Toronto and stretching from Hamilton / Brantford in the west to Port Hope / Cobourg in the east.

If the expected urban development within this region of Ontario follows the inefficient land use pattern it has in the past, the scenario painted by A. E. LePage's *Population, Growth and Planning: Province of Ontario* seems inescapable: continued sprawl throughout the Golden Horseshoe area.



The wasteful effects of low-density auto-dependent urban development have been spelled out by a number of experts in a variety of forums over the last decade.<sup>5</sup> These conferences and studies have usually linked the negative economic and social impact of sprawl to the larger environmental and ecological concerns arising out of a careless use of our natural resources. (These include the loss of irreplaceable farmland, pollution of our environment, the misuse of energy resources and the destruction of unique landscape features.)

The answer, urge the experts, lies in prudent and effective planning and resource management on a provincial and regional basis. In view of these warnings and recommendations, the fate of the regional development program (which includes regional land use and economic development planning) seems all the more worthy of consideration.

ii) Second, several of the new regional governments created since 1968<sup>6</sup> are currently faced with the task of preparing their official plans. Each of these plans must deal with the region's long-range development policies, including land use, transportation and servicing. They are supposed to provide the broad framework for growth in the region taking account of the overall distribution of population, housing, jobs, social and health services, as well as major amenities such as parks and recreation facilities. They must also deal with development in rural areas with a view to reconciling conflicts between demands for non-farm uses (such as residential development or waste disposal sites) and agricultural or environmental protection demands. Since these regional plans are expected to conform to and support the policies of the Province's regional development program, it is obviously important that the Province's planning and development strategy be clearly understood.

iii) Third, a significant discrepancy exists between official statements of intentions of the regional planning program and actual accomplishments. The delay in implementing planning schemes which have been publicly affirmed and reaffirmed, most notably the Toronto-Centred Region plan, together with certain undertakings which seem to be at odds with these schemes, has led to doubts about the entire regional development effort. There has been speculation that plans like the Toronto-Centred Region (TCR) plan will never come into effect. The problem is that even as skepticism about the value and status of the regional development program continues to grow, it remains the planning context for Ontario and dominates municipal planning efforts.

This review of *Design for Development* and its approach to regional development and regional planning will:

1. assess the progress which has been made in fulfilling the regional development objectives of *Design for Development* generally and of TCR in particular;
2. examine the present status of *Design for Development* in the light of recent policy statements and organizational changes.

## II REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

In order to evaluate the progress which has been made toward fulfilling the regional development objectives of *Design for Development*, we must understand the original aims of the program. The overriding concern was that all parts of Ontario would share more equitably in the province's growth and prosperity.

There were two central and complementary thrusts:

- \* the dispersal of growth to the regions which were lagging, namely the north and the east;
- \* the containment and structuring of growth in the Toronto Centered Region where the pressures were expected to be greatest and where urban sprawl seemed likely.

Before proceeding to assess the record of Ontario's regional development and regional planning efforts, we should define our terms. By "regional development" we understand the process of guiding the development of the province so that all regions obtain a more equal share of growth. "Regional planning", as we use the term, is the means by which this more rational pattern is achieved; it is not simply planning on a regional scale (and it is also to be distinguished from planning by a regional municipality.) These definitions are based on the original *Design for Development*, statement, presented in 1966. One difficulty in writing this *Comment* has been that the perception on the part of the Province as to what the regional development program is intended and expected to achieve has not been



consistent. Naturally, one's evaluation will depend upon the expectations and assumptions one holds about the purpose of regional development and regional planning. For example, if one were to judge the record on the basis of the current perception of regional planning within the government, discussed in section III, one's conclusions might be less critical. In our view, it is fair to judge the program in light of the expectations and goals of the original statement.

Looking at each of the two broad thrusts in turn, we can see the relative lack of success.

### **1. Dispersal of Growth to Northern and Eastern Ontario**

Despite some development initiatives by the Province, the pattern of growth in Ontario has not changed substantially since 1971 when both the status reports for the Northwestern Ontario Region and TCR were published.

It is true that the Province has made a number of new initiatives in the past six years which were attempts to stimulate growth in the lagging regions. Indeed, the Regional Priority Budget was created in 1973 largely to facilitate speedy implementation of development projects in areas like Northern Ontario.

Since the inception of the Regional Priority Budget, the Province has spent some \$70 million in Northwestern Ontario. (Many of the programs were cost-shared with Ottawa through DREE<sup>7</sup>) Funds have been allocated for: community infrastructure; roads; regional projects such as an airport at Geraldton; the development of telecommunications systems in the more remote areas; mining exploration; the improvement of manpower resources; social programs.<sup>8</sup>

Next year, the Regional Priority Budget will provide approximately \$60 million as seed and leverage money for selected areas of the province. Virtually all of it will be spent in Northern and Eastern Ontario.

Despite these initiatives, the objective of decentralising economic and population growth to the northern and eastern regions of Ontario is not being achieved. In Northern Ontario, for example, the labour force which is tied to the two primary resource industries — forestry and mining — has been in relative decline, the population growth has been slower than for the province as a whole, incomes tend to be below the provincial average and the level of common social and cultural amenities is acknowledged to be low.<sup>7</sup> The most that can be said is that the situation might be worse were it not for these programs and projects.

It is fair to say that the government has not yet made significant inroads in solving the problem of regional disparity. Some will respond, of course, that seven years is too soon to judge the success or failure of those initiatives.

### **2. The Toronto-Centred Region Concept**

As noted, in its regional planning efforts to date, the Province has concentrated most of its attention on Central Ontario — and the Toronto-Centred Region. As this is the "centre-piece" of *Design for Development*, we shall look at this policy in some detail.

The main features of the regional structure proposed in the TCR concept are summarized in the Appendix of this report. The TCR document listed five basic principles and twelve goals for the region which elaborated these principles. For our purpose, we have condensed these to five main goals:

1. to contain urban development along the lakeshore in a corridor or *linear pattern* so that transportation and other facilities could be efficiently provided;
2. to prevent urban sprawl by maintaining a pattern of *separate* urban communities in two tiers which roughly parallel the lakeshore;
3. to stimulate growth to the *east* of Metro to balance that occurring in the west, and to restrain development in the Yonge Street corridor;
4. to *decentralize* some of the growth in the region to two areas in the north and east; both (3) and (4) together would create a better distribution of population and employment in Southern Ontario;
5. to *preserve* the best agricultural land and the most attractive recreational areas; with respect to recreation uses, the Georgian Bay shoreline, Lake Simcoe, the Kawartha Lakes and the Niagara Escarpment were priorities.

In its recent *Toronto-Centred Region Program Statement* (March 1976) the provincial



This document offers very little that is original in either philosophy or substance. The Introduction acknowledges that the statement draws heavily on the original 1966 White Paper:

The objectives and policies of *Design for Development, 1966*, remain valid and continue to apply. The present statement does not replace its predecessor, but expands and in some ways refines it. It is not, however, a "plan" for Ontario, though it provides the necessary foundation of objectives and policies, and examines the machinery needed to translate such a plan into reality.

The first nineteen pages present a summary of existing trends. The report shows clearly that the basic population and employment trends which spawned the regional development concept in Ontario have intensified:

Although expectations of population growth have diminished substantially since the 1960's, nevertheless, if present trends continue, Ontario's population will be nearly ten million by 1986 and approaching twelve million by the end of the century. The total population of all regions will rise, but the trend towards concentration will be even stronger. Most of the counties in Eastern and Northern Ontario will continue to experience net migration losses. Only Central Ontario will increase its share of the provincial total .(p. 11.)

These trends demand action, concludes chapter I; the Province "can do a great deal to influence the course of these trends . . . But to do this, there must be integrated strategies aimed at clearly defined objectives and carried out within a unified policy framework". The same themes are repeated in the second chapter.

Chapter III is entitled "New Policy Directions". Yet a careful reading of both the four broad objectives and the more specific policy objectives reveals little that is actually new. All of the objectives have, to some extent, been set forth in the original White Paper, *Design for Development* (1966) and have been reaffirmed or elaborated in subsequent documents like the Niagara Escarpment and the TCR statement.

Even where the document expands and refines previously stated planning objectives, as in its "urban system concept" (six sub-systems of urban places are described), the basic thrust is again not new. The TCR policy had already rejected the possible alternatives to the proposed concept — which acknowledges continued concentration of growth in the Toronto area and at the same time calls for encouragement of growth to five other regional centres. Above all, the "urban system concept" in this latest document says nothing more about implementation than did earlier statements.

The essential message of the paper appears in the fourth and final chapter:

If these objectives and guidelines are to have practical meaning, they must be matched by a planning system and process which can give them substance.

*Trends and Options* concludes on the note that current methods will need to be carefully scrutinized and that the total planning system will need to be examined with a view to making some drastic changes.

The obvious question at this juncture is why has the government decided to publish another statement, almost ten years after the original *Design for Development* White Paper, which for the most part simply repeats earlier policies and objectives? The report had one overriding aim: to show the need for a "coherent integrated planning system". We understand that the document was written to a large extent for the provincial politicians in an effort to extract a political commitment for the regional planning program. Some planners felt that this program had suffered over the decade from a lack of consistent understanding and commitment at the political level. They hoped that the report would be released as an official policy statement.

Despite the fact that it was subjected to a careful scrutiny and modification, the report was put out only as a discussion paper. Therefore, in a very real sense, its basic purpose — to provide a mandate for a revitalization of the *Design for Development* program — has been negated. If its recommendations for major change in the total provincial planning system are ultimately followed, then the *Trends and Options* document could come to have positive significance. However, in the present context, we must ask whether it does denote a confirmation of the ideals and idea of regional development as intended. Given its derivative content and non-policy status, the report serves to confirm rather than allay



doubts about the future of *Design for Development* in Ontario.

One must also appreciate that a great internal momentum had been developing within Treasury and Economics since 1970. The Planning and Development Act, 1973, had given the Province wide-ranging powers to implement policies such as TCR. In 1974, then Treasurer John White had spoken in the House of producing a "rudimentary plan" for all of Ontario. In response to this, a draft major strategy report was prepared by the planners, but it did not receive official sanction and was put aside. Meanwhile, the COLUC, Simcoe and Northumberland Task Forces reported. Some public statement was needed, if only to release some of the steam. The *Trends and Options* statement allowed the government to let off some of this pressure and put regional development on the "back burner" at the same time. Briefly put, its publication can best be understood as a "holding action" in a period of rethinking.

## 2) The Toronto-Centred Region Program Statement (March, 1976)

While this statement offers an update since 1971, when the TCR status report was released, it is not very enlightening as to the current status of TCR. On the one hand, it reiterates the goals of the original policy and concludes that it "continues to be sound and workable". Also it reaffirms the government's resolve "to proceed purposefully to carry out its planning policy for the Toronto-Centred Region". On the other hand, it says that the TCR must be "adjusted to reflect the conditions of 1976" and subjected to regular review.

The document is general in approach and speaks in broad terms about the areas in which these adjustments will have to be made — agricultural land, recreation and transportation. It does imply one important modification. Acknowledging that growth in certain parts of the region will be less than expected, it casts doubt on the need for some of the second tier communities which had been envisaged by TCR.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the commitment to the "go-east" thrust of TCR seems to be stronger than ever. While "go-east" will necessarily be part of the review process which is currently underway, the feeling that emerges from this document, combined with other provincial actions (like the choice of Kingston for the Urban Transportation Development Corporation UTDC test track) is that promoting eastward growth is becoming an increasingly high priority with the Province.<sup>16</sup>

Presumably, the Central Ontario Strategy statement, to be completed by the end of this year, will tell us more precisely what parts of the TCR policy are still operative.

## 3) Organizational Changes

Between 1967 and 1971 the research and planning activities of the *Design for Development* program were carried out within the Regional Development Branch of the Department of Treasury and Economics. In 1972, the reorganization of the provincial government structure led to the integration of the former Departments of Municipal Affairs, and Treasury and Economics into one ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs. The new ministry (TEIGA) was primarily responsible for the initiation and implementation of both the regional development and regional government programs.

Beginning in 1973, an important ministerial realignment was instituted. With the formation of the Ministry of Housing in that year, some of the major plans administration responsibilities of TEIGA were shifted over to Housing. In 1976, the Local Planning Policy Branch also moved across so that now most of the Province's dealings with official plans and local planning are through the Ministry of Housing.

Then, in the Spring of 1976 a mini-reorganization occurred within TEIGA. With respect to regional planning, the most significant result of the shuffle was that the Regional Planning Branch was changed to the Economic Development Branch and moved from the now defunct Urban and Regional Affairs wing into the Office of Economic Policy.<sup>17</sup> This Branch had comprised the central machinery of the *Design for Development* program and was responsible for preparing the broad provincial policy plans for each of the five planning regions.

What did this change mean? In explaining the internal shuffle to the Provincial-Municipal Liaison Committee (PMLC) in June, 1976, a senior Ministry official stated that putting Economic Policy and Regional Development together in the same area "should make a lot



of sense in terms of trying to get regional objectives implemented in economic terms". This line of reasoning seems sound. The concept of regional development, as pointed out in the Introduction of this report, is rooted in the belief that all of the regions of the province should participate more equally in overall economic growth. Provincial economic strategies and decisions are obviously fundamental to the reduction of regional disparities.

In theory, the role of this Economic Development Branch, as it is now called, is to coordinate the work of other ministries with regard to the development strategies for the five planning regions of Ontario. After receiving this input, the Economic Development Branch is specifically responsible for the economic policy component of these strategies. Thus, in addition to the apparent logic of uniting regional development and economic policy, the change allows for greater involvement of the other government ministries in the creation of comprehensive strategies.

The reorganization signified a major shift in the course of *Design for Development*. The Branch has been greatly reduced in size, and as TEIGA is no longer "in the land use business", its responsibility is limited to the economic component of regional planning.<sup>18</sup> While the other major components, including land use planning, transportation and servicing policies, are to be contributed by the other ministries, one wonders where the sense of leadership and the momentum, which presumably is necessary for an effective regional development program, will come from. One result of the reorganization is that there is no longer a single locus of responsibility for regional planning and development.

The eventual implementation of a regional development policy will require more than research and projections; it will require the establishment of a planning process, the definition of policy objectives and the adopting of specific guidelines and legislation to make the concept operational. Given the new organizational set-up within TEIGA, can the Economic Development Branch provide the needed impetus and coordination? As one branch, within a non-operating, albeit central coordinating ministry, does it have the power to genuinely coordinate the efforts of powerful line or operating ministries? Can regional planning really take place within the present structure?

Those who argue that the Branch will be able to function as an effective coordinating secretariat to the other ministries point to the forthcoming Strategy for Northwestern Ontario, where the new strategy preparation process is being tested first. (This report has been prepared but has not yet been presented to Cabinet.) They say that, while the Economic Development Branch may not have the power, it can coordinate successfully since it fills a need which makes the coordinator-broker role acceptable to the other ministries. Time will tell whether this new process will work.

The recent organizational changes — notably, the separation of regional land use planning from economic development planning together with the relegation of the latter to a truncated branch within the Office of Economic Policy — leads us to ask: how high a provincial priority is regional planning and development?

#### 4) Design for Development, 1977 — A New "Phase" or the End of an Era?

It is evident, in our view, that a significant swing in provincial policy with respect to regional planning and development is underway. The organizational changes and recent provincial gestures towards a larger municipal role in planning contrast sharply with the words in the 1976 statements, published under the *Design for Development* label — the *Trends and Options* document and the *TCR Program Statement*.

Officials within TEIGA acknowledge that *Design for Development* is shifting its course and entering "a new cycle". This "new cycle" is characterized by a cautious view of the possibilities of regional planning and development. The planners talk about the need to be "realistic" and to recognize the limitations of large-scale planning. They accept the notion that the general course of economic development can, at best, be affected by public policies only at the margin. The confidence in the Province's ability to decentralize growth, which had characterized the Regional Development Branch in the late 1960's and early 1970's, has been replaced by a more limited and hard-nosed economic approach. The notion of a "grand plan" for all of Ontario has apparently been abandoned.<sup>19</sup> Although we are still in the transition period, this shift does not seem to be just another "phase" in the evolution of *Design for Development* but rather, more like the end of an era.

A number of factors help to explain this turnabout in provincial policy. Some of



these are as follows:

- the change in the economic climate has confronted politicians with the problem of stimulating growth, not containing it; the first decade of regional planning reflected the optimism of the 1960's when Ontario was riding high on a prosperity boom.
- the change in the demographic picture with reduced expectations for population growth in Ontario. As a result of the declining birth rate, more restrictive immigration policies and altered migration patterns within Canada (i.e., the lure of the Western provinces), Ontario can no longer count on 13 million people by the end of the century as originally predicted by TCR planners. Even the latest estimate of nearly 12 million may be high.
- the role of personalities of both politicians and senior bureaucrats. The fluctuation in the Province's commitment to and enthusiasm for the regional development program over the past decade can be related to the differing personal philosophies of the Premiers and Treasurers and the high-ranking civil servants in TEIGA.<sup>20</sup>
- a disenchantment inside the government with regional planning and the long-term goal of an overall provincial plan. There was some feeling among the politicians by the mid-1970's that the planners were overstepping their professional bounds in pushing for implementation of the regional development program and in their criticism of political decisions (e.g., COLUC Report).
- resentment within some ministries of TEIGA's dominant role in regional planning. Other ministers and senior civil servants, tired of their essentially reactive role, wanted to take a more direct part in planning. On the other hand, in Treasury itself there was a feeling that its central policy advisory role was becoming diffused by its involvement in specific projects and detailed planning, some of which could better take place at the municipal level.
- the widespread conviction, encouraged by Toronto-booster and the media, that Toronto is an ideal place to live. The need to structure and contain growth seems less urgent and the fear of a future Los Angeles in Southern Ontario, conjured up by the MTARTS Study, has eased. (This may be a false sense of security.)
- the creation of the Ministry of Housing in December, 1973, meant that there was a ministry to which some of TEIGA's direct planning responsibilities could be conveniently passed.
- the election of a minority government in 1975 made the government more sensitive to criticism and strengthened the feeling that it would be best to avoid new, bold planning initiatives. Regional planning was thought to have contributed to the government's election losses, particularly in the north end of the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area.

#### IV CONCLUSION

This *Comment* has drawn attention to the gap between the original objectives of *Design for Development* and the present land use and economic growth trends in Ontario. The two major regional development thrusts of *Design for Development* were the dispersal of economic growth and population to the lagging regions of Ontario and the containment of sprawl by sound structuring of growth in the TCR area. Neither of these has been achieved in large measure, although some constructive steps have been taken.<sup>21</sup>

We have also emphasized that the original concept of regional development and regional planning is now being seriously questioned within the government. However, it is not clear what the new *strategy* approach will mean.

Ontario's planning system is a hierarchical one: local or area municipal plans are supposed to complement and support regional plans, created under regional governments, and these, in turn, are supposed to conform to provincial plans for the five planning regions. The problem is that, except for the TCR concept, there are no provincially-developed regional plans in which the lower-tier plans can nest. The intent in this *Comment* has been to draw attention to the fact that the key to the hierarchical planning system — namely, the framework into which the building blocks of the planning system are required to fit — is still missing. Hence, the question and the title of this *Comment*: *Design for Development — Where Are You?*

As we have seen, the 1976 statements contain reassuring pledges of commitment to past *Design for Development* policies and familiar expressions of concern for making planning more effective. At the same time, provincial politicians and planners no longer



speak of *plans*, but *strategies*. We're told that, while a plan is static, a strategy is *dynamic*. A strategy is *short-term* rather than long-term and more *remote* from detailed land use and transportation planning. And, unlike a plan, a strategy concentrates on *economic analysis*, not spatial patterns.

Such definitions are obviously inadequate. By posing the question: "Design for Development — Where Are You?" we hope to encourage the Provincial government to clarify its current approach to regional development. It may be that the new policy planning route — which sets out objectives first for programs affecting development (as it has just done for agriculture) and then proceeds to define planning responsibilities — will be effective. Still, we have questions about where the new process will lead:

- \* If we can no longer expect five provincial plans for the five planning regions of Ontario, what can we expect?
- \* What kind of policy will the government provide to make its new, so-called "realistic" *strategy* process more effective for social and economic development in Ontario than the former approach?
- \* Given that the Province has affirmed its faith in the goals and objectives of regional development, what is the practical significance of its new approach to regional planning?

## APPENDIX

### Regional Development in Ontario Since 1966: A Summary

The following is a skeletal outline of the major government policy statements and reports which came under "Design for Development".

- 1966, April —The original policy statement, *Design for Development*, established the regional development and planning program.
- 1968, June —*The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Transportation Study* (MTARTS) initiated in 1962 to devise a transportation program for the Toronto region underscored the need for regional planning and presented four "regional goals plans" as alternatives. Goals Plan II, with some modifications, provided the main features of TCR.
- 1968, November—*Design for Development, Phase II* linked the restructuring of local government in Ontario to regional economic development. The two programs were at once distinct yet overlapping.
- 1970 —*Design for Development: The Toronto-Centred Region Plan*, May, 1970, was the first plan to emerge from the regional development program. Note that the present Central Ontario Region, made up of the eighteen counties and regions centred on Metro Toronto, is larger than the original TCR area. (It is one of the five current economic development regions in Ontario.)  
 In brief, the TCR concept envisaged three zones:  
*Zone 1* was the Lakeshore Urbanized Area, an area of intense growth along the lakeshore;  
*Zone 2*, the Commutershed area to the north of this band, was to be preserved mostly for agriculture, recreation and open space; a small urban axis extending northward from Metro Toronto along Yonge Street was proposed;  
*Zone 3* was the Peripheral area beyond easy commuting range of Metro; growth would be encouraged in selected areas to relieve the development pressure in the urbanized area. The two main growth areas would be Barrie-Midland and Port Hope-Cobourg.
- 1971 —*Design for Development — A Status Report on the Toronto-Centred Region* contained some modifications of the original concept as a result of public feedback, but reaffirmed most of the original proposals. (A status report was also done for the Northwestern Ontario Region which made minor modifications resulting from public and written discussion. By April, 1972, the so-called Phase I reports for all ten economic regions were completed.)
- 1972 —*Design for Development — Phase III* was presented by Premier Davis. It attempted to link provincial-municipal fiscal reform with regional development and regional government in a "triangle of interrelated policies". This document introduced a new system of planning regions for Ontario, reorganizing the system of ten economic regions which had been adopted in 1954 into five larger units (Eastern Ontario, Central Ontario, Southern and Western Ontario, Northeastern Ontario and Northwestern Ontario).
- 1973 —*The Parkway Belt West*, June, 1973, was a major structural element of the TCR concept. The Parkway Belt was intended to serve four purposes: to act as an urban separator between the various lakeshore communities; to provide a transportation and utility corridor; to provide a land reserve for the future; and to keep land for open space and recreation facilities. The Draft Plan was completed in January, 1976, and the Hearing Officers' Report on the Parkway Belt West, February, 1977, has recommended acceptance of this plan with some changes.



- 1973 —*The Niagara Escarpment* — designation of the 2,000 square mile Niagara Escarpment Planning Area, a corridor stretching from Queenston to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, with the basic goal being the preservation of this unique landscape feature. This policy statement set out the objectives and planning framework. It also established interim development controls which are intended to limit non-conforming development initiatives.
- 1974, December —*COLUC Task Force Report* — In 1973 a special task force was established to refine the TCR concept for the central parts of the region into a more specific structure plan. The Central Ontario Lakeshore Urban Complex (COLUC) report showed some 23 urban centres in a roughly triangular area, with most of these grouped along an east-west axis from Hamilton to Oshawa, and to a lesser extent along the north-south Yonge Street axis. Five centres were seen as forming the framework: Hamilton, Mississauga, Toronto, Oshawa, and North Pickering. The centres along the lakeshore are in two tiers, about five miles apart and separated by the parkway belt. Toronto was to remain the prime centre of the region. The population for the COLUC area when fully developed (between the years 2000 and 2050) was projected at between six and eight million people.
- 1975 —*Northumberland Task Force Report* of a provincial-municipal task force made suggestions as to how development should proceed in Northumberland County.
- 1976 —*Simcoe-Georgian Task Force Report* — the results of a provincial-municipal task force which made recommendations as to future growth in the Barrie area.
- 1976 —*Design for Development — Ontario's Future: Trends and Options*, updated the 1966 White Paper, reaffirming and refining the original policies.
- 1976 —*Design for Development — Toronto-Centred Region Program Statement* reaffirmed the government's resolve "to proceed purposefully to carry out its planning policy for the Toronto-Centred Region".
- 1976 —*Design for Development — Durham Sub-Region Strategy* contained the government's suggestions for increasing development to the east of Metro in the Region of Durham.

The above select chronology offers only a bare hint of the effort and activity that marked the *Design for Development* regional planning program. The evolution of regional development in Ontario, which can be traced back to the post-war period, cannot be reviewed in detail here. Several instructive accounts already exist.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For example, see Richard S. Thoman, *Design for Development in Ontario*, op. cit.; *The Tail of the Elephant: A Guide to Regional Planning and Development in Southern Ontario* (Toronto: Pollution Probe, May, 1974); Lionel D. Feldman, *Ontario 1945-1973: The Municipal Dynamic* (Ontario Economic Council, January, 1974); Norman Pearson, "Regional Government and Development," in Donald C. McDonald, ed., *Government and Politics of Ontario* (Macmillan Co., 1975); *Regional Planning in Southern Ontario: A Resource Document* (Social Planning Council, 1976). Also see the *Design for Development* documents themselves, which contain summaries of previous policies and "accomplishments".

1. *Design for Development, Statement by the Prime Minister of Ontario on Regional Development Policy* (April 5, 1966), p. 1. Note that this was really Phase I, although it was not called that at the time.
2. This was described as a third major stream of *Design for Development* in Phase III but appears to have been treated as an after-thought subsequent to this official statement.
3. See Richard S. Thoman, *Design for Development in Ontario: The Initiation of a Regional Planning Program* (1971) for a useful account of the Regional Development Program and its origins.
4. By "sprawl" we mean both continuous low-density urban development with no break and leapfrogging random development.
5. One noteworthy forum was the *Man and Resources Conference* (1971-73). Also see the recent report, No. 25, of the Science Council of Canada, entitled *Population, Technology and Resources* (June, 1976).
6. Between 1968 and 1973, thirteen major local government reviews were carried out, resulting in the creation of twelve regional governments. By 1972 opposition to the program was growing. In October 1973 the Province introduced the County Restructuring Program in which the Provincial role was less dominant.
7. The Department of Regional Economic Expansion.
8. Eg. funds have been provided for some experimental social service projects involving natives and justice.
9. See *Northern Ontario Development: Issues and Alternatives* (Ontario Economic Council, 1976), II.
10. See *Subject to Approval: A Review of Municipal Planning in Ontario* (Ontario Economic Council, 1973) p. 125.
11. Also see "Erosion on the Parkway Belt?" (*BMR Comment*, September 1973).
12. Planning for the new town of North Pickering has reached the detailed design stage. A specific plan leading to actual development should be coming forward by 1978.
13. See "Fighting Pollution on Metro's Playground", *Toronto Star* (Sept. 4, 1976).
14. The COLUC report did not discuss the objection of some that North Pickering undermines the go-east policy for growth in the Oshawa-Whitby area.
15. Also see *The Durham Subregion: A Strategy for Development to 1986*. Note that Durham's Official Plan (July, 1976) has eliminated all second-tier communities and instead has designated two special study areas. At the same time they have enlarged the lakeshore communities (Oshawa-Whitby and Pickering-Ajax).
16. Another indication is that the government is giving serious consideration to the relocation of some of its civil servants east of Metro.
17. There were two other main elements in the internal reorganization. The first was the reduction of the administrative hierarchy within the Ministry. The Assistant Deputy Ministers were removed from line responsibilities and made part of the overall corporate management of the Ministry through the Deputy Minister's Office. The second was the gathering of most of the activities of the Ministry which dealt with municipalities into one division, namely, the Local Government Division. This new division combined the former Local Government Organization Branch, the five field offices, the Advisory Services and the Provincial-Municipal Affairs Secretariat (formerly with the Intergovernmental Affairs Office). Provincial-municipal finance remained outside this Local Government Division.
18. Of the over 100 people in the Regional Development Branch, only 40 are left in the new Economic Development Branch. About 20 others are doing somewhat related work in other parts of TEIGA.
19. The debate over the limits of planning is an old one. Those who believe in the idea and ideals of regional development would argue that it is only "unrealistic" when the political commitment is lacking. They point to the success of population distribution policies in other Western industrial nations as evidence (e.g. Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden). See James L. Sundquist, *Dispersing Population: What America Can Learn From Europe* (Washington: 1975).
20. See analysis by Robert Williamson, "South Cayuga: A Symbol of White's Lost Influence" (*Globe and Mail*, March 8, 1977).
21. One might respond that it is too early to judge the real effects of the program after only ten years.



## **PART II: FOOD FOR THE CITIES CONFERENCE**

## PART II: FOOD FOR THE CITIES CONFERENCE

### 1. MAJOR ADDRESSES

Evening Address: Stephen Lewis, M.P.P., Leader of the  
Opposition, Government of Ontario

The whole question of provincial land use policy as it bears on agriculture is, I think, one of the most fascinating issues in the province of the last seven years. In the best and most positive sense, it illumines the philosophical and ideological differences between government and opposition or government and other interested groups. It is a debate replete with documentation and with embroidered opinion. It is, in every sense, a political issue which has engaged public concern and public attention.

The argument has, of course, gone on for years, but it received a quite climactic focus when the Ontario Federation of Agriculture submitted its brief to the government in 1974 and therein contained the documentation from Statistics Canada — the disappearance of agricultural land between 1966 and 1971 and the reference to 26 acres an hour — which gave to the Federation, and hence to a number of politicians, a notoriety which they may not have wished. Indeed, I was at Gordon Hill's testimonial dinner when Darcy McKeough was speaker, and Darcy said, I thought with some considerable passion, that he wished Gordon has been asphalted over by one of those bloody 26 acres! He then invited Gordon to run for the Tories.

The argument goes on, and in September 1975 the campaign made of agricultural land a central theme. I think that it conveyed to the public a largely unanswerable recognition that foodland was going out of production, whatever the reasons, and there were many pieces of collaborating evidence. Indeed, a number of prestigious groups whose views are regularly invoked had testified to that. The Ontario Agrolgists, the Association of Rural Municipalities and a number of other informed bodies had asked the government to do something about it.

Curiously enough, even though there was some splenetic feeling around the campaign in 1975, it was not followed by any particular initiative. As a matter of fact — and I refer to this almost informally, almost colloquially — the government's response was really unbalanced. Of all the issues that I participated in in the Legislature for the last few years, the response on the question of the preservation of land and land use has been least rational. A kind of ambulatory paranoia set in after September 1975 as the government argued about the figures and seemed terribly defensive over the whole question of the loss of land. Much time and preoccupation was then spent fashioning a response, and you will recall that the government engaged in all the standard rhetoric.

I am not deliberately casting this in a partisan context: I will give chapter and verse. I think you will recall that there were references to the rate of land going out of production slowing down, and that there was much greater production on smaller acreages, and that as agriculture became more profitable and prices went up, there would clearly be more land in production; and more and more the focus emerged from government that somehow, within the various realms of municipal life in Ontario, inducements would be provided to preserve the land and provide land use planning.

It didn't abate. Nobody was persuaded. In March 1976, there was yet another addition — that document called "The Strategy for Ontario Farmland", which was released in April of 1976, and with the greatest respect in the world, I have to say that the document was fragile, superficial and tenuous. Frankly, an alert adolescent could have done as masterful a job as was provided in the content of that document! What the document in fact did was to pick up the numbers game and to attempt to ram it home by saying that it was not important that land was going out of production but rather, that what was important was that there was an increase in land under crops. The Minister of Agriculture, The Honourable William Newman, grabbed the figure of 6.6 acres an hour and said that this clearly demonstrates that there is no longer a problem in Ontario. He didn't say that the land was going into crop, pasture, or livestock, didn't give any of the analysis of the figures, just baldly stated it. It didn't wash. As a matter of fact, in public and media terms, I think it was held up to significant ridicule.

And so in September 1976, as a tenacious and thoughtful politician, William Newman tried again. You'll recall that he went to the Agricultural Day at the Canadian National Exhibition, and he said, and I quote him exactly, "The Provincial Government regards our land resources as a trust to be properly managed and passed along to future generations. This is a job that can be planned best at the municipal level within the broad framework of provincial policy and soon planners at every level will have an extremely important statistical basis from which to work." You will notice the emphasis on "planned best at the municipal level". That is the recurring theme, the recurring focus in all of the Provincial Government responses. Then Mr. Newman went on to say this, "Ontario's



assessment rolls have been fed into computers" (one would think that this was a contemporary revelation of 1976: computers and assessment rolls joined together in fortuitous data) "to provide our first up-to-date, county-by-county catalogue of agricultural resources. The results are complete except for three areas in Northern Ontario and when those come in, we will have tables for the whole province." And then the computers will go on in their willful way recording subsequent transactions that will be revealed to all of us.

He went on to say that on a province-wide basis, the incomplete computer print-outs indicate that for every acre of land being used for agricultural purposes, there is another acre lying idle somewhere; the bulk of it is in Northern Ontario, however, and a lot of it is poor land by today's standards, I should say. And presumably by tomorrow's as well, because Class 5 to 7 land in Northern Ontario is not your best foodland within the context of this conference.

On the other hand, Mr. Newman went a little further and he began to document some specifics. He said, "In our major agricultural districts in Southwestern Ontario, we find more than 5.36 million acres being farmed now in 11 counties and regions; potential foodlands that are not being used for farming or anything else amount to more than 66,000 acres, or a bit more than one acre in reserve for every 100 acres being farmed."

"That seems appropriate," he said, "for an area of intensive agriculture."

One acre in reserve for every acre being farmed, 5.36 million acres of prime farmland. When you look at the Canada Land Inventory in that area, you find that the best agricultural land constitutes 5.27 million acres. We are, therefore, already using agricultural land in Southwestern Ontario which is not as good as the land we would wish to use — Class 1, 2 and 3. Where is the other 66,000 acres? Where is it going to come from? What kind of land is it?

We have asked on a number of occasions for a specific breakdown of the assessment data which the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has accumulated. We have not been privy to that data. They won't release it. And this entire charade around the assessment information seems to have disappeared.

But there is another dimension to this, which I think reasonable people have to think about, and that is this business of simply bringing the so-called idle lands back into production. That idle land is pretty expensive now; the speculative and development pressures on that land are enormous. From an internal document in the Ministry of Revenue, we know that in 1975 the average rural selling value of land in the Golden Horseshoe was \$3,830 an acre. There are people in this audience far more knowledgeable than I, but I dare say that a new farmer entering into farming, buying land at \$3,830 an acre, or an existing farmer expanding at those prices, would find it terribly difficult indeed to have an economic return on investment. And it is, I think, cavalier to talk facetiously about all of the land that could be brought back into production when in fact, in areas like the Golden Horseshoe and other parts of Southern Ontario, the dollar pressures on the land are so great that it is very, very difficult indeed to conceive of a return to farming.

In the fall of 1976, that speech not having done the trick, the anxiety continued, the pressure was still on. The Agrologists and the rural municipalities confirmed their position. The Government accused everybody who talked of legislating farmland or foodland protection of wanting to legislate a freeze, and then whimsically, unexpectedly, almost dramatically there emerged in the legislature a Private Members' Bill introduced by George McCague — I think he is a Conservative from Dufferin-and-Simcoe. It was an Act to provide for the designation and retention of foodland and all of the things that had been anathema when coming from Opposition were nectar when coming from a government backbencher. In this Act there was a provision to designate foodlands, albeit with the same underlying counterpoint that has characterized all of the government responses: municipally-controlled, municipal official plans, municipal designations.

In January of 1977, the Government enlisted the aid of its big guns and the Urban Development Institute issued a report alleging that only 3.2 acres an hour were lost to urban growth. I have had a couple of heavy days and still feel reasonably amiable and charitable. I shall say as gently as I can that I was surprised and dismayed at the shabby quality of the document. Its premises were surprisingly thin and (I think the Bureau of Municipal Research's background paper pointed this out) its methodology was really suspect. How you take random samples of farmland in Ontario including Northern Ontario and extrapolate to realities for the province is something that I haven't yet learned. More than that, how you deal with variations between 0 acres and 8 acres and make categorical statements is something that I'm not yet prepared to applaud. And there was about the document a self-serving sense, because it served a particular industry — forgive me for offending members of that industry who may be here. On the other hand, the document did affirm that farmland had been going out of production at a remarkable rate and the document did say what a great many of us had believed for years, that it isn't only urban growth but it is (again as the BMR background paper points out) all kinds of non-farm and related uses.

In the midst of all this, the people are more and more concerned about and agitated by the proposition that we still do not have adequate protection for farmland and foodland. There emerged in early 1977 the report on aggregates from the Ministry of Natural Resources, focussing the dilemma of land use planning yet again, particularly in agricultural areas. I don't know whether



any of you or all of you have read the Natural Resources report but the aggregates committee pointed out that in 1976, the demand for sand and gravel in Ontario was 97 million tons. They projected that by 1985, that demand will be 140 million tons. The Ministry of Natural Resources Task Force concluded and I quote them, "Since alternative sources in Ontario appear to be too expensive to develop, we have concluded that the needs for the future will have to be met largely from sites in Southern Ontario". No real cost analysis of what they mean by too expensive, no real balance of what it would mean to bring it in from the north or east; just the continuing dependence, the continuing reliance, the continuing assumption that because this is the way the world now works, thus it shall work ever after and if we've got problems of meshing agricultural land or other recreational land or other recreational land with aggregates, too bad. It will simply have to come from Southern Ontario. Again the question is raised — who is going to protect the land?

Finally in this litany, this saga — and I wanted to try to provide a context because it is the only way in which politicians can function in the Legislature as we grope towards a solution of the problem — after all of the promises and all of the pressures about protecting farmland and foodland, about providing some kind of land use designation, there appeared, you will recall, this stunning tribute to the creative ingenuity of the Civil Service, a Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture: *Foodland Guidelines*. Now with the greatest respect in the world, I must again say that this document simply mirrors the guidelines which were sent out to the municipalities in the Province of Ontario in 1974-1975. Nothing new about it; there is no new initiative added. It simply says categorically that any preservation of the good agricultural land will be left to the local municipalities and regions, embodied in their official plans, discussed generally for the next six months, implemented over the subsequent five years and then, without any power of enforcement provincially at all! I quote: "Agricultural lands must be clearly identified and shown within the Official Plan and on the land use map, and the policies applied to these areas must adequately protect them for present and future agricultural use." Quote: "The highest priority agricultural lands must be separated out into large, contiguous blocks and given greater protection for agriculture than is generally provided."

Well, I think that's exactly the wrong policy. I think that it's the policy that we have lived with for a very long time and I fail to see why common sense cannot prevail. I really fail to understand that. I fail to understand why the policy has to be dogmatic and so inflexible, why one must always rely on the methods which are traditionally discredited.

There was no more delicious and upsetting a paradox than the issuance of these Guidelines at the press conference convened jointly by William Newman and John Rhodes at which John Rhodes then announced the government's action on Regional Niagara. If ever there was a testament to the absurdity of relying upon Guidelines, it was that announcement! I wish you had been there to hear it because it was really quite remarkable. Mr. Rhodes said, after the Guidelines had been introduced, after special agricultural land was to be protected, that the government was going to save 3,000 of 7,000 acres. The maps that were distributed were incorrectly marked, and indeed did not even contain the boundaries of Regional Niagara re-drawn for 1976. There was very little specific illumination of what was meant.

I have a colleague in the legislature, Mel Swart; he is the M.P.P. for Welland. His tenacity on this issue has to be seen to be believed. He has done some astonishing work. He has a lot of planners in the Niagara Region who quietly and inconspicuously and, for their sake, anonymously, refer documents to him. I now want to tell you on the basis of what we have compiled and that I will set out chapter and verse in particular detail in the Throne Speech reply that I have an opportunity to make next Monday. It was not 7,000 acres at all; it was 8,050 acres, according to the Regional Government document of 1974. The same Regional Government, which on its own removed 600 acres in 1976, leaving a total of 7,450 of which John Rhodes in fact saved only 1,780, to the acre! And as I say, we have it chapter and verse — leaving as a loss for the Niagara Region, in terms of good agricultural land, 5,670 acres. In other words, the government chose to protect 23% of the land that was presented to it.

The rest is sacrificed to urban growth.

Again I am not a fundamentalist about it. I understand there are competing pressures. But there are times when it is so aggravating because it makes no sense! All of the new population analyses of the Niagara Region show that the premises on which this kind of land is alienated is wrong. As a matter of fact, it is really quite fascinating. As recently as February 1977, the Ministry of Housing issued a document, put out by Peter Bernard and Associates on *Ontario Housing Requirements 1976-2001*, which show that the estimates per population in the Niagara Region are excessive by up to 100,000 people by the year 1996; and it demonstrates conclusively that population expansion for the next several years could be accommodated comfortably within the designated area of St. Catharines alone. And as a matter of fact, it demonstrates that if we were serious about re-directing growth to land of lesser value, then the Niagara Region is precisely the place to do it, the southern part of the region. Instead we have the provincial government confirming a regional government decision to use some of the best fruitland in the province in all of those communities in the northern part of the region.



It really makes one stop. You wonder about balance, thoughtfulness, analysis. There is utterly no reason for it, and what really bothers us about it is that it demonstrates the hopeless inadequacy of guidelines, because what's the use of having guidelines in your official plan if every time you want to alienate good agricultural land, even though there are alternatives, you simply chop the guidelines.

May I remind you that what is true for Niagara Region is also true for Haldimand-Norfolk. As a matter of fact, Haldimand-Norfolk is a story that someone with sufficient verve and imagination will have to put to paper and sell it as a piece of surrealism on any local bookshelf. But surely, again for all people who are reasonable, Haldimand-Norfolk demonstrates the folly of talking in abstractions or in permissive ways about protecting agricultural land through guidelines. I remind you that Haldimand-Norfolk resulted as a consequence of a private decision, not a public decision. The Steel Company of Canada forced Haldimand-Norfolk. No one else forced Haldimand-Norfolk. And after STELCO decided to locate near Nanticoke, there followed in quick succession a number of industries which would turn Lake Erie into an industrial corridor parallel to that of Lake Ontario, and then of course the Region of Haldimand-Norfolk had to be forced upon the people in Haldimand-Norfolk. And then with the region come all of the expenditures on services which will amount to a very high and illegitimate cost, and then you suddenly have to build new cities to accommodate populations we now learn may never fill them — on land which is largely agricultural.

I want to tell you an anecdote. Pat Johnston (who is here and works for us and knows well the field of agricultural land and farming generally), Pat and I were down at the Soil Research Institute in Guelph not very long ago. We were meeting with a number of people in Guelph to learn a little bit about some of this land use planning. We wandered to the third floor of some of their offices wherein people were working on wonderful maps of multi-coloured graphs — the kind of thing that makes draftsmen feel sensuous about the world, a perfectly splendid delight which met the eye — and when we asked them what they were doing, they said they were upgrading the Canada Land Inventory analysis of Haldimand-Norfolk, particularly the Townsend site. And lo and behold what did they find? That instead of only 40 to 45% Class 1 and Class 2 agricultural land, in combination, it turned out that the Townsend site was 74% Class 1 / Class 2 Agricultural land: 37% of the Class 1, 37% of the Class 2. Thus we had managed to choose a piece of land and purchase it for the public sector and after it had been purchased, we decided its agricultural value!

But that wasn't enough. John White, in a positive spasm of public ownership, decided to take into the public domain South Cayuga as well, and now we have two parcels of land — 12,000 to 13,000 acres each, costing the people of Ontario roughly 30 million dollars each plus the interest which accrues. We know that the South Cayuga parcel of 100 farms is completely irrelevant, will never be used for population and we're even beginning to have our suspicions about whether or not Townsend will ever be seriously required. And Pickering sits there in the back of the interstices, reverberating quietly, with public money shoring it up.

It is not only the major issue — let us take a moment to draw this together. There are a lot of smaller issues which attest to the folly of guidelines.

Right now, out in the Regional Municipality of Halton, there is a remarkable little struggle being waged over a landfill site. At a recent meeting of the Regional Municipality, by a vote of 11 to 10, site "F" was chosen as the landfill site for the Regional Municipality of Halton. Site "F" — comprising 500 acres of Class 1 (predominantly) / 2 agricultural land, the nicest chunk of land in the region. As though a magnet riveted to that land when it was seen that it could be a waste disposal site! Now what is interesting about it, and it is interesting, is that that acreage is held jointly in the cities of Burlington and Oakville, and it is designated *now* and zoned *now* agricultural land. Those are the designations, those are the zonings. Well, what conceivable use is that kind of guideline when the 500 acres will disappear for a land fill zone when there are all kinds of possibilities which the Region might examine and perhaps would like to examine if it had any Provincial support at all? But it doesn't have that support.

I heard of a case today in the Regional Municipality of Waterloo where 200 acres designated prime agricultural land are going into urban growth. The Regional Municipality re-zoned it from agricultural land to urban residential land, and when it came to the Ministry of Agriculture, that Ministry approved it because it was zoned urban residential. A little circuitous? It takes your breath away.

Those kinds of abstract guidelines are never of any use. As a caucus research group, we've been doing a considerable amount of work on the Niagara Escarpment, and again, in the Throne Speech this Monday, I'm going to be able to adduce with documentation which I think is irrefutable — well I know it is irrefutable — just what happened within the Escarpment Commission about the loss of good recreational and agricultural land on the Escarpment. And how it violates the feelings of planners and how it violates basic protection instincts. But it still goes on. It always goes on, as these vain guidelines never seem to work.

I do not know how more strongly to put it than that, except to sum up by saying that I think there have always been 5 major issues on which government policy is weak and shortsighted. I don't want to be categorical about it, but I will mention all five:



- 1) There just has to be a land use plan in this province. We've got to have a land use plan for Ontario. It's absurd to attempt to cope with forest resources, with water resources, with aggregate resources, with agriculture resources, without a land use plan in Ontario. We almost had it with John White and when we lost John, which some wouldn't consider a bereavement, we gained Darcy. And Darcy will have none of it. As a matter of fact, John White said — because he was a marvellous fellow to sit in the legislature with, he was adventuresome, he was innovative, he wasn't cast into traditional moulds — he said at the Tri-Level Conference, at which some of you may have been in attendance: "In our modern society, a government cannot govern effectively without planning ahead. The great and often competing demands made upon all governments today mean that government must have a clear and realistic idea of how these demands can be met. To do this is to plan. Any other approach is irresponsible." And he fashioned a plan and the plan was jettisoned, and there must be a land use plan in this province.
- 2) Within that land use plan, there must be legislative protection of foodland, of agricultural land, a designation of the best agricultural variety 1, 2 and 3, and then a protection of that land. That has been asked for by farm groups, by the Agrologists, by the municipalities, by political parties. The legislative *imprimatur* is what would give the governing guidelines validity. Now within that legislation, nobody is going to be utterly rigid about it. None of us work in a world which does not permit a flexibility and if in specific locations, in specific areas, there is required an alternate use of land which is designated agricultural, and that alternate use can make an effective argument, O.K. But if you designate it agricultural and you protect it from the outset, then chances are that's the way it will remain unless the competing demand is demonstrably more desirable.
- 3) There has to be a careful study in this province to rationalize the housing and agricultural priorities. Most of us in the N.D.P. Caucus have always considered it largely a red herring to say that you can't accommodate housing in Ontario because you require so much of it on agricultural land. Nonsense! If we were to take the Canada Land Inventory maps, even in their partial state, and superimpose them upon given regions and counties of Ontario and take a look at the places where growth should be directed into land of lesser value, then I dare say, judging from the reduced population projections, that we could accommodate all of the urban pressures without violating very much agricultural land at all. But it just isn't done, and Regional Niagara is an absolutely classic example of that. Now obviously it serves the development industry, who already have the land, to have the housing on their land even if it is good agricultural land. But the responsibility of the government who wants to protect foodland is to re-direct that growth in certain locales and regions. And if we have to service some areas anew, we have to service some areas anew. There are very strong competing priorities here.
- 4) None of this can go on without ensuring that the farmers of Ontario are assured a legitimate income. One of the greatest frustrations in this debate is that we cannot say that we are going to protect foodland in a categorical way without remembering that if you are going to protect the land, there are farmers on the land farming it and they too have to have an income. And that is why so many of us felt that the Farm Income Stabilization plan was inadequate and that it had in fact to be strengthened, and that they must have a fair return on investment in the bad times as well as the good. And it is a *sine qua non*, you cannot protect agricultural land without working in conjunction with the farmers for a plan which gives them a fair return, whether that is subject to simply market factors in good times or subject to income stabilization in difficult times. And I hope that is something upon which we can all agree.
- 5) The fifth point, which is particularly or a peculiarly social democratic point I suppose, is that on those occasions and in those instances where farmers would wish to sell, for whatever reasons (most farmers I have met would wish to continue farming), but for those who wish to sell, I want to remind you that agricultural banks have worked wonderfully well in other provinces, keeping land in production, giving farmers a fair price, allowing sons and daughters of farmers to continue farming, and it is an option which might well be looked at for Ontario.

I wish all of those things could happen, but I pick up the Throne Speech which was delivered yesterday and I read you, finally, these salient paragraphs:

"The land we live on is a fundamental and finite resource, a fact that makes the responsibility of government to protect and husband its use a matter of paramount importance. Measures will therefore be taken to provide a clear focus and strong co-ordinating function for the development of land use policies including the protection of our agricultural foodland." How is that to happen? "The Provincial Secretary for Resources Development will be given a strengthened mandate to co-ordinate the land use policies of ministries and to expedite the resolution of



land use issues. Administrative responsibilities will remain with respective ministries and with municipalities but central assessment and co-ordination at the provincial level will assure the best uses for our land through an overview of individual, community and provincial interests which will be implemented through the process of official plan approvals."

A mellifluous sentence. That is what is in the Throne Speech. And, again, while no one begrudges the autonomy which should be exercised by local and regional councils, you will note the reliance, and with the most charitable wealth in the world, let me tell you that Rene Brunelle, lovely fellow though he is, and Provincial Secretary for Resources Development is simply not going to be able, as his Secretariat is not equipped, to provide the kind of co-ordination implicit in those of us who would wish to protect the farmlands.

Ontario's self-sufficiency in several crops is declining dramatically in food products; I think your panelists will deal with that. Agrologists say that we will have to import; consumers say they want inexpensive food; the Third World goes hungry two-thirds of the time. Surely the land of Ontario deserves legislative protection, and I think that is basically the issue we are talking about.

Thank you.

**Morning Address: Dr. Stuart Smith, M.P.P.,**

**Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario**

(Eds. Note: Dr. Smith's remarks were available in abbreviated form only.)

I would like to begin if I might with a quote: "This is true of affairs of State, for if the ills that are shaping up in the present are recognized in advance, and this is an art possessed only by the prudent, they can be quickly remedied; but if, not being recognized, they are allowed to grow until they are evident to all, there is no longer any remedy".

Now the source of that quote is Machiavelli, but I think he made good sense with respect to this issue.

In the short run we could let the market prevail. More land would be taken out of production, prices would rise, and those farmers remaining on the land would have a very good income.

But we must look to the future. There is no more land being made; we must husband and protect this product. This requires a distortion of the market today, but it will pay dividends in the future. As has already been mentioned at this conference, it is the philosophy of the Treasurer of this province not to intervene in the market. That is part of his laissez-faire Conservative philosophy. And we do not undertake a distortion of the market lightly; it is important to understand the reason for doing so.

It may be a fashionable thing to say that we must preserve farmland to prevent a food shortage here in Ontario. However, I have seen no argument that we are in imminent danger of starvation. There is certainly enough farmland to provide the amount of food that is now being consumed. Really dramatic growth in Ontario is unlikely; in fact other parts of Canada are now growing more quickly than Ontario. Neither Ontario, the rest of Canada, or the United States are at all likely to suffer from starvation. However, we must look to the future. Subtle changes in climate, some of which are now being predicted by experts in that field, could render our current land resources much less productive. Changes in the price of fertilizer may affect the optimum productivity of the land. There may well be a time when food exports will become a vital part of the balance of payments of this province. Although it is not yet the case, it seems clear to me that by present world trends our food resources could become somewhat similar to the oil resources now held by the OPEC countries. As we incur ever increasing deficits to pay for energy resources, we may be able to sustain our economy by exporting natural resources.

The energy crisis is not temporary and the price of energy will continue to rise. It may soon become economically feasible to raise energy crops on agricultural land to produce methanol.

But if we distort the market, who shall pay? In our view it should not be the farmer, already struggling to make a decent living — that would be patently unfair. We all must find fair ways to share this cost. We must pay at the supermarket and through taxes. We must make wise use of marketing boards and tariffs and must recognize that part of the price must be paid through higher food prices. If we want to preserve agricultural land there must be some increases in the price of food. Farmers must have an incentive to earn a decent living but it is not enough to say preserve the farmer and he will preserve the land.

In some cases the growth of cities has put tremendous pressure on our best agricultural land in terms of soil capability and heat units. This is natural because many settlements in Ontario such as London, Chatham and many others grew up as market towns. But it is not responsible to say that we would freeze all growth of such communities. I repeat, a freeze is not a sensible solution.

What are the policy alternatives which we would consider? The first is a buffer zone for areas fringing on areas of growth. These are the areas where the largest losses of farmland have occurred. This land should be put to those agricultural uses relatively compatible with urban growth and large population centres. Such uses as pick-your-own fruit and vegetable market gardens would be just one example of this type of use.

In addition to a policy on the use of fringe or buffer lands, we would require a mandatory designation of all foodlands. This would include an immediate proper inventory of our agricultural land, a determination of where it is located. We believe this measure is long overdue. Once land has been designated as food land there should be no development unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Of course decisions respecting individual parcels of land must be subject to a certain degree of flexibility, and persons whose land is affected must have the right to appear before a tribunal which includes concern for the agricultural use of land.

Reliance on the property tax continues to constitute a great burden on our municipalities. It encourages development for non-farm uses. We would reform that system so that municipalities were not dependent on property taxes to pay for soft services; we would remove the incentives which now exist both for individuals and municipalities and which encourage non-agricultural uses inappropriately.

The Province has done nothing meaningful in the way of decentralization; the pressure for growth and population increase continues to be in the south and the southwest part of the province.



Decentralization, which would involve some additional cost, would also bring about financial benefits, particularly in the long run.

The present government has, from time to time, spoken of an interest in these matters, but let's look at some of the examples of their behaviour. Because, you know, by their deeds shall they be known, not by their Green Papers.

Look at Niagara and the regional planners in that area. I've spoken to these planners; I've gone over with them, on their diagrams, acre by acre, the land they were suggesting be included in the new urban boundaries. In each instance when I asked them what guidance they had from the government during the planning process, the answer was "zero".

When they wanted to know from the government whether the government really felt that the municipal sewage treatment plants had to have the number of houses originally projected in order to make those things viable, they got no answer. When they wanted to know whether or not the Queen Elizabeth Highway would be expanded right in the middle of the northern part of the peninsula where the best land was, they got no answer. When they wanted to know what kind of help they could get in order to redirect growth onto some of the less desirable, less productive lands, they were given no assistance; no dollar figures were mentioned.

They had nothing they could use as a weapon in their discussions with the small municipalities. They would go as planners to the small municipalities of Niagara, and the people in the small municipalities would insist that they needed some growth to pay for the sewage plant or whatever. They had nothing they could use in bargaining with those people because the provincial government gave no guidance and no support.

Look at the Parkway Belt exemption. Look at 900 acres of class 1 agricultural land east of Milton, 500 or 600 acres of that already zoned for agriculture and exempted from the Parkway Belt — these are owned by the Shipp Corporation — exempted from the Parkway Belt on the basis of hardship to the company.

We have the example of Barrie. The Ontario Municipal Board is hearing an application by Barrie to annex some land in Innisfil Township. Included in that land are about 7,000 acres of class 1 land, the best in Ontario. That land is south of Barrie and development there will therefore force additional pressure on that excellent agricultural land yet farther to the south. More development pressure between Barrie and Toronto is bound to result from this. That is where some of our best farm land is located.

The Treasurer has sent a letter or two to the Ontario Municipal Board suggesting that 125,000 people is the population the government desires for Barrie. It is government policy to have that population there. I think you know that the Ontario Municipal Board has now stopped its hearings while it discusses the propriety of that letter. I don't intend to discuss that because I understand it's before the courts.

I feel it is really a very unfortunate day for Ontario that 7,000 acres of class 1 land should be proposed for annexation and for urbanization when there is a very reasonable alternative available.

I note the fact that the planners who developed that proposal for Barrie were also the consulting engineers on a development proposal for the precise parcel of land. The developers stand to gain tens of millions of dollars by the annexation proposals.

In summary, we believe that firm measures must be taken to protect food land for the future. Among the measures which are required are a provincial plan including an inventory of food lands, mandatory designation of such areas for agricultural use, an opportunity to appeal this designation, the decentralization of growth away from our best agricultural land, and the applicability of the designation to government ministries and agencies as well as to the private sector. We do not believe that Ontario Hydro or the Ministry of Transportation and Communications should have any special privileges which an individual land owner does not.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my views with you.



**Luncheon Address: Hon. William G. Newman,  
Minister of Agriculture and Food,  
Government of Ontario**

I may cover some ground that you have already examined closely last night or this morning. That's unavoidable, I'm afraid. However, rather than discuss any single aspect of policy in detail, I propose to outline several different approaches and show how they tie together.

It might do no harm to begin with a reminder that government policies apply to an enormous area. Ontario is bigger than Great Britain, France, West Germany and Belgium all rolled into one. We have about 20 million acres of class 1, 2, 3 and 4 agricultural land as classified by the Canada Land Inventory. In addition, there are another 12 million acres of lower-class land and excellent organic soils. From the tundra of the far north to the vineyards of Niagara, our topography has a bit of just about everything except desert.

Southern Ontario has not only the soils but also the climate to produce more than 100 crops — a much wider variety than other parts of Canada. In the choicest areas, our farm output is prodigious. Kent County alone has much higher agricultural sales than any of the Atlantic provinces. The value of a single Ontario crop, corn, is nearly equivalent to the total value of farm production in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island combined.

Sitting in downtown Toronto, it's not easy to realize that this is such a great agricultural province. More than one-third of Canada's people live in Ontario. It's a great industrial province, accounting for more than half of all Canadian manufacturing. It's a great business complex, accounting for more than 44 per cent of Canada's financial, insurance and real estate activity. When it comes to farming, most people would think first of the vast western grain fields. But the truth is that urbanized, industrialized Ontario is also Canada's leading agricultural province, and our farmers earn about 27 per cent of the nation's total farm cash receipts.

This fact is all the more remarkable when you consider that only one person in 20 is a farmer. The face of rural Ontario has changed rapidly, and it's still changing. The trend has been to fewer farmers but bigger farms — and much more efficient farms.

Twenty years ago one Ontario farm produced enough to feed 12 people. Today one farm produces enough for 50 people.

Ontario's agricultural production has doubled since World War II, even with fewer farmers. It has expanded at about the same rate as population growth. We retain the capacity to continue this rate of increase in production for the rest of this century. We can even increase total farm production at a faster clip, if market conditions warrant.

Canada is a net exporter of food, primarily because of our western grain shipments. In Ontario we import a bit more food than we export. Nevertheless, we could be totally self-sufficient in food if we had to be or wanted to be. We could seal off our borders and maintain nutritious diets even in winter without the citrus fruits and other fresh produce we import from the South. Mind you, I can't imagine that we'd want to do anything of the sort. We're used to oranges, and besides, a lot of people count on our agricultural exports. Canada is the largest donor to the United Nations world food program. On a per capita basis, we're the biggest food donors in the world.

The extent of Ontario's food production isn't just a result of bigness. It's also the result of efficiency or productivity — the results we accomplish from the various inputs used. Agriculture is the most efficient sector in our economy. Ontario's annual gains in farm productivity are significantly higher than the national average.

Twenty years ago one acre of land produced 33 bushels of winter wheat. Today, thanks to advances in scientific farming, one acre produces 48 bushels — an efficiency increase of 45 per cent in 20 years. Ten years ago the average Ontario dairy cow produced dairy products for fewer than nine people. Today it produces enough dairy products for 13 people — an increase of 50 per cent. In only five years, the average dairyman has increased his milk shipments by 35 per cent.

Those are pretty remarkable statistics, but here's one that's even more remarkable: 80 per cent of our food is produced by 20 per cent of our farmers. A great many factors underlie that imbalance, but it's obvious that there's still room for even greater efficiency on our farms.

There's a problem associated with efficiency in agriculture, though. Instead of bringing the farmer rewards, it can sometimes bring penalties. The plain truth is that our farmers could produce more than the rest of us could eat — but they'd go broke doing it. Over-production cuts farm gate prices and creates surplus problems of the kind that our dairymen and grape growers suffered last year. Now our corn producers are worried about a near-surplus situation on the North American market.

The value of Ontario's corn is equivalent to the value of Manitoba's wheat. It is the basis for our livestock industry, which accounts for 70 per cent of Ontario's gross farm receipts. In the last 16 years our corn acreage has increased by 400 per cent and our corn production by 500 per cent. Ontario farmers now plant 1.5 million acres of corn, and I wouldn't be surprised to see that expand to 2 million acres in a few years. However, that will depend on market conditions, and right now the market's not so hot. In 1974 Ontario farmers produced 90 million bushels and got \$3.03 a bushel.



Last year they produced 134 million bushels, but the estimated farm price is only \$2.20 a bushel.

That's one hell of a drop in income in a business where inflation has doubled the cost of production in the last five years. And it illustrates a point that doesn't receive nearly enough attention in most debates about preserving food lands: *Acreage figures can never be divorced from the dollars-and-cents realities of farm life in appraising the food situation today or planning for tomorrow.*

It is significant, I think, that the theme of this conference is "Food for the Cities". City people today are more concerned than they have ever been about how food reaches their tables. I believe this concern can be traced back to price increases in 1973, when urbanites began talking about a "food crisis". The other phrase on the cover of your program became current about the same time — "Disappearing Farmland and Provincial Land Policy".

As a farmer, I can't help reflecting that city people showed little concern a few years earlier, when they were getting food at cut-rate prices that were driving many farmers off their land to find other work.

Between 1951 and 1971, total production and productivity per acre increased greatly on Ontario farms, but the market demand wasn't very strong. That combination drove prices down. When prices go too low, farmers go out of business. Then a scarcity of food can result. Everybody loses — producer and consumer alike. But no urban protests were heard in the 1960s about the sale or abandonment of land. When food for the cities was cheap only the farmers protested — and many of them had to take other jobs to keep food on their own tables.

What happened to the land they had to abandon? Well, some of it was used for housing and industrial sites. Some of it was sold to land speculators or city people who simply wanted to raise families away from the urban hassles. A lot of land was left to rest in pasture or woodlot until it became profitable to farm it again. In the 1970s farm gate prices have improved and many thousands of those idle acres have come back into food production. Many more thousands of acres could be reclaimed for agriculture if the need arose.

We have seen how farmers responded to favorable conditions for corn production. We'll see similar expansion in other areas of production when the market calls for expansion.

The concurrent upsurge of concern about planning for the future has been a mixed blessing. Some people who are relatively uninformed about agriculture have been misled by the manipulation of Census figures from the 1960s. Some have been scared into accepting simplistic solutions to extremely complex issues. But there have been positive benefits, such as the public participation in selecting routes for power transmission corridors and other planning processes. There has been a great deal of worthwhile fact-finding and knowledgeable debate as well as political posturing.

The widespread public interest is a healthy sign, for in the long run society as a whole must solve many of the problems in land use and food production. City people, in particular, should not underestimate the complexity of the issues. The solutions will require well-informed public opinion, and the organizers of this conference are to be commended for trying to present various approaches as fairly and dispassionately as possible.

One of your aims is to assess the need for new Provincial land use policies. I can assure you that the Government of Ontario is receptive to sound and practical new initiatives. We welcome them. We don't pretend we already have all the answers. That sort of rigidity would be a fatal approach to the future of our province.

Ontario's population today is around 8.2 million. By the end of the century we might have as many as 12 million people. They'll need more land for housing and services and work and recreation. They'll also need land to grow much more food than is grown now. The conflicting demands for every parcel of good land will be even more intense than they are today.

Such conflicts might assume crisis proportions in a small nation, but not in a province as big as ours. A valuable perspective on our situation was offered recently by a firm of consultants who studied Ontario's housing needs for the next quarter-century. This is what Peter Barnard Associates had to say:

"Land acreage requirements for the forecast level of housing are small in comparison to total land available. Approximately 278,000 acres are required to provide sufficient land for the total additional housing requirements to (the year) 2001. This acreage represents only .0012 per cent of the province's land supply, or an area equal to 1.8 times the land area of Metropolitan Toronto."

The report foresees some conflicts with prime agricultural uses in Central Ontario, naturally. We all do. But with sensible planning there's no reason we can't have farming on the prime land and housing on less valuable land.

From the available evidence, from the examples I've already cited of our agricultural capabilities, there is no cause for alarm about future food shortages. Certainly there would appear to be no excuse for any. However, that is no basis for complacency about our reserves of food-growing land.



Successive provincial governments have been planning for the wise use of our resources, including land, for 30 years or more. With the wisdom of hindsight, maybe we can say today that they should have shown more concern for farm land long ago. But then, how many of us did? Expansion was our watchword in the postwar years. Everything was geared to growth. Big was good and bigger was *better*.

In the 1970s, though, the emphasis is on *controlled* growth. Not zero growth, but moderate, reasonable and well-managed growth. We have seen provincial initiatives of a new type, such as the Toronto-Centred Region concept, the Parkway Belt system, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the establishment of regional municipalities for co-ordinated planning in areas where urban development pressures were most pronounced.

We have seen an overall strengthening of the provincial-municipal planning process. The government believes detailed land use planning is done best at the local level, but it expects municipalities to recognize provincial responsibility for guiding the broad outlines of Ontario's development. We want all official plans to conform to provincial policies, so close liaison is essential. We believe in cooperation, not confrontation. There have been occasional differences and disagreements, and no doubt there will be more in the future. But on the whole this system is running as smoothly as anyone could ask.

The Provincial and Federal governments are also working in close cooperation under the Agricultural and Rural Development Agreement. One of the most important ARDA programs helps farmers enlarge their holdings into more economically viable units. ARDA has acquired well over 400,000 acres which are leased to adjacent farmers for five years, at which time they may either buy the land or renew the lease. Another joint program has provided nine community pastures totalling more than 25,000 acres in various parts of Ontario.

In 1974 a provincial government committee grew into the Food Land Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Its objective is to retain the better land in every part of the province for food production. The branch reviews all official plans, subdivision plans and sometimes zoning bylaws and severance applications. It makes sure agricultural interests are adequately protected within a sound planning framework. Branch personnel work with planners, developers and politicians involved in the plans. They also maintain liaison with the Ministry of Housing and review proposals of other ministries, agencies and private firms that could affect valuable farmland.

Last year the government published "A Strategy For Ontario Farmland". It renewed its commitment to maintain a permanent, secure, economically sturdy agriculture and food industry through two avenues. One consists of measures to ensure that within any area the better land is kept for farming. The other comprises a wide variety of programs to ensure the economic feasibility of using that better land for food production.

My friend and colleague, Bob Eaton, discussed the latter approach at a workshop session this morning. For those who were attending other workshops, I'd like to repeat that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food had a budget of \$171 million in the fiscal year just ending, in spite of the severe anti-inflationary restraints on government spending. All our programs help make agriculture a better business proposition.

For example, proper field drainage can increase crop production more than any single method we know. The amount of drainage work in the province has increased tremendously in the '70s. In three years we have made more than \$45 million available to municipalities for low-interest tile drainage loans to farmers, and we plan to provide \$18 million in 1977-78. We also provide grants covering one-third of the cost of municipal drainage outlets that serve the farm drainage systems.

I won't list all our other programs to help the farmer help himself, but please don't forget that this year we have a Provincial Farm Income Stabilization Plan to help participating producers weather periods of poor market conditions. That should boost confidence in the future of farming in Ontario.

I'm glad this conference on foodland policies has drawn attention to the need for measures that ensure the economic viability of farm operations. I think it's impossible to overstate the importance of such measures in keeping farmland in production. They should never be sidelined in discussing the other side of the coin in government strategy — the actual conservation of land through planning.

One of the difficulties in planning has been the absence of reliable statistics on just how much land *is* being farmed in Ontario, and how much more *could be* farmed if there were money to be made farming it. We've had plenty of statistics floating around, God knows, but the trouble was that anyone could take his pick to prove almost any point he wanted to make.

I'm happy to say we'll soon have data which, I believe, everyone will accept as an accurate, current and comprehensive basis for planning and discussion. Information was obtained from a computer data bank developed by the Ministry of Revenue for assessing farm property. It identifies both properties that are being farmed and vacant land that can be regarded as potential farmland in reserve. We now have statistics for every county and region in Ontario, and I'll be tabling the results of this study in the legislature in the very near future. Probably the most important aspect of this project is the fact that the computers will constantly be updating the figures, so we'll have a benchmark for routine monitoring of land use changes in the future.



Another important advance was announced six weeks ago when the Government issued what is known as its Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture: *Food Land Guidelines* to help municipal councils and planners identify and preserve our better food land.

The booklets are being distributed to municipalities, farm organizations and others for their comments before the Guidelines become official Government policy about five months from now.

Within five years, the Government wants the final guidelines incorporated in all local, county, and regional official plans. The laws of supply and demand determine how much land is actually in production at any time, but the Guidelines aim at making sure that as much land as possible with the *capability* for food production is kept available for farming when it's needed.

In designating such lands, the Guidelines establish priorities based on soil grades as they are ranked in the Canada Land Inventory. But they also give high priority to areas with a high capability for specialty crops, such as the Niagara fruit orchards, or apple areas, or greenhouse areas.

What's more, they draw attention to other areas where special conditions exist to make agriculture a viable enterprise. For example, some farmers using special management skills or farming techniques may succeed where others would fail. We also want to protect areas where farms survive mainly because they're close to major markets, such as the Greater Toronto complex. And there are special cases in northern Ontario as well, where local farms are the main source of fresh vegetables and dairy products.

I think the Guidelines are extremely realistic and practical. They recognize that Ontario's urban growth must continue. So they make allowances for it, while providing measures to divert development to land of poorer quality and minimize its impact on agriculture.

As a result, official plans will designate some high-priority food lands where only farming — or uses compatible with farming — will be permitted. A broader range of alternative uses may be allowed on land with a lower agricultural priority, but only as spelled out in the official plans.

We also hope local by-laws will incorporate the provincial Agricultural Code of Practice. It was revised last year and now provides formulas to keep rural residences and the smellier sort of farm operations a reasonable distance apart. This is especially useful in areas that fall within the so-called urban shadow, where farmers and non-farmers have to get along as neighbours. The code was drafted in consultation with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and has since been approved by the Ontario Municipal Board.

In future, before any lands designated for agriculture may be used for other purposes, the need *must* be justified and documented. In addition, the amount of land allocated for various uses must be realistically related to population projections and compatible with provincial growth objectives for the general area.

The Government of Ontario also wants greater emphasis placed on planning for hamlets and villages to decide which ones should be encouraged to grow, and how. One result will be to limit growth of hamlets surrounded by good agricultural land and encourage growth of those surrounded by less valuable land.

The Government wants firm policies set to minimize the impact on agriculture caused by new highways, power lines, oil or gas pipelines, water and sewer lines, and waste disposal sites.

The Guidelines specify ways to discourage severances for non-farming purposes and divert rural-residential development away from prime land. They encourage buffer zones between urban and agricultural areas to avoid the problem of strip development next door to farming. They require better planning for future changes in urban boundaries. This will include definite staging to indicate the direction and extent of future growth, the rate at which it will occur, and the time limits within which agriculture can occupy the area as an interim land use. Long-range planning of that sort will reduce uncertainty and speculation in areas where growth will not be permitted.

Some critics have complained that the Guidelines lack teeth unless they are codified in provincial legislation. Well, they're wrong. The Guidelines are tough — in fact, they're *too* tough to suit some other critics. And they couldn't be legislated in a province this size because there are simply too many factors which, taken together, describe the character of attractive land.

It's simple enough to determine whether it's class 1 or 2, usually. And whether the slope, wetness and so on make it suitable for agriculture. But how could we write into legislation such considerations as the growth prospects for the town next to this piece of land? How could we account for the fact that it has a unique stand of, say, mature black walnut trees? Or that the ownership is fragmented?

Under the rigidity of legislation, how would we compare this piece of land to another property next to a town whose growth prospects are quite different? Or in an area where black walnuts are not particularly rare?

For hundreds of reasons like those, both the municipalities and the province must be free to exercise individual discretion in judging individual cases.

The vital point is that the overriding concern of conserving agricultural land must be borne firmly in mind by the people applying those judgments. It will be the responsibility of people who want to



withdraw land from agriculture to justify such a withdrawal thoroughly. It will be the responsibility of the plans approval people to apply the final guidelines as consistently as possible, remembering that their discretionary powers must be applied wisely and sensitively. Blanket legislation could invite complacency, whereas this system will ensure vigilance by plan approvers who judge each case on its merits. I simply can't understand how anyone could consider this procedure *less* flexible than province-wide legislation.

The system will require good faith on both sides. Sometimes it won't work properly. But its chances of success are infinitely better than we could hope for if we simply issued decrees from on high and expected them to apply equally well to any situation that arose anywhere in the province.

Planning procedures *must* be flexible in a province as big and diversified as ours. We have ruled out such inflexible proposals as the provincial land freeze advocated by the New Democratic Party and others. Not only would it be unnecessary and unfair to thousands of farmers, it would be an administrative and legal nightmare. Besides, it probably wouldn't work.

There is no need for that sort of authoritarian action when food land can be protected through provincial-municipal co-operation. The Food Land Guidelines will do that. We have already demonstrated their value in the case of the Official Plan for the Region of Niagara.

The Province sent the plan back twice for revisions because we felt the proposed urban boundaries were eating up far too much of Niagara's unique fruit lands. The region is blessed with well over 300,000 acres of fine farmland. We had to establish priorities. We gave top priority to the unique fruit lands, located mainly in the narrow band between the Niagara Escarpment and the Lake Ontario shoreline. For the most part, the lands south of the Escarpment are more suited to general farming enterprises.

The fruit lands themselves may be divided into two categories: those suitable for tender fruits such as peaches or plums and those suitable for grapes. A combination of circumstances give the tender fruit soils the higher priority of the two. General agricultural land comes third. We were also concerned with retaining large tracts of land wherever possible, as the Guidelines recommend.

The result was that the Government decided that 3,000 acres could be saved from urban expansion — 1,800 acres of tender fruit land and 1,200 acres of vineyards. Some other parcels could have been saved, but there were already problems of land fragmentation and conflicts between fruit production and adjacent development. So we decided these should be used for urban housing. The Guidelines stress that population projections must be realistic and compatible with provincial growth objectives for the area. The Region of Niagara reduced its original population projections to meet this criterion.

The Province also insisted on documentation and justification for alternate land use proposals.

The regional policy now conforms to the Food Land Guidelines by re-directing urban development south of the Escarpment as a positive aid in reducing urban pressures on the unique agricultural lands to the north. The Government will provide financial assistance. The Niagara municipalities will also make sure all vacant properties within their existing limits are built up before they consider expanding outwards.

Politics is the art of the practical. Niagara Regional Council has accepted our solution, and I think it was an eminently practical one. About 3,000 acres of fine land will be permanently available for agricultural use — as they would not have been without the provincial review. We have established long-term, stable urban limits in the area. Outside those limits there are about 400,000 acres, and we have also established agricultural priorities for more than three-quarters of all that land.

I'd like to stress that we didn't arrive at the solution just by drawing lines on maps. The land use decision was made in conjunction with economic policies to assist the Niagara fruit farmers. My Ministry is developing new research and economic programs to maintain the tender fruit industry. We are providing grape growers with assistance to convert to the French hybrid vines preferred for table wine production. The Government has introduced legislation to reduce the price of 200 domestic wines and encourage their consumption. For two years we have also guaranteed loans to purchase surplus grapes and produce Ontario brandy. We also plan market development projects and efforts to improve tariff arrangements.

All these things are the nuts and bolts of land use planning — the results of an integrated government strategy to tackle difficult decisions from every angle. After all, there's no point in designating land for agriculture unless a man can make a buck farming it.

When we talk of preserving agricultural land, let's not talk as though we were preserving some sort of museum. Farming is a business. Like any business, it has to generate customers. Agriculture has experienced problems in marketing several commodities, and it will face new problems in the future.

I am convinced that government must increase its share of responsibility in farm marketing. We must look at measures that would assure our producers, as far as is possible, that everyone involved in marketing food understands what is happening in the market place. For this reason, my Ministry plans to establish a strong, talented and co-ordinated Market Outlook Branch to analyze developments and spread the word about them.



We reorganized the Ministry last year to form a new Marketing Division that concentrates on selling Ontario food products and opening new markets for them. Ontario's food exports exceeded \$650 million last year, but we think we can do better. I recently returned from a trade mission to Britain with members of several farm marketing boards. Other missions are planned this year to Europe, the Far East, the Caribbean . . . even to darkest Buffalo.

We encourage foreign buyers to visit Ontario and see the food products we can offer. We organize trade show exhibits in other countries. We provide grants towards approved industry projects for promotion outside the province.

At the same time we are trying to replace food products that are now being imported but could be produced in Ontario. We identify markets and then encourage their development by co-ordinating the approaches of producers, researchers and extension personnel. We coordinate sales promotions for the gigantic hotel, restaurant and institutional trade. And much more besides. This year you'll notice an even stronger promotion of Ontario food products.

When you take such pains to sell Ontario food products, it's disheartening to see shoppers reach for an imported product instead because it's a bit cheaper. It's happening all the time, all around us, and it's undermining our agriculture and food industry.

Some countries can produce food more cheaply than we can. Their climate is warmer, their growing season is longer, their labor costs are lower, their whole standard of living is lower than ours. A primary reason for our higher standard of living is that we've always enjoyed low food prices, in relation to our earning power, so we've had more money to spend on other things. We are not going to lower our living standards, obviously, so our farmers have every right to expect support in their fight against cut-rate foreign competition. Instead, the federal trade and tariff policies often create enormous difficulties for our own producers and processors while encouraging those in other countries.

The Niagara Fruit and Vegetable Growers asked Ottawa for some action. Instead, their Association got a letter last month from the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Tony Abbott. It read, in part: "One of our best measures of competitiveness is in relation to imports. I can accept the case for temporary protection against low-priced imports coming into Canada because of particular short-run situations of market gluts or overproduction in other countries. On the other hand, I am not convinced that protection is warranted in those instances where other countries can supply the Canadian market on a regular basis at lower prices than our own industry. If this causes problems for the Canadian industry, then I believe the solution is to assist the industry to adjust to the new environment."

New environment, eh? Maybe it's a new environment for Mr. Abbott, but it sure as hell isn't for the Niagara grower. How would you react to that kind of preaching if you were a peach farmer who had watched Ontario's share of its own peach market whittled down from 80 per cent to less than 20 per cent? How would you feel, knowing that Australian peaches pour into Canada at a tariff of half a penny per pound, and Australian pears enter Canada duty-free? How would you feel if you were still waiting for the Tariff Review Board to say something about the reforms you requested in 1973?

I'll tell you how I reacted. I got sore as a boil. Here we are, wrestling with the problems of preserving the Niagara orchards, and there is the Federal Government, denying Niagara growers the national support they could expect in almost any other country.

That kind of callous, short-sighted thinking in Ottawa has already killed Ontario's sugar beet industry. Now it's threatening other areas of agriculture. Whether the federal attitude results from indifference or opportunism, it has to change. And this is the time to change it.

During a recent foreign trade mission I visited Geneva, the site of the so-called Tokyo round of talks on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT. I was appalled to learn how little direction Canada's negotiators have been receiving from Ottawa. It could be 10 years before we get another chance like this to improve our agricultural trading position.

Subsequently I went to Ottawa with a delegation representing the main sectors of Ontario's agriculture industry. We delivered a list of priorities that we want presented at the GATT negotiations or outside them. Here are some of our key demands:

- we want no variable levies against our food unless Canada also imposes them.
- we want reciprocity in tariffs, quotas and non-tariff measures between Canada and the United States.
- we want all Canadian tariffs calculated as a percentage of a commodity's value, as other countries calculate them, instead of our obsolete cents-per-pound duties that have been eaten away by inflation.
- we want Canada's anti-dumping procedures streamlined so they can go into action in time to protect our domestic agricultural industries from the periodic waves of low-priced foreign surpluses.
- we want seasonal protection for fresh Ontario produce.
- we want a meat import law that will give Canadian producers the same kind of protection

American producers enjoy.

In short, we want equity and fair play.

Since our visit to Ottawa, higher tariffs have been announced on imported pork and canned tomatoes from Taiwan. These are steps in the right direction. But a great deal remains to be done. Many of our tariff troubles aren't just inequities — they're absurdities. It's time for some desk-thumping in Ottawa, and the Ontario Government is doing just that.

Canada, like the other GATT nations, is permitted to restrict the competition against foods that are regulated on a national scale. We have national production quotas only for milk, eggs and turkeys. They aren't desirable in the case of some other commodities. But where it is appropriate, the Government of Ontario supports the national plan approach as one answer to the problem of maintaining our own markets.

Another answer is salesmanship. We already have 16 promotional campaigns planned for this year, and with so much pressure on our domestic market we will inject a new note of urgency in a familiar appeal to consumers: buy Ontario.

If Ontario shoppers support Ontario farmers, they'll do much to guarantee food for the cities as the planning decisions, the agricultural research, the whole gamut of extension services in rural Ontario. If society as a whole truly wants to guarantee our future food supply, then society as a whole must decide it's willing to pay our farmers a fair price and keep them on the land.

Farmers have certainly been getting better prices in the 1970's. But at the same time their production costs have doubled, and they're still going up. Federal economists expect this year's farm cash receipts to remain around the 1976 level while expenditures increase another six per cent. If the economists are right, Ontario farmers will end 1977 with 19 per cent less in their pockets than in 1975.

Inflation hurts everyone. Sure, but other people are still getting raises. Something is drastically wrong when our farmers — the most efficient producers in our economy — are penalized by pay cuts. If there is a threat to the supply of food for the cities, it lies mainly in the economic bind confronting our farmers.

The dilemma won't be solved by politicians and planners. This is a problem all the people of Ontario must face squarely. If there is a moral imperative to protect our food lands, there is also a moral imperative to pay our farmers a fair price.

We can't go on expecting cheap food forever, any more than we can expect a return to cheap electricity and cheap gasoline. If we're going to buy our food from other countries, we might just as well build on every available square foot of land in the Niagara Peninsula. That would leave us at the mercy of foreign suppliers five years or 10 years or 25 years from now.

If we sell out on our own farmers for short-term gains today, our selfishness will cost the people of Ontario an awful lot more in the long run.



## **2. FOUR STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR PROVINCIAL ACTION: WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS**

### **A. Province-Wide Land Use Plan**

**Presentation: Pat Johnston, NDP Research**

#### **Introduction**

I don't think I need bore you with a recitation of all the facts and figures on agricultural land loss. The alarms have been raised. We've heard them all. Some would claim the "problem" isn't as great as is being made out — the UDI, for example, — others insist we have a crisis on our hands. I think it is fair to say that I fall somewhere between those two poles. Crisis is probably too emotive a term for me. I think we have a problem with the loss of food-producing lands and I think something should be done about it. To me this is just commonsense. It is simply prudent to forestall what might someday be a crisis. I don't want Ontario to rely on the dubious possibility of increased domestic intensity in land-use and technological change to provide food for a growing population.

But the so-called food lands issue is not one-dimensional. The diminishing land base for agricultural purposes is but one of the facets of a larger resource use question. The agricultural land question is also part of a larger economic question. A society which allows one of its basic economic underpinnings to languish is simply foolish. If we don't build from strength, and we do have natural advantages with respect to agricultural production, our search for magic solutions to our economic woes will be futile.

#### **The Resource-Use Context**

Southern Ontario is the vortex of all the competing demands on our resources. Our 31 million acres must accommodate land for agriculture, land for housing, land for industry, roads, schools, hydro corridors, gravel pits, landfill sites, parks, wildlife habitats, and harvestable forests. Let me outline briefly for you the dimensions of these demands, leaving agriculture to the last.

#### **Urban Growth**

Recently some have argued that the loss of land to urban development is an insignificant proportion of the total loss. The UDI, for example, submitted a dubiously-arrived-at figure of 3 acres/hour which, I might point out here, represents more than one-quarter of a million acres every decade, made up predominantly of the best land in Southern Ontario. They argue this loss as a necessary evil. But let me quote for you from the U.N. Settlement Conference:

"Our small population is very unevenly distributed. Nine-tenths (9/10) of our country is practically empty; nine-tenths of all Canadians are concentrated on 7% of all the land. However, this 7% equals . . . more than the combined area of West Germany, the U.K., the Benelux countries, and Switzerland, which supports a population of about 150 million under roughly comparable soil and climatic conditions." (C.I.P. paper for the U.N. Conference, Human Settlements)

That's a pretty graphic account of sprawl. Sprawl is expensive. The further we spread out, the further we must push the sewer pipes, the roads, the utilities, the transit and the fire and police protection. Property tax payers and income tax payers pay heavily for sprawl. That's who pays! Who benefits?

I'll read a short passage to you; you can guess who said it — Marx? Engels?

"Fancy comparing these healthy processes with the enrichment which comes to the landlord who happens to own a plot of land on the outskirts of a great city, who watches the busy population around him making the city larger, richer, more convenient and more famous every day, and all the while sits still and does nothing. Roads are made, streets are made, services are improved, electric light turns night into day, water is brought from reservoirs a hundred miles off in the mountains — and all the while the landlord sits still. Every one of those improve-



ments is effected by the labor and cost of other people and the rate payers. To not one of these improvements does the land monopolist, as a land monopolist, contribute, and yet by every one of them the value of his land is enhanced. He tends no service to the community, he contributes nothing to the general welfare, he contributes nothing to the process from which his own enrichment is derived.

While the land is what is called "ripening" for the unearned increment of its owner, the merchant going to his office and the artisan going to his work must detour or pay a fare to avoid it. The people lose their chance of using the land, the city and state lose the taxes which would have accrued if the natural development had taken place, and all the while the land monopolist has only to sit still and watch complacently his property multiplying in value, sometimes many fold, without either effort or contribution on his part!

But let us follow the process a little further. The population of the city grows and grows, the congestion in the poorer quarters becomes acute, rents rise and thousands of families are crowded into tenements. At last the land becomes ripe for sale — that means that the price is too tempting to be resisted any longer. And then, and not until then, it is sold by the yard, or by the inch at ten times, or 20 times or even 50 times its agricultural value.

The greater the population around the land, the greater the injury the public has sustained by its protracted denial, the more inconvenience caused to everybody, the more serious the loss in economic strength and activity, the larger will be the profit of the landlord when the sale is finally accomplished. In fact, you may say that the unearned increment on the land is reaped by the land monopolist in exact proportion, not to the service but to the disservice done. It is monopoly which is the keynote, and where monopoly prevails, the greater the injury to society, the greater the reward to the monopolist.<sup>1</sup>

Post-war prosperity in Ontario created an environment of plenty. People had money to spend on new housing; developers had money to gain; above all, governments had money to spend on expensive suburban servicing. Governments responded to demand; they provided the servicing with little thought given to location or cost.

The seventies have seen faltering economies, incomes shrinking. Housing is too expensive for people, sprawl is too expensive for governments and their taxpayers to foot the bill.

It's not only a costly process, it's also proving disastrous to our other resources — land for agriculture, recreation, forests.

But, is there no alternative?

There is much land within present urban boundaries to accommodate urban growth. In fact, presently CMHC is conducting a comprehensive survey of Canada's largest cities to determine just how much is available. But suppose we discover that enough land could be made available for housing and industry — what then? Municipalities have essentially a passive and negative role in the development process. They are in a position to regulate what may not occur (through zoning and official plans). They are powerless to be active. Without financial resources they cannot compel development to occur on vacant land within their boundaries. They are under an obligation to ensure that affordable housing is produced in a continuous process, but they are subject to the whims of developers. If developer /speculators have accumulated agricultural land on the fringe of urban areas and only those developers propose housing projects, what alternatives do municipalities have but to approve them? If municipalities had the resources to assemble land and tender house-building to small contractors, everyone would be better off. Affordable housing might be a reality. In cases where cities must expand beyond their boundaries, the expansion could be preceded by municipal purchase of non-agricultural land.

The Provincial role (and to a degree the Federal role) in this case becomes supporting municipal finances to achieve the ends and diverting growth to areas not surrounded by prime land.

This approach is just common sense — just responsible management to meet our many and varied needs.



## Sand and Gravel

"In Ontario we are faced with a rising demand for sand, gravel and stone. In addition, many people are quite plainly dissatisfied with the location, operation and rehabilitation of existing pits and quarries and have no confidence in the assurance of operators who propose to open new pits or quarries. The public also lacks confidence in the enforcement of The Pits and Quarries Control Act, 1971, which is simply not doing the job it was intended to do."

So begins the Government's latest report on gravel. It's quite an understatement to say that people are "dissatisfied" with the industry. Groups of citizen coalitions have sprung up all over the place to fight an industry which tears up agricultural land, poisons watersheds, and leaves a train of ruined landscape in its wake.

In 1976, Ontario's demand for sand, gravel, and stone resources was in the order of 97 million tons, most of which was supplied by Southern Ontario reserves. By 1985, eight short years away, demand is projected to be in the neighbourhood of 140 million tons — or almost 50% more. The Ministry of Natural Resources Task Force concludes:

"Since alternate sources in Ontario appear to be expensive to develop, we have concluded that the needs for the future will have to be met largely from sites in Southern Ontario." (Task Force, p. 27)

The report concludes:

"... planning will be necessary to ensure that the current level of supply is maintained from present source areas including the *Niagara Escarpment Planning Area* to cover the present levels of demand into the future . . .

Basic to our proposed approach is an acceptance of increased resource utilization in the regions closest to markets and an equitable sharing of demand between producing areas." (p. 36)

Thus southern municipalities will be forced to designate areas of protected aggregate reserve to meet Provincial requirements. Furthermore, Metropolitan Toronto is to be persuaded to:

"as a matter of urgency, provide zoning to allow underground mining of aggregates." (p. 31)

Of course, the "resources of Northern Ontario are limitless" but they would be "too expensive" to produce. Expensive for whom? What about substitutes? Who is conducting a major study of rail and ship transport possibilities from remote areas? Do we really have to disturb our farmland and so seriously disrupt our communities? Can municipalities individually be expected to plan for what are obviously Provincial requirements?

## Forests

Believe it or not, we apparently don't have enough harvestable timber in Northern Ontario to meet all of our needs.

Southern Ontario, with its favoured climate and soil, has the unique capacity to grow, quickly, many species of trees. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, we are going to need 9.1 million cunits annually by the year 2020. The Golden Horseshoe is to provide 55,000 cunits annually according to a Ministry Task Force (COLUC). The Task Force goes on to say:

"In order to meet those needs approximately 500,000 acres or one-quarter of the COLUC land area, must be in forest, in amount substantially larger than the present forested area, estimated at just under 300,000 acres." (COLUC, p. 38)

Can municipalities be expected realistically, to plan for these provincial needs? If we give all the land away to aggregates, housing, industry and agriculture, what will be left for forests? Or maybe it doesn't matter.

## Recreation

"Along the shorelines and across the rolling landscape recreational opportunities for an urban-chained populace abound." (COLUC, p. 41)

Today, they abound. Tomorrow is an open question. According to Ministry figures, approximately 7/8 of outdoor recreation activity involves a one-day outing, of not more than 60 miles round trip. As our population expands, the demand for parks, open space



increases accordingly. COLUC estimates a fourfold increase in demand between 1974 and 1986. This demand will imply a need for at least 135,000 acres in the Golden Horseshoe alone. Can we set aside enough land? Can each municipality decide on its own how much land needs to be protected for these purposes?

Then, there is fishing — sport and commercial. Water quality endangered by excessive growth. River banks need to be reforested. Marshes need to be protected for wildlife habitats. As the Province's own Task Force indicated:

"Clearly there are provincial imperatives that transcend *the boundaries of regional municipalities* — prime agricultural lands and major upland areas, for example. The Province must define and secure its overriding interests. Clearly, too, wherever there are potential conflicts over the allocation of provincially-significant natural resources, *the Province must establish the priority and trade-off rules.*" (COLUC, p. 35, Emphasis added)

### Agriculture

Now we come to agriculture.

Agriculture has been in retreat in Ontario. Between 1966 and 1971, over a million acres of improved farmland were "lost". Statistics Canada didn't tell us where it went. Over the same period farm population declined by something like 20%. In 1976 net farm income declined by 18% and is expected to plummet a further 19% in 1977.<sup>2</sup> We used to produce as much or more than we consume in this province. In many cases, this is no longer true and the future looks bleak. Obviously, things are seriously wrong in a crucial sector of Ontario's economy (farm cash receipts total in excess of \$2-1/2 billion). Plainly, there is more to worry about than a disappearing land base; plainly, the solutions don't lie with one-dimensional approaches.

Farm income, eroded by massive food imports and by farmers' relative powerlessness in the market and increasingly in the political arena, is in one of its cyclical declines. Dairy producers have yet to find out what it is Ottawa won when it traded cheese imports on the international selling block. Broiler producers wonder out loud how it is Loblaws gets away with importing massive numbers of birds. Ontario producers continue to be puzzled by an Ontario Government which is reluctant to restructure a property tax system to cease charging services to people (e.g. education) against farmland. The UDI to the contrary, the impact of urban expansion is much more an agricultural economics problem than a simple land problem. Farmers are being priced out of the land market. In 1975 the average rural selling value of land in the Golden Horseshoe was \$3830/acre. Not many young people can afford to start farming on land that expensive. Even established farmers would have to be growing gold "in them thar fields" to make the investment pay. The threat to agricultural land is clearly not simply the land taken for immediate development. The pressure on price exerted by continued expectation of profit from development extends far into the countryside and will continue to do so long as governments appear the slightest bit equivocal about planning.

How much land does agriculture need? The question is nonsense. I don't think anyone is in a position to make a reliable prediction. To return to the point I made in my introduction, isn't it simply prudent to preserve all that is within our capacity to preserve?

### Current Government Policy

In a word "Guidelines". **Municipalities are to protect "wherever possible" prime agricultural land, wildlife habitats and potential gravel extraction areas. They are to provide adequate affordable housing, accessible parks and cheap land for industry. And, they are to do it all with impossibly tight budgets in an atmosphere clouded by rapidly rising property taxes.** If your municipality happens to contain part of the Niagara Escarpment, quantities of gravel, Class 1 and 2 land, and is growing at a rate of 8% per annum — God help you, because the Province won't. The recent farmland guidelines, which incidentally are a polished version of a document the Ministry of Agriculture has been using since March of 1975, tell the whole story. Municipalities are told, in the most patronizing manner:

"The allocation of land uses is rarely simple within a given area . . . The land needs



must be analyzed to determine where various land uses such as residential, commercial, open space and agriculture will be in competition for the same land. The resolution of these conflicting demands will vary according to the types of land use to be accommodated, the amount and nature of the land resources available, and the future growth pressures expected."<sup>3</sup>

But the province washes its hands of the problem.

The Niagara Boundaries decision finally announced by Minister of Housing John Rhodes, on the same day as the *Guidelines*, was either the first clear violation of those *Guidelines* or the first illustration of how useless they are. The general posture of the *Guidelines* is that agricultural land should be preserved if low class land is available for development. Lower class soils are available in Niagara, yet the Province saw fit to exclude from the boundaries only some 1800 acres of fruitland and 1200 acres of grape land. Thousands of acres of general agricultural land (Classes 1 and 2) still remain slated for urban development. To be sure, regions will find this example a convenient excuse for using up good agricultural land while claiming to preserve the best. Not good enough.

### A Provincial Plan

The Niagara boundaries controversy throws into epic relief the proposition that municipalities can do all the job. Niagara Region hasn't the resources, even if it had the will, to shift development to poorer soils. Nor has any other region. What the *Guidelines* will accomplish is simply to tie every region up in an endless bureaucratic debate. House-building will be stalled; time will be lost; land will be paved.

I submit that the present Government understands this. When they chose to create a Parkway Belt System, it was crisis management. Ministers of the Crown admitted publicly that time was too short to allow municipalities to do the job. The same was true in the case of the Niagara Escarpment. Why didn't the Provincial Government simply tell municipalities to preserve the Escarpment? Because the government knew full well that the recreational resource would be eroded beyond recognition. The admittedly feeble Escarpment Commission was a tacit recognition of the need for planning at a larger scale. The Commission has, I think, failed, but that doesn't detract from the main point, that is, its necessary creation.

Municipal planning, official plans, zoning by-laws developed out of the need of the community to mediate the essential contradiction between the notion of land as a private commodity and land as a public resource. The unwieldy, cumbersome and often costly nature of that planning process is a direct out-growth of the lack of a larger view.

I don't think there is any real question of the need for a parallel Provincial planning process. I don't think that is in any sense a dogmatic response; it just makes sense! Part of that planning process must, in my view, be a provincial body or tribunal charged with the responsibility to preserve agricultural land. Of Southern Ontario's 31 million-odd acres, only 14 million acres are Class I through IV agricultural land; it's possible to save most of it.

It is possible to preserve the Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine for recreation. It's possible to plan which areas can be used, temporarily or permanently, for woodlot. Part of the provincial planning process will also be to develop, or capitalize on already-developed, sources of remote aggregate and suitable substitutes for the natural resource. Part of the process must consist of an industrial strategy — locationally and structurally specific — but this is another whole debate. Farm income must be addressed as part of the provincial planning process as well — that will touch on marketing structures and, in my view, a more adequate stabilization plan.

In brief, when we speak of the need for a Provincial Plan, people seem to conjure up some intricate land-use map on a Provincial scale which would run roughshod over local governments' and their citizens' wishes. This is unfortunate. Let me conclude with an analogy from my own experience. The powers that be in any political party determine election *strategy*; local candidates are forced to make the day-to-day *tactical* decisions. What is absent in this province is a strategic focus. And, I think, municipalities, agriculture and people suffer as a result.

1. Winston Churchill, quoted in *House and Home*, August 1960.

2. OMAF, *Outlook*.

3. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, *Foodland Guidelines*, February 1977.



## **Response: Peter Hannam, President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

Province-wide comprehensive farm land zoning has many difficulties. The ideals embodied in it and the theories behind it are admirable in many respects, but the implementation and practicability in Ontario present many roadblocks.

First, let me say that I believe in wise planning for our resources — and prime foodland is one of our basic resources. Southern Ontario has high quality land in many parts of it, the climate is superior for a wider variety of crops than almost anywhere else in Canada. This land does present a valuable resource for future generations as well as for our own.

But saving this resource and utilizing it efficiently for food production are much more complex issues than merely saying "freeze it".<sup>1</sup> There are several other issues that also have to be addressed.

(1) The first and foremost is markets for food produced in Ontario. From the viewpoint of farmland physically, we are not in an imminent crisis so far as can be foreseen.

In fact, one of producers' biggest problems is our potential to over-produce for available markets. We do not have surplus production on a gross basis in Ontario now, but prices for Ontario corn, soybeans, wheat, beef, pork, fruits and vegetables, etc. are directly responsive to world prices. Nevertheless, our potential to over-produce exists and threatens the viability of many food producers in Ontario.

One of the most serious problems is that we are losing our domestic food market to foreign products (either subsidized products, or products from countries with superior climate or lower labour rates) and we are not aggressively seeking export markets for food.

The Niagara fruitlands are a case in point. In 20 years, our industry has changed from supplying 80% of the domestic market to under 18%. The prime reason is inequitable tariffs. The average Canadian tariff protection is only 1.72 cents per pound, while tariff barriers in the U.S. are 20% ad valorem, and in Europe, over 16% ad valorem. As a result, we are wasting resources — land, processors (down to only one canner), and the resulting impact on Canadian jobs, G.N.P., and balance of payments.

Since the peach market has been largely lost, producers are desperately trying to produce other crops. So as a result, in 1976, grapes were in surplus. Over 11,000 tons purchased for surplus disposal and over 2000 tons still rotting on the vines because there were no buyers.

This very serious problem has to be overcome before a land freeze can be contemplated or supported. The N.D.P. have steadfastly avoided any policies to stimulate these markets. I am somewhat heartened by the fact that improved marketing was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne two days ago. I hope it materializes.

In short, Canadians and their governments, do not appear willing to take the necessary measures to solve this problem.

Every time a consumer buys Australian peaches, she casts a very decisive vote in favour of preserving fruitlands in Australia.

(2) A second essential consideration before comprehensive farm land zoning can be implemented is adequate farm income stabilization legislation.

There are many factors affecting farm incomes that are beyond the power of farmers — such as world market conditions and political manipulation of supplies or prices. In order to provide some security for producers to continue heavy capital investment in food production and long-term planning, enabling legislation is needed on a voluntary, flexible plan. The Province's present farm income stabilization bill is inadequate and will not likely be used very widely by farmers because it protects such a small proportion of his risks (5%).

(3) Another essential ingredient in effectively planning farm land is a system of positive incentives for growth to occur on soils of lower food producing capability. These incentives are largely missing from the present government's farm land planning guidelines, and also are not well defined in the N.D.P. land freeze proposals.

But, unless there is encouragement to grow elsewhere, then the growth pressures that have existed in the last 20 years will continue in exactly the same areas into the future. It is my contention that energy facilities (pipelines, hydro generating stations, transmission lines) and transportation facilities (highways, railways, airports) can be used as positive planning tools to assist in the general goal of encouraging development away from farmland. This



would also reduce the conflicts between these services and food production.

(4) The fourth question that must be dealt with is the severe economic losses which will be suffered by some farmers if such a land freeze were instituted.

The case for such consideration is well justified, even though it's unpopular in political circles.

If a provincial government confiscates rights of property owners, then it has a responsibility to compensate for that confiscation. Private individuals should not be forced to pay inordinately for the costs of policies which benefit the common good.

The common complaint we hear is that it would be too expensive. But, if eight million Ontario residents cannot share the cost, it is unreasonable to expect a few farmers to bear the entire burden.

A valid comparison can be made between provincial land zoning (which amounts to confiscation of certain ownership rights) and expropriation of partial or complete ownership rights from individuals. In the latter, legislation does require the expropriating authority to pay full costs of compensation.

Many techniques could be used, including:

- (1) Government purchase of development rights
- (2) Transferable development rights
- (3) Negative capital gains tax.

It is interesting to note that most efforts to preserve land for food production on a permanent basis are failing unless some compensation formula is devised. As a result, in New Jersey, Maryland, and New York, compensation policies are now in place, starting on a small scale.

## Conclusion

I am in favour of planning for food production in Ontario. It must be done with food production in mind—it must be practical—and it must not be done at farmers' expense.

Ontario producers and consumers are not ready for the comprehensive provincial land use plan proposed by the N.D.P. because no one seems prepared to solve the other issues which are so directly related.

Foodland is important and we must continue our efforts to plan our resources wisely. But a province-wide scheme imposed from the top will not work except in a crisis. We have an urgent problem in the sense of disarray in agriculture in the urban shadow but not a crisis as to the quantity and quality of food producing land.

Planning our resources means much more than just saving land.

A concern, perhaps even more major than the number of acres we preserve, is to encourage and develop a viable farming industry on the land that is saved. It's ridiculous, for example, to see a zoning by-law in one of the "saved" areas of the Niagara Peninsula which forbids all new buildings except houses. How can you farm when you are not allowed to build chicken houses, or even tractor sheds on your "saved" land. It also means reducing the conflicts facing farmers from non-farm activities. If an area is zoned for agriculture, then food production should be recognized as the paramount industry, and given the priority over other uses it requires.

OFA has been saying for three years that it will do little good to save the farms if you cannot save the farmers.

1. (Eds. note): While Pat Johnston did not specify a land use freeze, because her paper did not focus on implementation, the idea of an immediate and temporary holding action on land use changes is part of NDP policy on farmland.

## **Chairperson's Summary:**

### **Ken Cameron, Executive Sec., Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto**

This workshop was intended to examine the NDP's proposal for a provincial land-use plan governing the use of farmland and a tribunal to rule on applications for conversion of farmland to other uses. The paper on this subject was presented by Pat Johnston, who acknowledged the need for such a policy to be complemented by measures to ensure that farmers have a decent income.

In responding to Ms. Johnston's presentation, Peter Hannam of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said four other things were needed before he would favour the NDP's plan:

- more extensive markets for food produced in Ontario;
- a more effective program of farm income stabilization;
- incentives for development of non-farm uses on poorer soils, including uses for which provincial agencies are responsible (e.g. Hydro lines, highways); and
- compensation for farmers whose land is downzoned for use as permanent foodlands.

In the discussion, the following further points were brought out:

- the competence of the Province to administer a land-use plan sensitively was questioned, and it was suggested that municipalities would have better knowledge of the capability of their lands and should have this responsibility, if we could be certain they would act;
- we might focus on short-term versus long-term issues, decide which of the regions or types of foodlands are most in jeopardy now, and take steps to protect them while working out longer term strategies;
- it is quite possible that our goals of decentralization of development and preservation of farmland are contradictory, as the Barrie case shows;<sup>1</sup>
- while the use of land is a prime concern, we must realize that the issue is broader and includes the impact of change on the economics of agriculture, rural community life, and a whole host of other factors whose interplay we are only beginning to understand.

### **To what extent would the provincial role outlined alleviate or solve the land loss problem?**

It depends. While the land-use controls would prevent land from being turned over to other uses, they would not guarantee that the land would be used for agriculture. In a market economy, the only way to do that is to ensure that people will buy the product at a price that will make it worth having the land in production. So the effective use of this technique would rely heavily on other necessary steps.

### **What are the problems and political prospects of this approach?**

The four points raised by Peter Hannam certainly present some problems in that they represent conditions that would have to be met before there was much support for this approach from farmers. To these must be added the question of whether a provincial government could implement such a plan competently and sensitively. There is also the fact that the approach shows little appreciation of the changing social and economic situations of rural people. The foodlands problem is only the most visible manifestation of these changes.

1. *Eds. note:* Barrie has applied to annex some 20,000 acres from its three neighbouring townships; this acreage contains prime agricultural farmland.



## **B. Mandatory Designation by Local Authorities**

**Presentation: George R. McCague, M.P.P., Dufferin-Simcoe.**

### **The Mandatory Designation of Foodland**

The purpose of this paper is to explain the concept of a mandatory designation for Foodland as outlined in the Foodlands Protection Act (Bill 162), a private member's bill recently introduced to the Ontario Legislature, and to point out the effects such legislation would have on the problem of disappearing foodland in the Province of Ontario.

The Ontario Government has been moving steadily in the direction of a more comprehensive land-use strategy related to agriculture, with steps that include the policy statement "A Strategy for Ontario Farmland" and the revised agricultural Code of Practice brought out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) in 1976. In the same year, OMAF's Foodland Development Branch set to work on the development of guidelines to assist municipalities in planning for ongoing agriculture. These guidelines were recently brought out and will be undergoing a six-month review during which the public and interested groups will have the opportunity to comment.

On October 29, 1976, a submission was presented to Cabinet by the Ontario Institute of Agrologists calling for concrete action by government to retain the food-producing lands of the province for future generations. This submission recommended that a mandatory designation for Foodland be implemented and that lands so classified be released to other uses only when it is proven that the need for such land cannot be met from the supply of lower quality land, and that society would benefit from the change in use.

The Agrologists' submission came to me just as the returns for my farmland preservation questionnaire were arriving in my office. Constituents in Dufferin-Simcoe were speaking out quite strongly for government action to halt the loss of farmland to development and to help the farmer compete with developers for good farmland.

#### **The Proposal**

On November 16, 1976, I introduced the concept of a mandatory designation to the Ontario Legislature in the form of a private member's bill calling for the designation of all Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 agricultural land and specialty cropland as "Foodland".

The Foodlands Protection Act (Bill 162) would require all municipalities in the province to survey and classify all agricultural land within their planning area using the Canada Land Inventory (ARDA) maps as a guide. Each planning board would proceed to formulate a planning policy for Foodland within the municipality and recommend the plan to council for adoption within two years of passage of the bill.

In the bill, provision is made for the development of guidelines through the co-operation of the municipalities with the appropriate provincial ministries. This process of developing planning criteria designed to preserve and foster economically viable farming areas would augment government moves to establish a sound planning strategy for the province as a whole.

Allowance is also made for development which can be justified in the light of such guidelines, that is, development which would be more beneficial to the community than the agricultural use for which the land was originally intended.

#### **What Would a Mandatory Designation Accomplish?**

At present, most agricultural land is zoned under a general 'agricultural' designation, a zoning category regarded by some developers and some planning boards as a holding designation.

In the process of rezoning land to give it development status there is little if any pressure on a planning board to consider the value of the land for its original use as farm land. The 'agricultural' zoning bylaw is sufficiently vague in wording and intent that usually a persuasive case put forward by the developer showing the advantages to the municipality in terms of increased assessment and employment opportunities is enough to convince the planning board that the proposal is a good idea.



In this fashion, many development proposals reach the circulation stage through the various provincial ministries without proper consideration at the municipal level of the agricultural potential of the land or the effect of development on other farms in the area.

The Foodland Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has the opportunity to comment on the implications of development, considering the effect on surrounding farms and the class of land, items often missing in the municipal review.

The mandatory designation, as outlined in Bill 162 would effectively place development on the defensive at the municipal level beginning at the first stage of the approval process wherever prime agricultural land is involved. Development would have to justify itself and be prepared to defend its reasons for removing agricultural land from production, in contrast to the present process where the case for agriculture is seldom presented until the project is in the final approval stage.

The mere fact that a developer knew that land he was contemplating for development was designated Foodland and that the municipality was serious about that designation, would automatically put him on the defensive and encourage him to consider alternative sites on lesser quality lands.

### **Response in Dufferin-Simcoe**

The reaction to the concept of a mandatory designation has been very interesting in my riding of Dufferin-Simcoe.

Before Bill 162 was introduced, I conducted a survey of the riding to obtain constituents' opinions on strategies that should be used to combat the disappearance of farmland. The results indicated that not only do a majority of respondents favour a stronger provincial-municipal role in agricultural land-use planning, a majority is also in favour of a 'freeze' or comprehensive land-use controls. (Questionnaire results attached).

Many of the riding newspapers reported on the introduction of the Bill and several gave it favourable editorial comment. The Bill was also the subject of my January Newsletter which was distributed door-to-door throughout the riding. Since November I have attended many meetings to explain the principle of a mandatory designation.

At every turn the response has been positive. People are worried about the future of our best cropland and generally agree that foodland designation would help to slow the trend.

### **Some Considerations**

Some helpful comments about certain aspects of the proposal have been made and should be mentioned here.

It has been suggested that the use of the word "foodland" may result in two different interpretations between rural and urban groups. A 'foodland' designation might have the effect of overstating the role of agriculture as a food-producing industry in the eyes of the urban consumer and add a further distortion to an already highly emotional subject. Perhaps then, the title "farmland" or "agriculture" should be considered in any further proposed legislation.

The accuracy of the Canada Land Inventory maps as a guide to municipalities has also been called into question. It may be that additional information combined with local knowledge of farming areas would be required to augment the CLI classifications as each municipality approaches the task of preparing its agricultural plan.

In my opinion, land already zoned for development should not be "down-zoned". Any action that had the effect of removing development rights would be discriminating and pose real financial hardships to affected landowners.

The Urban Development Institute's report on disappearing farmland comes to the conclusion that 560,640 acres went into urban housing and employment between 1951 and 1971 and predicts that this trend will continue at the same rate until the end of the century. If this prediction is accurate, about 670,000 acres of farmland will be developed for non-agricultural purposes by the turn of the century.

When it is considered that The Institute of Agrologists estimates that the province has an inventory of only 10 million acres of improved farmland, this trend takes on added significance. While there may not be a problem in this generation in maintaining our food



supply, we cannot allow ourselves to lapse into the comfortable assumption that supplies are assured indefinitely.

### Complement to the Guidelines

The release of the Green Paper on *Foodland Guidelines* by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in February has not eliminated the need for a mandatory designation. The *Guidelines* will play a critical role in the process of screening development applications in agricultural areas but they will not provide hard and fast rules of procedure. The *Guidelines* will serve as a 'checklist' in the approval process and will still require the force of a legislated designation behind them to give them sufficient weight.

The experience with the first Agricultural Code of Practice was an example of how a policy with only 'guideline' status lacked the necessary weight to be effective. Some municipalities adopted the Code but many others chose to ignore it, a neglect which played no small part in the emerging conflicts between rural and urban interests in agricultural areas.

I would like to see a mandatory designation adopted and I am prepared to introduce the Foodlands Protection Act to the Legislature during the upcoming session. However, under the new rules of procedure for private member's bills a limited number are chosen by ballot to be discussed in the House. I have drawn the 37th position on the list and it is unlikely that more than 30 of the bills will be discussed during the session. In light of these new rules of procedure, the re-introduction of the bill may not be a useful exercise.

A mandatory designation by itself would certainly not guarantee that farmland would be used for food production; but it is a necessary step and, when combined with the Guidelines and continued government encouragement of the industry, will form a responsible agricultural land-use policy for the Province.

### Results of Foodland Questionnaire

In September, I sent a questionnaire to a selected mailing list of 1,000 constituents who I thought might have a special interest in the subject of the preservation of farmland. The list contained names of farmers, part-time farmers, urban and rural residents and we were careful to see that different political persuasions were represented. 438 questionnaires were returned out of 1,000 sent out. Responses were divided as follows: 155 farmers, 59 part-time farmers, 115 urban residents, and 109 rural residents. The results are worthy of note.

#### Summary

1. At present, a significant acreage of land suited to agriculture in Ontario is lying idle. Do you think that all agricultural land should be in production?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	70	84	2
Part-time Farmer	37	21	1
Urban	81	32	2
Rural Resident	63	42	3
TOTAL	251	179	8

2. Some people have proposed that a "freeze" be placed on development of all Class 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land. Do you support this proposal?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	70	81	4
Part-time Farmer	28	29	2
Urban	69	42	4
Rural Resident	57	46	6
TOTAL	224	198	16

3. If a development "freeze" were to be placed on agricultural land, do you think that landowners should receive some form of compensation?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	107	38	8
Part-time Farmer	47	12	0
Urban	70	42	3
Rural Resident	54	48	7
TOTAL	278	142	18

4. Do you support increased municipal control over agricultural land-use planning and growth management, with overall provincial guidelines?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	81	64	10
Part-time Farmer	33	24	2
Urban	78	31	6
Rural Resident	74	32	3
TOTAL	266	151	21

5. Do you support a system of comprehensive land-use controls based on local official plans and zoning by-laws for all Class 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	95	48	12
Part-time Farmer	38	19	2
Urban	83	21	11
Rural Resident	81	20	8
TOTAL	297	108	33

6. Many municipalities are adopting a strict severance policy, one which allows a farmer only to sever a lot for his retirement or one for his son or daughter working on the farm. Do you support this trend?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	94	61	1
Part-time Farmer	32	25	2
Urban	72	41	2
Rural Resident	72	36	0
TOTAL	270	163	5

7. Do you think that farm land should be subject to a different form of taxation in order to encourage its continued use as farm land?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	99	52	4
Part-time Farmer	45	13	1
Urban	88	23	4
Rural Resident	79	29	1
TOTAL	311	117	10

8. The Ontario government has appointed a commission to look into various forms of property taxation. One proposal the government has made to the commission is that all farm land, farm buildings and farm houses be assessed at their market value. Farm houses would be taxed at 50% of market value, as all other residences. The province would pay 100% of the remaining taxes on farm land and buildings. This proposal also includes a provision to recapture up to 10 years of taxes from an owner who develops the land for non-agricultural purposes.



a) Do you agree that the farm residence should be taxed as all other residences in the province?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	82	69	4
Part-time Farmer	34	24	1
Urban	94	18	3
Rural Resident	82	27	0
TOTAL	292	138	8

b) Do you agree that the province should pay the taxes on farm land and farm buildings?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	37	108	10
Part-time Farmer	23	32	4
Urban	36	73	6
Rural Resident	31	76	2
TOTAL	127	289	22

c) Do you agree that there should be a recapture of taxes provision in the proposal?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	79	61	15
Part-time Farmer	42	12	5
Urban	70	32	13
Rural Resident	62	35	12
TOTAL	253	140	45

9. The Ontario Government has proposed a farm income stabilization program to protect farmers during periods of low market prices. The program would set support levels equal to 90% of the market prices for various commodities, averaged over the previous five years and adjusted for increases in production costs. The scheme would not affect those commodities already covered by federal plans or controlled by a producer marketing board which has price and quota setting authority. Do you support this proposal?

	YES	NO	UNDECIDED
Farmer	77	67	11
Part-time Farmer	33	20	6
Urban	62	44	9
Rural Resident	62	42	5
TOTAL	234	173	21

The concept of a mandatory designation for foodlands as outlined in Mr. McCague's Private Member's bill "The Foodlands Protection Act" (Bill 162), I believe is a good first step in the right direction, but I would go further. Mandatory designation is the type of legislation that groups such as the Ontario Institute of Agrologists have been asking for. Present municipal zoning is very flexible. It is often merely a review process whereby individual applications for land use changes are considered as they arise and are either approved or rejected. The zoning can be changed as growth pressures increase and so land values are not affected as much as stricter provincial controls. In this way, the value of zoning as a planning tool is usually overlooked.

A move to designate all class 1, 2 and 3 lands and special crop lands as foodland could reverse the current assumption that agricultural designation is merely a holding category for development land and could thus slow the loss of prime foodland. Moreover it could also be used to establish and effectively maintain planned urban edges and prevent uncontrolled urban sprawl and the breaking of farming units in a growing urban and industrial economy.

In his strategy for Ontario farmland tabled on April 8, 1976 the Minister of Agriculture rejected provincial control to protect farmland and there was nothing new in the government's strategy. The protection of farmland will be left to the municipalities and their local plans as has been the case in the past. Municipalities, however, cannot be counted on to preserve agricultural land through zoning if an agricultural zoning is merely a holding zone for future development. Therefore, zoning as a method of implementing provincial food policy at the local level will not be sufficient and other methods of preserving agricultural land will have to be devised. Examples of local control of farming in many municipalities such as Huron County do not apply to growth municipalities.

It has been pointed out that a legislated designation of agricultural land would fit in well with the *Green Paper on Foodland Guidelines* which has recently been released by the Minister of Agriculture and Food for use in the planning procedures of municipalities. I would agree that the designation would give a base for the *Guidelines*. And as the Ontario Institute of Agrologists have pointed out, "It would also provide a means whereby the preferred approach would have to be followed."<sup>1</sup>

However, the success of government measures such as the *Foodland Guidelines* will depend on their implementation. Are they to become government policy or merely weak suggestions? It is interesting to note that they have been presented in the form of a discussion paper and so are not policy. It is also noted that the Government has not indicated the degree to which these guidelines *must* be followed by the municipalities in their planning and the degree to which they are merely suggestions. This would seem to me to be a crucial aspect of any guideline principle.

I would agree with observations which have been made that these guidelines are merely an elaboration of the Government's agriculture strategy and focus on local land use policies to assure "that as much as possible of the land area with the capability for agriculture is kept available for farming when needed".<sup>2</sup> The province is merely saying that this is the way they would want the municipalities to go. Moreover, in the long run these measures will never be successful without government incentives to draw development on to the lower quality land. However, no such incentives have been announced. Neither is any mention made for public utilities such as Ontario Hydro (or government ministries such as the Ministry of Transportation and Communication) to conform to the Guidelines.

While the proposed bill would require all municipalities in the province to survey and classify all agricultural land within their planning areas using the Canada Land Inventory (ARDA) maps as a guide, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that this classification does not supply an accurate map of the significant agricultural lands to be preserved. Rapid improvement in the C.L.I. is a vital element for improved agricultural planning.

The total acreages for the soil capability for Class 1, 2 and 3 agricultural lands for most of the Canada Land Inventory area in Ontario is about 16,400,000 acres, and nearly 10 million acres of improved farmland. There is, however, a definite constraint on the climatically favourable lands. If we add an important climatic indicator such as heat units at



a selected level, then we get a clear indication of how limited is the best farmland in Southern Ontario. In fact, it has been estimated that perhaps 7,000,000 acres is a safe figure to use for the significant farmland. "meaning land which is outside the urban arc, not affected by the shield and in a relatively favoured climatic situation."<sup>3</sup> It is these agricultural lands, based both on soil classification and climatic constraint, which are the significant farmlands in Ontario and which must be designated as foodland and preserved for that purpose.

In conclusion, while I would support a mandatory designation of the significant agricultural lands as foodland to be kept in food production, this land use strategy on its own without meaningful guidelines from the Province cannot ensure that prime agricultural land is kept for farmland.

This would leave the major implementation to the municipalities, and assumes that the problem of maintaining good agricultural land is universal throughout the province. On the contrary, some municipalities have little concern with the preservation of viable agricultural land.

What is needed is a provincial land inventory of prime agricultural land based on the significant Class 1, 2 and 3 soils and special croplands. An important climatic indicator such as heat units must be added at a selected level. The Province, in co-operation with the local municipalities would identify and establish the significant agricultural resource areas. The local municipalities would work within Ministry of Agriculture and Food guidelines to determine which areas should be eliminated or included for designation taking into account criteria such as physical conditions of the land, proximity to existing development areas, price of land, etc. Once these areas are established and the provincial agricultural strategy is put into effect, the official plan of the municipalities would be amended by the local councils to reflect this policy, designating significant farmland as agriculture priority areas. These lands would be released to other uses only when it is proven that the need for such land cannot be met from the supply of lower quality land and that society will benefit from the change in use. Different planning strategies will be required for different areas of the province. Planning in the predominantly rural agricultural areas of the province would encourage and support agriculture rather than limit, restrict and control it as has been the case in the past. In the urban fringe areas, buffer zones must be established which encourage open space, and are compatible with the urban nature of the areas, such as pick-your-own fruit farms.

The detailed follow-through on land-use policy must be put in the hands of the local government because it is the government most accessible to the people. Incentives must be provided by the Province to attract industries on to the less productive lands in eastern and northern Ontario. Some form of compensation for the loss of development rights, that is down-zoning, would be a justified, long-term debt. Methods of compensation which have been suggested for use and which may have relevance for use here in Ontario could be based on the application of a negative capital gains tax on farmland as has been proposed by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture or the concept of sale of development rights, which has been developed and is currently being tried in selected areas in The State of New Jersey.

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1. Ontario Institute of Agrologists, *Memorandum to the Ontario Government* Oct. 29, 1976.

2. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, *Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture, Foodland Guidelines*, 1977.

3. See Pearson, Norman, *Food Land & Energy Planning* Vol. Aug. 1976.



## **Chairperson's Summary: Workshop B: Mary Collins, Pres., Mary Collins Consultants Ltd.**

George McCague presented a paper in which he advocated the mandatory designation of all Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 agricultural land and specialty cropland as "Foodland", as proposed in the private member's bill ("The Foodlands Protection Act") he introduced in the Ontario Legislature in the fall of 1976. In his proposal, municipalities would be required to survey and classify all their agricultural land, formulate a planning policy for foodland and adopt same within a two-year period. The provincial government would be responsible for the development of guidelines within which the municipalities would carry out this policy. This policy would put the development of foodland for purposes other than agricultural on the defensive, yet would retain local control over the designations by local councils who understood the problems and could implement the program with the least political repercussions.

Jack Riddell's response indicated agreement with the general principles outlined in McCague's paper. However in his opinion, foodland designations would not be implemented satisfactorily at the local level and should be done by the provincial government. He indicated that municipalities could not be counted on to protect foodland as they have a variety of other interests which are not necessarily compatible with the protection of these lands for agricultural purposes. In order for designations to be effective, Riddell proposed that there also needs to be a proper Provincial Land Inventory, which takes into account climatic indicators as well as soil conditions, a Provincial Land Use Plan, incentives to industry to relocate on lands of lower quality, and compensation to farmers for downzoning which might occur. This could be done in the form of a negative capital gains tax, sale of development and other rights, special incentives to farmers, all of which could be justified by society as a long term debt to farmers.

Both speakers indicated that mandatory designation of foodland was not the only step, although it was a vital one for protecting agricultural lands and promoting a viable agricultural industry. It must be accompanied by other policies to resolve the many interrelated issues involved. Both indicated there must be some flexibility in implementing these policies and some avenue of appeal for those who disagreed with specific designations.

During the discussion, the group indicated its concern that provincial guidelines had not been adequate to date and had not provided a definite direction for municipalities. There often appeared to be double standards as well, whereby provincial agencies and crown corporations have not abided by guidelines and have undertaken programs, some of which have involved utilization of prime agricultural lands for purposes other than food production.

There was a good deal of concern about the impact of mandatory designations on farmers and a fear that this would result in a land freeze which would make the farmers' position more difficult and make farming a less attractive and profitable career.

However, the majority opinion within the group favored the implementation of mandatory designations of foodlands. There was almost an equal split between those who favored the responsibility for designations being with the provincial government and those who felt that it should be a municipal responsibility.

The major concerns about municipalities' effectiveness in developing and implementing designations were that municipalities are not strong enough to withstand the pressures from the developers and farmers who would resist such policies and that municipal councils have not shown their capability of doing this in the past. Those who favored municipal control feared that the province would be out of touch with local situations and would not provide necessary flexibility, that provincial control would not be acceptable to the public, that municipalities would never gain the greater autonomy and responsibility that the province appeared to want to extend if they were not given appropriate opportunities to develop new responsibilities, and that with support and education, municipalities could develop the skills to develop and carry out such policies effectively.

Several people indicated that there were wide differences between the problems of protecting farmland in those areas on the urban fringe of large metropolitan areas and those more remote from populated areas. A variety of approaches and policies should be considered in order to deal with these differing problems. It was pointed out that the foodland



preservation issue was also in large measure a question of dealing fairly with the farm community. Farmers are the ones most directly affected by policies which would, in some cases, restrict their future options in dealing with their own lands.

## **C. Stronger Provincial Guidelines for Local Land Use Policies**

**Presentation: Jim Blair, Planner, Regional Municipality of Durham**

There are several major issues that emerge from a consideration of municipal planning and the agricultural community. The main thrust of this paper is to examine, within the context of the recently adopted Region of Durham Official Plan, the ability of municipalities to plan for the agricultural community and the need for stronger provincial guidelines for local land use policies.

The Regional Municipality of Durham has recently completed and adopted its first Official Plan. Early in the plan preparation process, the importance of establishing strong regional policies for the protection of agricultural lands was established. This was important since the extent to which development patterns will influence the future of farming depends on the council adopting policies contained within the Official Plan. There are conscious alternatives which municipal councils can adopt to reduce both the direct disappearance of farmland and the uncertainty related to farming.

The official plan process in Durham involved five major stages:

*Stage 1* consisted of the documentation of information and issues related to agriculture.

*Stage 2* consisted of the development of a set of regional goals through which it was determined that the preservation of agricultural lands was the second most important regional goal.

*Stage 3* consisted of the presentation of a number of policy options related to agriculture.

*Stage 4* presented the outcome of the evaluation of these options and translated the preferred option into a number of agricultural policies for discussion.

*Stage 5* consisted of the completion of the draft official plan and its adoption by the Planning and Development Committee, Planning Board, and Regional Council.

Briefly, the main features of the draft regional plan related to agriculture include:

- 1) Hard edges to the urban areas which require an Official Plan amendment to change;
- 2) A major open space buffer area between the residential and permanent agricultural areas;
- 3) Restrictive consent policies;
- 4) The designation of sufficient areas for population and employment growth;
- 5) The preparation of district plans for all hamlets, with agriculture considerations playing a dominant role in determining hamlets for growth and hamlets for infilling;
- 6) Distinct policy areas for agriculture: one a permanent agriculture reserve designation, in which almost absolute priority is given to the needs of agriculture, and a General Agricultural Area with flexibility for additional uses.

The result is an Official Plan which contains policies consistent with the approach outlined in the recent provincial Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture. We believe that the plan is workable since it has gone through a public and political process, has been endorsed by local councils and by Regional Council. We expect that it will be approved with minor modification by the Province. It is encouraging to know that Durham has been able to develop strong agricultural policies in an area which is in such close proximity to Metropolitan Toronto, an area subject to development pressure in which some of the options for a strong agricultural policy would have appeared to have been lost.

Notwithstanding this generally favourable experience with Durham Region, there would appear to be some important considerations related to the ability of municipalities to protect the farm community. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food in "A Strategy for Ontario Farmland" and subsequent Green Paper, stressed that the implementation of the priority for agricultural land would occur through local control by municipalities. There are many circumstances which would appear to make this approach to the achievement of provincial objectives for agriculture difficult.

### **1. Financial Tradeoffs**

The financial prosperity of many municipalities in Southern Ontario is predicated on continued growth and development irrespective of the quality of lands which are consumed for urban uses. Since much of Southern Ontario consists of prime agricultural land,



decisions by individual municipalities for development will continue to consume this resource.

At present, agricultural land does not produce the same tax revenue for a municipality as do other more intensive land uses such as residential, industrial or commercial.

Municipalities are still competing for industry and employment opportunities. When a major employer wants to locate in a rural area (for example, near the waterfront, which is often a prime location for farming), municipal councils have tended to sanction the industrial development by making the appropriate zoning change and official plan amendment because of the importance of such economic activity to the respective municipality. The municipality's interest is not always best served by preserving agricultural land. There is often no overriding benefit, at least in the short term for preserving agricultural lands from a municipality's point of view.

## **2. Short-term Political Decisions**

Councils elected on a short-term basis find it difficult to make decisions based upon long-term considerations which tend to affect their constituents on a day-to-day basis. This situation is compounded by the existing land ethic which emphasizes individuals' rights to use land as they wish.

I believe that planning for the future of agriculture depends less on the precise identification of areas that should remain in agriculture than in convincing the various levels of government of the need to preserve agricultural land; that the wise management of agricultural resources contributes to the overall municipal, regional, and provincial economy. The "political will" of a council determines how far a particular municipality can go in designating and protecting agricultural land. Furthermore, it is the council that makes the day-to-day decisions that cumulatively will determine the future of agricultural areas. For example, if an official plan permits estate-residential by amendment, then how the elected representatives deal with estate-residential applications in terms of conforming to official plan evaluation criteria will influence the long term prospects of agriculture. If a council decides not to follow the official plan criteria, then the approval of estate-residential subdivisions on an ad hoc basis will quickly undermine the agricultural community. A similar situation occurs if a council is unwilling to appeal land division committee decisions to the Ontario Municipal Board when they conflict with Official Plan policies.

## **3. Land Assemblies**

Land assemblies within urban fringe areas have removed large areas from agricultural production in anticipation of future urbanization. The substantial financial commitment by large companies ensures that a continuing effort will be made to have these lands developed. A key question is: how to get this land back into agriculture? What is to prevent landowners from just allowing weeds to grow on their lands hoping for a future government to reverse its decision?

## **4. Pre-Designation of Urban Areas in Provincial Plans**

I believe that one of the main problems with provincial planning has been the lack of implementation combined with a development commitment too far into the future. For example, the Province's plans for the Toronto region committed second-tier development in the Durham Region at a scale which may never be achieved.

In the preparation of the Official Plan it became evident that the scale of development envisaged by the Province was not desirable within the 25 year time frame of the Regional Plan. The decision to develop, for example in the Brooklin area, could be left as an option for consideration by another council. It has become apparent that once an area has been indicated for development and has been acquired by development corporations, the attempt will be made to get it placed as a first priority in terms of future development.

A main problem in the Brooklin area is the existing or potential health problem and inconveniences related to water supply and sewage disposal. In order to alleviate this existing problem additional development must be allowed to pay for the extension of piped services several miles over rural land. Therefore, one of the areas in which the



Province could truly give some assistance is to finance the servicing of these problem areas. Then the servicing does not become the reason to urbanize an area and so preclude agriculture.

### **5. Capital Budgets and Servicing Commitments**

The need to identify future areas for development 30 to 50 years in advance of actual development so that hard services can be designed continues to create problems from an agricultural viewpoint as does the fact that the regional capital budget is given high priority in the initial years of regional government (because municipal spending on capital services has been held back for several years pending the formation of the regional corporation). Thus capital works budget decisions will tend to commit certain areas to urban development in many cases prior to completion of an official plan. This problem has been accentuated by the availability of funding through the Ontario Housing Action Program, a source of funding which is usually tied to specific capital works.

### **6. Municipal Political Structure**

There is a tendency in some areas of two-tier government for the councils of the lower-tier government (area municipalities) to deal with official plan amendments in rural areas. Lower-tier councils may be less cognizant of a regional policy for agriculture or the long-term implications of urban development in rural areas.

Regional government is a federation of municipalities. Policies in a regional official plan tend to reflect a consensus among the member municipalities and may, therefore, represent the lowest common denominator. Since agriculture policies involve the regulation of land uses, especially the individual's use of land, strong and restrictive region-wide policies are unlikely to evolve.

### **Agenda for Provincial Assistance to Municipal Planning for Agriculture**

*Notwithstanding these considerations, provincial objectives for agriculture can be achieved through the municipal planning system.* What then should be the agenda for provincial assistance to municipal planning programs? In examining the role of the Province in supporting municipal land use planning for agriculture a number of items could be considered in addition to those in the Green Paper. Municipal planning programs require research assistance to make planning for agriculture effective.

Some municipalities have out-of-date soil maps which are too general for agriculture planning purposes. Further detailed delineation of areas of varying productivity is needed. There is also a lack of adequate time series data to reveal what is actually happening within a particular municipality with respect to agriculture.

The provincial government should assist in developing additional techniques of preserving agricultural resources and making these available to a regional or local municipality. For example, the acquisition of some rights in land in open space areas would assist greatly in terms of implementing the buffer concept between residential and permanent agriculture. A program should be available that would allow farmers to convey the development rights to their properties to the municipality.

Existing vacant lots of record have to be treated as a basic development right in terms of residential units by municipalities, and zoning by-laws cannot be made retroactive. Perhaps there is a need for some type of provincial action to consolidate vacant 10 acre lots.

In areas where agriculture is given a dominant priority in the municipal planning system, provincial assistance is required to encourage and improve the availability of land resources to the agricultural industry at costs that farmers can afford.

I think one area where the provincial government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Food can assist municipalities, is in making the argument for agriculture and to clearly document the agricultural trade-offs that are involved in specific development proposals.

It is my experience that the case for agriculture has not always been made by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Until very recently the Ministry had very little capability for evaluating plans of subdivision, official plan amendments and official plans, let alone the location of major provincial projects. It has been extremely difficult until



recently for planners at all levels of government to deal with agricultural issues because of the lack of interest, support, knowledge within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. I believe that this situation has drastically changed over the last few years. Now the Food Land Development Branch is in a position to help establish the case for agriculture and to present it to provincial and municipal decision-makers. Therefore, I feel we have come a long way and that if things tend to progress at this rate, then it is clear that the chances of maintaining agriculture in some areas of the province will be enhanced.

Whenever a final provincial decision is being made on the use of a given piece of land and the land in question is prime farm land, the recommendations of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture should have high priority. This has clearly not been the case in the past. For example, the proposed Highway 407 and the 500 kv. hydro lines location in Durham Region intrude and traverse through some of the principal agricultural communities. What weight is given to agriculture in considering the location of these types of facilities? There still appears to be a problem since provincial plans for these types of corridor facilities continue to show locations on prime agricultural land.

Another problem which has concerned planners in Durham Region is the general lack of provincial civil servant participation before the Ontario Municipal Board. There was a recent case in one of the municipalities in our region where the Ministry of Housing had modified the Official Plan to incorporate certain environmental policies. Recently there was an Ontario Municipal Board hearing to deal with an objection to the modification and the Ministry responsible would not appear before the board to defend their own policy; a municipality was caught without sufficient expertise to defend somebody else's work. Therefore, I think one of the important considerations is that if the Ontario Government is going to operate through the existing municipal planning system to implement provincial policies, it must be prepared to give expert testimony at hearings and also to support municipalities across the province in preparing for such hearings. Municipalities simply cannot afford to have on staff an expert in every aspect of planning. It is an extremely costly proposition to hire an expert witness each time a precedent-setting case arises.

One of the problems that faced Durham Region during the preparation of the Official Plan was the lack of adequate guidelines from line ministries within the provincial government as to what would be required in the Plan. This was particularly evident in the case of agriculture where there was a policy vacuum on the part of the Ministry. There was a tendency to talk in terms of simply preserving all class 1-4 lands according to the Canada Land Inventory. Applied to Durham, this would give priority to agriculture over most of the region, including some large areas that are clearly not a high priority from an agricultural point of view. It would appear that the Green Paper now provides the necessary Official Plan guidelines. However, the government should clearly indicate the degree to which these guidelines must be followed by the municipalities in their planning and the degree to which they are simply suggestion.

The Province and municipalities in working towards a planning solution for agriculture must recognize that the agricultural problem varies substantially from area to area. Thus provincial objectives and the kind of strategy to be used for farmland should vary from one area to another.

With respect to the development of urban areas or uses in areas of poor agricultural land, it is clear that the Province must take the initiative because of the generally higher costs to private industries and the municipalities involved. However, this should not be used simply as a justification for development in any area that consists of poor agricultural land. Often these areas contain significant environmental features, have severe physical limitations for development, are water recharge or storage areas, add diversity to the landscape, or consist of sand and gravel reserves. Municipalities will require assistance making these trade-offs.

The Province in its enthusiasm to accelerate housing starts through its Housing Action Program should ensure that long-term planning considerations are not jeopardized. It is extremely unfortunate in Durham's case that the Ontario Housing Action Program coincided with the preparation of the regional Official Plan. Basically the Ontario Housing Action Program acted through each of the area municipalities assisting them in preparing their own planning studies. This tended to preclude some options with respect to agri-

culture. The O.H.A.P. program was geared to getting houses on the market in the short term, and there is no question that it had a major influence on the long-term Official Plan policy formulation. At times we had the impression that O.H.A.P. carried more weight in decision-making than traditional programs within the Ministry of Housing and other provincial agencies. This experience suggests it is going to be very difficult for the Province to co-ordinate programs between its own ministries and also within particular ministries.

### **Conclusion**

Protection of the agricultural communities involves restriction and prohibition of land use. This is likely to run counter to the interests of the local authority. There is a fundamental conflict between long-term goals to preserve farmland and short-term interests such as the desire to allow development to expand the tax base, or the economic interests of the local farmers. The price of land and the infiltration of non-farm uses into the farm community will likely continue to undermine the efficiency and long-term viability of the agricultural communities in some Ontario municipalities. The Province must play an active role in ensuring that the approach outlined in the Green Paper on agriculture is effective.

The work done in Huron County, Waterloo Region, Northumberland Task Force Area, Durham, and other areas of the province clearly indicates that municipalities have the ability to deal with agricultural land use problems and to preserve agriculture in the long term. However, I believe that in order for municipal policies to remain effective there will have to be an active involvement of the provincial government in municipal land use decision-making.



**Response: Elbert van Donkersgoed, Executive Director,  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario**

**Introduction**

The brochure circulated to publicize this conference tells you that the purpose of today's workshops will be to "examine possible provincial roles in the management of our land resources".

Mr. Jim Blair has suggested that there are a number of things that make it doubtful that municipalities can protect the farm community and implement the goals identified in OMAF's "A Strategy for Ontario Farmland", March 1976. He has identified

- financial tradeoffs
- short term political decisions
- land assemblies
- pre-designation of urban areas in provincial plans
- capital budgets and servicing commitments
- the municipal political structure

as stumbling blocks to achieving provincial objectives.

As a result, Mr. Blair made a case for an increased provincial role in planning in order to support municipal land use planning for agriculture and in order for municipal policies to remain effective. He has suggested a number of areas where provincial involvement should be increased:

- out of date soil maps should be improved;
- data on the historical and predicted development of a municipality should be developed;
- programs to buy development rights from farms are needed;
- consolidation of small lots is required;
- food land costs for farmers should be lowered;
- the quality of urban planning should be improved;
- OMAF should do more documentation of agricultural tradeoffs;
- more expertise should be made available to help municipalities make their case for agriculture;
- the new OMAF guidelines for planning should be mandatory — not just suggestions;
- the Province must encourage development elsewhere;
- some monitoring and control mechanisms over official plan amendments.

**Why Increase Provincial Involvement?**

But why does Mr. Blair suggest more than 10 areas in which provincial involvement should be increased? Why not make all these concerns additional responsibilities of our county or regional municipalities?

Why not make regional municipalities responsible:

- for preparing better soil maps,
- for documenting agricultural tradeoffs,
- for making the new OMAF guidelines mandatory in their municipality,
- for doing all those things that Mr. Blair has suggested for increased provincial involvement?

Why not? Because it is not a municipal or regional responsibility.

**A Question of Responsibility**

Underlying this concern of Mr. Blair's is the basic question of who in this province is responsible for the agricultural industry and its basis — our food land resource.

Who is responsible for protecting our food land for future generations?

Is it the farmer's job? Does our society expect each of us in the farm community to say, "Uh, Uh, you can't have my land for twice what it's worth for agriculture."

Is it our local township's or town's job? Does our society expect a township to say, "We're not going to allow growth in our tax base" while the township just over the fence or the town just down the road approves every development that's worth two-bits in assessment?

Is it our county or regional government's job? Does our society expect each of these municipal governments to formulate major land use strategies for our future uses of land when out of the blue our provincial government buys more than ten thousand acres of land in such places as Townsend and South Cayuga Township?

Is it a provincial responsibility? Does our society believe that this is strictly within provincial jurisdiction? If so, what do we do when an international airport is suddenly dropped on our province?

### Three Responsibilities

The question of responsibility for our food land base comes into focus better if we divide it into three levels.

1. Inventory — who is responsible for determining what is out there in the countryside?
2. Goals — who is responsible for determining what we are going to protect?
3. Development — how do we support or control development to achieve the goals we have set?

### 1 Inventory

Who is responsible for determining what is out there in the countryside? Who should develop an inventory of our food land base so that we can speak with confidence about what areas are crucial to the agricultural industry? You may wish to ask Mr. Blair what kind of inventory was used to develop the Durham Official Plan. Did they look at each individual farm? Did they have up-to-date production information? Did they compare present agriculture with agriculture of 5, 10, 25 years ago to identify trends? Is it easy to keep their inventory up-to-date as agriculture changes?

Our regions and counties have been saddled with the responsibility of developing inventories as a result of the requirement that they prepare official plans. But is it really their responsibility? How does a planner, such as Jim Blair know how important a 100 acre farm of Class 2 land is if he does not know how much of that land exists in our whole province or if it is not related to the total food production industry in Ontario?

There is a provincial responsibility here. If inventories are to be accurate, they must relate to the total provincial situation and even beyond. Should the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food not be taking some responsibility for this? They are not. Let me quote from OMAF's 1976 submission at the Public Information Hearings of the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning — (page 10)

#### *"D. AGRICULTURE INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR MAJOR PROJECTS*

*In order for appropriate agencies to properly assess the effect that a major project will have on agriculture, the Ministry has identified the required information base.*

*It is the responsibility of the proponent to obtain this information and provide an assessment of its agricultural impact to the agencies concerned. The following information would be needed to assess such a project in terms of its effect upon agriculture."*

The document goes on with an itemized list of information required.

What is my concern in this quotation? It is the statement "It is the responsibility of the proponent to obtain this information and provide an assessment. . ." Ontario Hydro must provide an inventory of agriculture and an assessment of its impact to OMAF according to this document.

When I first asked who is responsible for protecting our food land I presented as alternatives:

- individual farmers
- towns or townships
- counties or regions
- the province or the nation.

Now I must add Ontario Hydro and perhaps a whole list of crown corporations and regulatory bodies. Is Ontario Hydro responsible for protecting our food land? OMAF has said that Hydro must provide the information and an assessment of it.

As a matter of fact, Ontario Hydro has been doing exactly what OMAF says it should do. In 1974 Ontario Hydro completed an "Environmental Report" for its proposed 500 KV



transmission line right-of-way from Bradley to Georgetown. This provided an assessment of, among other things, the agricultural impact of the transmission line. The farming community did not appreciate this report, nor its implications. We have shown I think quite conclusively that this assessment was not acceptable. Perhaps this study is not as thorough as the Ministry's guidelines now propose. But, a better study alone will not solve Ontario Hydro's problem. If a better study results in the same transmission line proposals, the farm community will react in the same way. We will not accept — at face value — a study done by the proponent. We want an independent study of the matter and we want significant input into such a study.

The concern about Hydro's Bradley-Georgetown study resulted in members of the farm community sitting down with Ontario Hydro to examine the alternatives of how to come up with a better information base and a better assessment of that information. This work has become known as Ontario Hydro's Working Group on Agricultural Methodology and its efforts will be in print shortly. This means that Ontario Hydro will have the best overall inventory of agriculture in the province.

There's something wrong here. How many more times will we have to develop a methodology for preparing an inventory? How many of the methodologies now used are comparable so that data available in official plans is comparable?

There is a need for a provincial inventory to which more detailed inventories for very specific areas or projects can be related.

Let me now look briefly at the second level of responsibility.

## **II Goals**

Who is responsible for determining what we are going to protect? Who sets the goals in our plans for the future? Will the goals that the Durham Region set for itself in developing its official plan be left intact by provincial policy developments and by local policy interests? Was there any provincial input into the establishment of these goals? Can these goals be maintained in the face of changing provincial goals?

Responsibility for establishing goals must be shared by all segments of our society. At present there is a significant amount of discussion on municipal and regional goals. But where is the discussion on provincial goals? Is it being left to the discussion taking place before the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning and by implication are we going to continue to allow Ontario Hydro to set major provincial development goals?

It is important that we identify our goals as a province. It is not enough for the province to approve of the goals evident in official plans. Such approvals are not a commitment by the province to honour those municipal or regional goals.

## **III Development**

The third level of responsibility relates to how we encourage or control development to achieve the goals we have set.

Our food land resource needs a definite commitment for its future use for agriculture. Such a goal requires support and control mechanisms. Who is responsible for food production? The provincial government and the federal government — right? Should they be providing the support and control mechanisms? It is their responsibility. Where are these supports and controls?

Let me comment on just one: the Agricultural Code of Practice. Perhaps the best example of a provincial effort in the planning area is the Agricultural Code of Practice. But it is basically a control mechanism on agriculture so as to find room in our rural communities for urban types of development. It is not a strong support mechanism that will help agriculture in its development. This is a basic problem of the present planning structures: They are geared to control; not to support.

## **Responsibilities Summarized**

With this as background I now face the question of this particular workshop. "Are stronger guidelines the right provincial role in the management of our land resources?"

No.

In the first place let me make the point that the three levels of responsibility that

I have identified require different approaches when sharing them between the various structures of our society.

With regard to inventory. We need a provincial inventory — not just guidelines to regions on how to make them.

With regard to goals. The province needs to identify broad goals. These may turn out to be not much more than guidelines but they need to identify *provincial* priorities. They need to be enunciated. And they must be more than guidelines to regions on how to determine their goals.

With regard to development. There must be both support and control mechanisms for development. The basic structure of these mechanisms must be established by the Province. The actual administration for much of this can be left at the municipal levels where the present control mechanisms are.

Guidelines, be they weak or strong, are no solution.

I wish to make two additional observations while I have your attention.

### **Community Planning**

The topic of this conference is "Food for the Cities". This workshop is only intended to deal with managing our land resources. You will not protect food supplies by only considering land resources. We have to broaden our concept of planning from one of land use control to one of agricultural community development.

As an example, consider the Niagara Peninsula. It is not just the disappearing land that is destroying agriculture there. The farm community is disappearing. Let me mention some of the ways our farm community has been hurt:

- a. Veterinarians have become small pet oriented rather than large farm animal oriented.
- b. Implement dealers have become involved in small equipment for estate and urban residents and are less eager to repair machinery during the crucial harvest times.
- c. More city-type services are being provided at the expense of agricultural services from our municipal government.
- d. Coverage of farm news has deteriorated in the local media.
- e. Farmers have to pay the higher city costs for both labour on the farm and in the construction of their facilities.
- f. Increased traffic on the region's roads has made it more dangerous for farmers to use them with their slow moving vehicles.
- g. The whole rural social structure including schools, churches, and other organizations is undergoing forced changes detrimental to the role of the agricultural community in the region.

Agriculture needs more than its land protected. It needs its support community as well if there is to be food for the cities in the future.

### **Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture**

Lastly an observation on the *Green Paper on Planning for Agriculture: Food Land Guidelines*. It falls short of what is urgently needed.

1. There is no commitment to prepare a provincial inventory of agricultural lands.
2. No provincial goals for future development are enunciated except to repeat the vague idea that Ontario will maintain an economically viable agricultural industry.
3. Guidelines do not constitute a support or control mechanism to reach any goals that we may have. They would at least need to be mandatory.

In total the Green Paper has not provided us with a policy for the agricultural community and its basis — our food land resource.



**Chairperson's Summary: Workshop C: John Farrow,  
Manager, Urban and Regional Planning, Currie, Coopers and Lybrand**

A number of issues were raised by participants in this workshop.

Extensive discussion occurred concerning the appropriate level of government to establish policies. There was substantial agreement that policies for preserving agricultural land would only be successful if governments at all levels supported the concept and had complementary policies. These policies should be appropriate to the jurisdiction and interest of the various governments, ranging from tariff policies at the federal level to land use policies at the municipal level.

With respect to the provincial level, the *Green Paper Guidelines* were thought to be unsatisfactory. Although they set out appropriate steps for municipalities to take in varying degrees of detail, overall they allowed too much flexibility in interpretation.

Some felt that mandatory guidelines were justified, despite any other problems they might create, because of the urgency of the disappearing agricultural land problem. But if the Province were to make compliance mandatory on municipalities, then the present *Guidelines* would require redrafting so that they set out firmer directions for given situations.

Others felt that a mandatory approach would interfere with local priorities and the meeting of local needs (for instance, the provision of housing).

After considerable discussion around the willingness of local communities to accept more detailed policy direction, the majority in the group appeared to agree that the Province's role should be to firmly define the limits within which municipalities could then work out their own land use policies. Such an approach would allow decisions at the local level which recognized differing local conditions.

The group also agreed that there still was a need for certain basic research in agriculture. The feeling was that this research should be undertaken mainly at the provincial and federal levels. The publication and distribution of such research would be the basis for realistic policy-making at all levels of government.

government states:

The key objectives of the TCR policy remain valid today, and major steps have been taken during the last five years to put it into effect . . . development in the Toronto-Centred Region since 1971 has been generally consistent with policy. (p. 3)

Bearing the original TCR goals in mind, we must question the validity of this claim. Let us look at the extent to which the key objectives have been achieved.

1. and 2. *to structure development along the lake so that a pattern of separate communities is maintained*

\* Regional municipalities were established on the perimeter of Metro Toronto (Durham, York and Peel) in order to prevent sprawl and manage growth. They are required to create official plans with these TCR objectives in mind. To date, two have been completed and neither has been approved.

One might ask whether the new regional governments in terms of their structure and boundaries were correctly drawn to support *Design for Development* policies. For instance, the regional municipalities of Peel and York, based on an urban centre and large rural hinterland, lack a clear sense of their own identity as regions. This in turn has weakened their ability to plan.<sup>10</sup>

\* The most noteworthy step taken by the Province was the announcement of the Parkway Belt System which the government cites as a key step towards implementing the TCR plan. A draft plan for the Parkway Belt West has been prepared and a public review process just completed. However, does the system amount to much more than landscaping? Notwithstanding the political difficulties of creating the Parkway Belt, we must ask: is it a sufficiently large open-space frame to accomplish its four stated purposes (urban separator, service corridor, land reserve for the future and open space and recreation)? As *Tail of the Elephant* noted in 1974, even before the latest series of modifications was proposed, "of these four, only the utility corridor function is carried through the whole length of the Parkway"<sup>11</sup>. In some areas, the supposed land buffer will be less than 1,000 feet wide. Moreover, it was recently decided to put the eastern section of the Belt system on "hold".

\* The concept has resulted in the cancellation of several subdivisions and rural estate developments in zone 2, north of the intensively developed urbanized area. (Century City and Centennial City are two examples.) Thus, in the sense of preventing certain projects, TCR has had positive impact.

3. *to direct new growth in the TCR to the east, reversing the trend towards the west*

\* Growth has continued to concentrate in the area west of Metro. Expectations for eastward growth have not materialized. While the Province has proposed the new town of North Pickering,<sup>12</sup> some argue that this proposal is at variance with the TCR concept (i.e., too close to Scarborough). On the other hand, it was quite logical to attempt to capitalize on the potential opportunity for growth east of Metro offered by the proposed new airport.

\* The goal of restraining development northward in the Yonge Street corridor may be undermined by the York-Durham Sewage Scheme. This scheme which started partly as an anti-pollution project will be able to provide for some 900,000 new people, roughly half in York. The temptation to develop the land as a result of this infrastructure may prove irresistible and may override TCR principles.

Population allocations for York Region as finally established after Provincial-York bargaining are much higher than originally envisaged under TCR. The original allocation of some 250,000 (1971) has been more than doubled to 557,000 (457,000 in urban population).

\* New commuter lines have been built northwest of Metro to Georgetown, and an additional line was planned to Streetsville but has been forestalled by the recently announced withdrawal of promised Federal funds. Some view these GO-transit lines as a major violation of the go-east TCR policy. Others answer that they were a response to existing demand and that TCR was never meant to be a concept imposed on a blank canvas, which would ignore existing needs while it sought to achieve more balanced growth. Also, one might ask why the GO line to the east was terminated at Pickering, rather than Oshawa — a designated major growth pole.



4. to decentralize some growth to two areas north and east of Metro

\* Although the Simcoe and Northumberland Task Forces have completed their work and submitted final reports, the implementation has not yet begun.

5. to preserve the best agricultural land and recreational areas

\* The most important decision with respect to recreational and open space resources has been the designation of the Niagara Escarpment Area. The master plan is due in 1977; meanwhile the interim development controls are intended to limit non-conforming development initiatives. We do not know yet whether it will succeed in controlling development pressures in the area. Current opinion is divided between those who argue that the development control area, which includes some 40 percent of the total planning area, is not large enough and those who feel it is too restrictive.

\* The concept has failed to achieve its recreational objectives with respect to the Georgian Bay - Lake Simcoe and Kawartha Lakes system, the three main lakes of TCR. Officials from the Natural Resources Ministry, for instance, have acknowledged that the water quality of Lake Simcoe is steadily deteriorating.<sup>13</sup> Responsibility for the lake is shared by the fifteen urban municipalities around the lake together with six different ministries. The regional planning goals of coordinated development and pollution control are not being met.

\* The concept has also failed "to minimize the urban use of productive agricultural land". While this goal is vaguely stated and "minimize" is never defined, the main point to note is that prime farmland in Ontario is going out of production at what many consider to be an unacceptable rate; this is occurring throughout Southern Ontario and particularly in the Toronto-Centred Region. In our companion *Comment* "Disappearing Farmland: So What?" we discuss the many short-and-long-term factors that contribute to this withdrawal of farmland from production.

Recently, the Province has stated it intends to act. The Province's *Strategy for Ontario Farmland* (April, 1976) and the more recently released *Guidelines* (February, 1977) talk about greater protection via land use control. Implementation will depend upon *municipal* willingness to plan for agriculture, and provincial readiness to support those municipalities which do (and enforce the guidelines if they don't).

Further, in certain instances, provincial programs such as the Ontario Housing Action Program (OHAP) have conflicted with this objective (eg., in Durham and York) and developments have been allowed on good farmland.

As this summary indicates, most of the TCR hopes have yet to be fulfilled. Some things have been achieved in a preventive way, but in a positive sense, the accomplishments have been less than one might have hoped. The provincial COLUC Task Force, which itself was set up in 1973 because of the need to clarify the TCR concept, concluded that:

The Toronto-Centred Region concept, as originally set out in May, 1970, and even after it had been elaborated in some respects in the following year, was so general that important issues arising from it tended to be blurred . . . In fact, since 1970 the provincial government has embarked on a number of undertakings which in retrospect are not supportive of the concept or whose compatibility with it is, to some extent at least, open to question. These include, for example, the Central York Servicing Scheme, the Housing Action Program, the Georgetown GO service, new municipal boundaries and even (to the extent that a site further east might have been preferable in TCR terms) the new community of North Pickering. To this list could be added the federally-sponsored Barrie commuter rail service. At the same time, it must be said that in four years little has been done to give substance to the "go-east" policy, except to the extent that North Pickering — still in the planning stage — does so. (p. 48).<sup>14</sup>

### III The Present Status of Design for Development

#### 1) Ontario's Future: Trends and Options (March 1976)

In early April, 1976, the Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs released a number of planning statements under the "*Design for Development*" label. The most important of these was entitled *Ontario's Future: Trends and Options*.



## **D. Emphasis on Ensuring the Economic Viability of Farming**

**Presentation: Robert Eaton, M.P.P.,**

**Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food**

I have been asked specifically to discuss programs of support to the agricultural industry which can slow down or stop the main process by which land goes out of production. In a sense, the entire thrust of our Ministry in production, marketing and research can be said to do this. The ultimate aim of these programs is to increase the efficiency of production and marketing in Ontario so that Ontario products will penetrate the local and world markets more deeply. However to measure the effects of these programs in terms of actual acreage prevented from going out of production or being brought into production is almost impossible.

What I will do is review the programs of our Ministry and trust that the discussion will centre on the limitations and the potential benefits of these programs and perhaps suggest improvements or new programs which might have a further impact on land use.

Our programs extend all the way from applied research to assistance to groups on selling missions. This Province is more committed financially to research than is any other region of Canada. Relative to the value of production, Ontario spends more on research than does any other province. This expenditure heightens the ability of Ontario producers to use new and existing technology both on the farm and in every business. This expenditure on research brings considerable results. For example, in 1955 in Southern Ontario, grain corn yields averaged 63 bushels per acre; in 1975, the yield was 96 bushels per acre. The difference of 50% was a result of research and the application of the results. That same research and education has extended, for instance, the acreage used for corn; in 1955, it was 500,000 acres and by 1975, the figures stood at 1.4 million.

I suppose one could say that there was an increase in land use of 900,000 acres. However, I would point out that much of this came about due to the shifting in the crops produced. These examples of research and education in keeping Ontario competitive could be multiplied. It is estimated that each year over the period 1961 to 1974, the productivity of land, labour and capital employed in Ontario increased 0.75% annually and that with the increase in inputs used in agriculture, the increase in production amounted to 1.93% annually. The rate of increase in production in Ontario in that period was greater than any other part of Canada. The results and application of this research have made it possible for us to remain competitive so that our land stays in production. However, at the same time, one might argue that with the increased productivity per acre, less acres would be required to meet our needs.

Education plays a role in instilling skills in new entrants to the farming industry and at the same time, through our advisory and extension services, provides the benefits of the new techniques to producers already in business. In other words, research, education, and extension programs of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food are all aimed at increasing the efficiency of Ontario agriculture so as to maintain our competitive position and keep our land in production.

Similarly, the marketing programs of O.M.A.F. are aimed at increasing the penetration of local and world markets so that there will be demand for the products of Ontario soils. This work is accomplished by the marketing board programs under the Farm Products Marketing Board and the Milk Commission. The promotion program under the Food Council and the product-grading program under the Farm Products Inspection Branch and Milk Industry Branch are all aimed at marketing to the advantage of the producers so that Ontario farmers can afford to continue to keep land in production.

Mention should be made here of our constant effort to obtain protection at home equal to that which other countries give their domestic production. Ontario has vigorously put the case before the Federal Government that such a policy would increase the market for Ontario products and thereby tend to increase the usage of Ontario farmland.

Other programs of our Ministry provide direct financial assistance aimed at keeping Ontario agriculture competitive and at putting a strong capital base into the agricultural industry. I refer to such programs as the Capital Grant Program under which farmers were



eligible for up to 40% of the cost of an approved project to the limit of \$3,000. Most of the projects on the approved list related directly to land use — farm drainage, field enlargement, farm water supply and orchard tree removal. I mentioned that some of this Capital Grant money was used on farm drainage and worked directly with the Tile Drainage Act under which a producer can receive a loan amounting to 75% of the cost of drainage at a favourable interest rate of 6%. This drainage program not only increased the productivity of land but along with the municipal drainage projects make it possible for land to be farmed which would otherwise go out of production.

Further programs have been the provision of direct financial assistance, such as the Farm Tax Reduction Program which is paid only if a minimum of \$2,000 worth of produce is being produced on the farm thereby encouraging the use of the farmland, whether by the owner or by those who rent.

There is also a broad range of transfer payments aimed at transforming Ontario agriculture so as to keep it competitive. For example, the grape growers are eligible for guaranteed loans and partial debt repayment grant to assist them to convert to production of grapes which are in demand. Ontario had similar programs for beef heifers and another to assist the expansion of milk production. From a standpoint of assisting a farmer into the industry, Ontario still has outstanding subsidized loans under the Ontario Junior Farm Establishment Loan Program and has developed an unsubsidized guaranteed loan program for young farmers. Under this program, Ontario negotiated with the banking community for young farmers to receive loans at favourable rates. The Province guarantees a portion of the loan, resulting in an infusion of capital into Ontario agriculture which does much to assist in the transfer of farms from one generation to another.

In the same light, mention should be made of our A.R.D.A. program which aims at improving the productivity and increasing the viability of agriculture in less favoured portions of the province. The A.R.D.A. programs provide funds for projects to improve and develop land resources in Ontario. Part of the money goes to finance farm enlargement and improve drainage, keeping in production farmland which probably would have gone. The Ontario Crop Insurance program which has been in place for eleven years now, pays all the administration costs while farmers and the Federal Government share the premium of insurance against weather, pest and disease which can be particularly useful in preventing farmers from being wiped out by natural disasters. This might be of particular assistance in some areas that could be vulnerable and would therefore not be used for farming.

Ontario has recently proclaimed legislation which supplements the federal price stabilization program. An example of how this may have kept land in production is the Beef Cow-Calf Stabilization programs. While some areas have seen up to 20% reductions in cow herds, Ontario has experienced only a slight drop. Much of the land used for this beef cow-calf program would not likely be used for other production. Therefore the stabilization program which helped the cow-calf producer to stay in business probably kept that land in production. These programs are a risk-assumption by the Province and I feel they will encourage expansion and maintenance of production because producers will themselves face lower risks for price disasters. This program will thereby help to keep Ontario production high and tend to increase the amount of Ontario land in production.

Overall, the budget of our Ministry, apart from loans which farmers are to repay, stood at \$150 million for the 1976-77 year. This averages out to about \$2,000 per farm. The major thrust of this program was to increase production and productivity and increase Ontario's penetration of markets.

Increased productivity in sales are a key to maintaining Ontario's position in the marketplace. Without this, some of Ontario's land would surely go out of production. I have laid emphasis on the provincial programs. The Federal Government also plays a role — in financing research, in supplying credit and in stabilizing prices — because agriculture is a shared jurisdiction under our constitution.

I think we recognize the fact that all land capable of producing food in Ontario is not now needed. However, over the next twenty-five, fifty or hundred years, it will be

and, in order to keep the quantity and quality available, the other policy positions of the Province must be maintained, such as the *Guidelines* and development policy which direct urban industrial development on to poor lands. If that is done, the policies that I have just gone over can be used to bring land into production when it is needed and to maintain a sound agricultural economy so that it will be maintained in production.



**Response: Douglas Hoffman, Director,  
Centre for Resources Development, University of Guelph**

Mr. Eaton has indicated very clearly that Ontario has an impressive program for ensuring the economic viability of the farm. Farmers are promised an ample supply of foodland, markets, research, education and financial assistance to make farming profitable and there is little doubt that Ontarians have reason to be proud of the provincial program; but not complacent. Even with such a program farmers complain about lack of profitability due to surpluses and high costs and therefore the program may not be as successful as expected in keeping land in farming. Let us look in a little more detail at a few of the current programs of government which affect land use. Perhaps this will expand our understanding of the roles of marketing boards, farm credit, crop insurance and so forth in keeping the land in farming.

**Research and Education**

Both research and education have played a significant part in keeping farmers farming. New technology has certainly taken much of the drudgery out of working the land but at the same time has increased capitalization markedly. Since 1962 there has been a 50 per cent increase in capital inputs. This has resulted in increasing output and improved productivity — an annual increase of 1.93 per cent as stated by Mr. Eaton — and the number of people that can be fed from one farm's production continues to increase. But, increased productivity does not guarantee a profit and profits are what keep people on the land.

The energy requirements of Ontario's agriculture continue to increase and to become more costly. Of the total amount of energy consumed in Canada about 3 per cent is used at the farm level and another 9 to 12 per cent is used to transport and process farm products. Therefore, potential energy savings at the farm level cannot be large. Very large energy savings would seem to be possible only outside the food system, such as in planning population growth. However, a cutback of energy use on Ontario farms could result in a reduction of the cost of production. This might not lead to increased profits since a reduction in energy use could result in a lowering of production.

Education, extension services and various rural activities are important to maintaining an active and knowledgeable farm population. As Mr. Eaton has noted these services and activities are needed to maintain our competitive position and thereby keep our land in production. Unfortunately there is little information gathered which can be used to determine how successful these activities have been in keeping farmers on the land. Indeed, such services may be increasing competition for the land.

The increasing competition among buyers of agricultural land poses a difficulty for many farmers who want to own their own land or expand their operations. The cost of capital prevents many farmers from making the necessary adjustments to their farm operations. Farmers, however, have participated in programs that have helped them gain access to land and other capital inputs to improve their operation. Ontario agriculture now uses more capital relative to production than in the past but has not become involved in corporate ownership to any degree as a means of spreading the risk. Instead of corporate ownership agriculture has made greater use of credit, often through government guaranteed loans, which has increased the degree of risk and thus increased farmer uncertainty.

**Agricultural Marketing**

Farmer uncertainty has led to increased demand for farm price and income stabilization and appears to have been influential in removing the less efficient farmers from the land. Farm prices are related to marketing procedures set forth in a complete system that includes marketing boards, co-operatives, private individuals and business firms. Of these, marketing boards are said to be most successful in maintaining a stable farm industry. However, most people have no idea of the role marketing boards must assume to provide income stability for farmers. Should they be a public utility or producer dominated? Some prefer the current move toward regulation of agriculture as a public utility. In this instance private ownership is retained but production, marketing and profits are controlled



by government. The tradeoffs for farmers between freedom and security are apparent. The loss of independence may drive more farmers off the land than security keeps farming.

Indeed, there are some farmers who look upon all efforts of price stabilization as an end to free enterprise and use beef production, which is not controlled by a marketing board, as evidence that production will not suffer or the family farm be threatened by the free forces of the marketplace.

The best efforts of governments and farmers have not brought about the income stability that would satisfy the aspirations of many farmers. The integration of provincial with federal income stabilization programs has not been successful and is one reason for the lack of progress.

### **Direct Financial Assistance**

Direct financial assistance to farmers takes many forms as has been mentioned. Many of these programs are of great help in keeping farmers farming. Certainly the loan program for junior farmers has made it possible for many a farm youth to get started. On the other hand some programs encourage certain farmers to sell out. One example is the ARDA farm enlargement program in which up to \$350 an acre is available for the public purchase of farmlands having no other buyer. These lands are usually sold after ARDA purchase to neighbouring farmers to enlarge their holdings. This in itself is not a bad idea but it does reduce the total number of farmers.

None of the programs of direct financial assistance guarantee that all farmers will take advantage of them nor is there any guarantee that the farmers involved in one or another of these programs will know how to manage his farm now that it has a new productive capacity. For example the development of outlet drains does not mean that all farmers served by the outlet will immediately install tile. Nor does it mean that the farmers who do tile will change their cropping practice to increase their chances of making a profit.

In most cases, however, direct financial assistance does increase the economic viability of farms but we might ask where it all will end. Perhaps new institutions are required to reduce the acceleration in the farmers' needs for capital and credit.

### **And in Conclusion**

Ensuring the economic viability of farm operations calls for a comprehensive farm policy. The Minister of Agriculture and Food and some of his colleagues say we have a farm policy. Some experts say we haven't got one. Others say we do, but it's wrong. Consumers want a specific point included in the policy. Labor unions want another. University professors and economists have their say. Thus the development of policy is a complex and often frustrating matter.

In my opinion Ontario has a number of programs developed to solve certain farm problems, but no policy. Policy should have goals, objectives and a strategy developed to meet the goals. It seems to me that planning for future agriculture requires a decision on the level of sufficiency in food we expect to attain and if cheap food is to be another goal it should be given more visibility.

Mr. Eaton has outlined a number of programs. Each has its specific objectives and is helpful to farming. However, the emphasis is placed on increasing productivity, not on ensuring profits. Even the research is geared to production concerns. More emphasis is needed on the social aspects of rural life. More study is needed to determine the felt needs of the farm public and the impact of government programs on the social and economic life of the farm community.

Some of the rural dwellers are neglected in the present government programs. Part-time farmers and those not part of a recognized farm group have difficulty getting assistance. Government programs are useful for marginal farms but are not applicable to rapidly urbanizing areas. None are geared to keeping land in farming.

Because of the complexity of the problems concerning the economic viability of farm operations a number of policy issues can be posed.

\*Will governments continue to provide nearly all the long term credit requirements?

\*Should steps be taken to reduce non-farm competition for farmland?



\*Should there be controls on the use of farmland?

How should that control be exercised?

\*Should all agricultural assistance be applied to food land only?

The economic viability of farm operations depends on how we deal with these issues.

## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE THEMES

The "Food for the Cities" conference provided a forum where a variety of interests came together to discuss policy options with respect to farmland. This was one of the few times such a diverse group (see list of participants, Appendix B) had been assembled for this purpose in an urban setting; certainly the first time since the provincial government's *Green Paper on Planning For Agriculture: Food Land Guidelines* was published for public review and comment (February, 1977).

Two dominant themes and sentiments emerged during the day and a half of speeches, presentations and discussion groups. The first was really a questioning of the assumption that we could isolate the land use policy aspect from a total strategy for agriculture, which would include price and income policies as well. The second combined an affirmation of the need for provincial/municipal measures to control the loss of productive farmland with an uncertainty as to what the actual method should be or how the province and municipalities should share the responsibility.

### a) The Validity of Treating Land Use Separately from Farm Economics

Most of the criticism of the conference's focus on land use was voiced by one group of farmers. By and large, these farmers held land in areas directly adjacent to Metro Toronto. In such areas land values are high because of perceived development potential and expectations about selling off farm holdings have been raised; income derived from farming cannot compete. This group's point of view was that government action should first and foremost be directed to saving the farmer, through various economic support measures, rather than the farmland. Yet, it became clear that a certain ambivalence characterised their viewpoint: while some were concerned about the adequacy and stability of their farm income, others were thinking more about their retirement security.

We sensed, however, that the initial skepticism and even anger of these farmers had given way by the end of the conference to a more positive feeling that their concerns were being considered and that no one was advocating a one-dimensional land use control approach as the panacea for agriculture. The other kinds of action required in addition to land use policies were set out many times throughout the proceedings. Several participants were not without humour when they staged two demonstrations about waning domestic markets. At the close of Session III one vigorous participant distributed blocks of Ontario cheese and packages of Ontario carrots for everyone to sample, while at lunch another presented one brand of Ontario wine for a taste-test.

While these demonstrations caught the media's attention as expressing the so-called "farmer's viewpoint"<sup>1</sup>, it was clear from the evening panel session on that other farmers disagreed with this particular segment of the farm community. Gordon Hill, a farmer himself, was sympathetic but stated categorically that we could never save farmland simply by saving the farmer because we could never afford to raise farm prices and incomes to a level sufficient to compete with the land prices that other non-farm uses can command. Stephen Rodd, an agricultural economist at the University of Guelph, argued during the evening question period that the price cycle/farm income problem had existed for many decades and that it legitimately could be separated from the land planning problem. He explained that farmland withdrawal is a more recent phenomenon, which to a large extent has arisen from different causes, outside agriculture itself. Doug Hoffman, Director of the Centre for Resources Development at the University of Guelph, was able to demonstrate in Workshop D that the impressive number of programs designed to increase productivity will not by themselves ensure that land will be kept in farming. He showed that the economic viability of agriculture is dependent on more than economic supports; it depends, for example, on creating a secure environment for farming and supporting the social aspects of rural life.

In fact, in each workshop, farmland and its protection were seen as one of several interrelated agricultural policy issues, each of which required different kinds of tools for its solution. Thus, while the concern about separating land use from marketing and other economic policies did surface numerous times during the sessions, the need for specific measures to protect farmland itself seemed to be clearly recognized by the majority in attendance.



## **b) The Need for Stronger Leadership and More Detailed Guidance by the Province**

Turning to the second major theme, it was clear that most people attending the conference believed that there was a land planning problem (although they may have disagreed as to its urgency) and that it was complex. The problem arose mainly from non-farm competition for rural land and resulted in both direct and indirect effects on farmland and the viability of farming.

It was also clear that most in attendance felt that a different system of land use policy was required to cope with the problem. Barry Lyon, a consultant to the development industry, downplayed the problem as "the new motherhood". Yet he, too, shared the sense of frustration that public priorities for the use of land at a particular place or a particular time were seldom clear. A climate of uncertainty surrounding agricultural land obviously discourages new farmers or those practising farmers who wish to expand and, at the same time, facilitates the introduction of a variety of non-farm uses.

When we designed the conference program, we did not expect to be able to generate agreement as to the precise methods required to protect farmland. However, we did hope to elicit a consensus on the direction in which policy should move from the current provincial approach; such a consensus would be significant because of the calibre of the guest participants and audience and because of the variety of interests represented. We feel the conference did achieve this.

### *i) the inability of municipalities to act alone*

The conviction that, under permissive legislation, there is no guarantee that municipal government will prepare or implement protective land use policies, whatever the actual mechanism, prevailed throughout the evening session and the next day's workshops. Gary Davidson, Planning Director for Huron County, did point out that Huron County (as well as Durham, Perth and Waterloo) was already acting to preserve farmland. Others argued that this was due to particular circumstances: for instance, the Province had chosen Huron as a pilot project, or other areas such as Oxford County were facing fewer demands from non-farm rural development. Their point was that we could not be certain that local governments would act. At least one municipal politician in the audience stood up to say that, while he strongly championed municipal autonomy, he knew that in the case of farmland he could not cope with the financial and political pressures placed upon him to allow severances or large-scale development. A provincial planner who worked with municipalities echoed this sentiment. Joe Reid, former Mayor of St. Catharines, bluntly indicated that he saw the local politician's job as one of ensuring adequate housing, jobs, and low taxes — each of which could undermine preservation intentions.

In discussing which level of government should be responsible for initiating control policies, a number of speakers made some reference to the federal government's role, although these pertained more to marketing and tariff regulations than to national land policy<sup>2</sup>. For the most part speakers and audience stuck to the agenda, and tried to ascertain how far the provincial government should extend its control over the use of land. Here a conundrum emerged. While acknowledging that municipal government is "closest" to the problem of competing demands for farmland, the conference participants sensed a municipal level unwillingness or inability to act. It was recognized that municipal officials tend naturally to have a narrow focus, being concerned with assessment, for instance, and specific local concerns. The participants saw the provincial government as being further removed from the problem and perhaps freer to take strong action. They also understood that the constitutional responsibility for regional development and the management of the province's resources belonged to Queen's Park. Yet, they feared that the provincial hand could be too heavy and insensitive to local situations.

### *ii) the Green Paper*

Nevertheless the conference viewed the Province's recent Green Paper as an inadequate solution to the problem of farmland withdrawal. All three workshops directly addressing the question of land use policies agreed that the Green Paper was only a first step in developing an appropriate provincial role. The most frequently voiced criticisms of the *Guidelines* were that:

- they are only suggestions for municipalities to take into account when making land use decisions, not requirements; since they "lack teeth", they cannot ensure that muni-



- capalities will manage their farmland resources properly;
- they set out no specific objectives or targets for the preservation of Ontario's farmland, so that municipalities do not know what they should be working toward; combined with the five year time limit, the *Guidelines* convey a certain indefiniteness; (upon further analysis we concluded that criticisms about targets really reflected frustration at the lack of provincial backup. *Eds. note.*)
- related to this last point, they offer only vague guidance as to how municipalities should make trade-offs among competing land uses in particular instances where agricultural land is involved. Some felt that the *Guidelines* method for identifying the better agricultural lands relies too heavily on the Canada Land Inventory of Soil Capability — a system which is difficult to apply at the local level.

### iii) the suggested approach

Although the conference was divided as to the "correct" mechanisms for the long-term protection of the farmland resource, the presentations and discussions did highlight areas where the provincial government's attention should be focussed now. Workshop B came out strongly in favour of a "guideline" approach, but one strengthened with M.P.P. George McCague's idea for a mandatory requirement by the Province that the guidelines be followed. In that case, the guidelines would have to be specific as to the importance of farmland in relation to land for other purposes, and here the group was split almost equally as to whether municipalities could make the decision without an overall provincial schedule of priorities.

Workshop A discussed one such overall strategy. Presenter Pat Johnston was concerned about how individual municipalities would recognize what the province-wide requirements for farm land were and how they each fit into the picture, unless there were some type of provincial plan establishing priorities and trade-offs. This concern was also raised by M.P.P. Jack Riddell and Elbert van Donkersgoed of The Christian Farmers' Federation in other workshops.

Others felt that even though the total provincial picture might not yet be clear, the proper emphasis at this point would be to at least make a beginning. Both Gary Davidson and Jim Blair, planner with Durham Region, were less concerned with developing the correct policy package than with starting an incremental process whereby both the Province and municipalities could begin to put a more rational approach for rural land use planning into practice.<sup>3</sup> As planners they felt this could best be done through active provincial involvement in and assistance with the day-to-day decisions that must be made at the local level. However, some doubted that such a county-by-county approach which depended on the motivation of local staff and politicians to define the objectives and initiate policies leading to the delineation of agricultural boundaries would add up to an effective province-wide system for protecting farmland.

Stephen Rodd's comments on the required hierarchy of planning actions seemed to summarise many of the concerns raised throughout the conference. His proposal that the provincial government develop a "macro framework" of agricultural and other priority areas in conjunction with county/regional governments was consistent with the guidelines approach set out in the Green Paper in that it left the detailed planning and implementation to municipalities. But, going beyond the Green Paper, it would guarantee that municipalities would act, and that they would do so within a province-wide resource management perspective.

As for where to begin, Doug Hoffman reflected the views of others when he stated we must not spend more time debating how to tackle the farmland problem in the most difficult areas of the province where urbanization pressures were intense. Rather, he suggested that we should act first in those areas where farming was still economically viable, the farm infrastructure was intact, and where land prices had not yet moved too far beyond the reach of farmers.

The conference recognised, of course, that any methodology and process of planning for agriculture would have to provide for legitimate exceptions based on the variation in farming situations across the province (such as location, type of farm, ownership, personal circumstances). The issue of compensation for loss of development value was raised, by Peter Hannam of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, M.P.P. Jack Riddell, and a



number of farmers, but it was not a major discussion theme. Those who feared that their nest egg for retirement would disappear received the answer that, under stricter planning controls, they would still be able to sell their land and would profit from the rising agricultural value of that land.

Thus most participants and audience members agreed that stronger action should be taken by the Province that municipalities could not be counted on to do the planning alone, that the Green Paper represented a good "first step" but was insufficient as a provincial government answer, and that it was important to get some sort of joint provincial/municipal process going now.

The failure to agree on how that process should start, let alone how it should be structured, stemmed from differing beliefs about the relevance of the local autonomy principle to the farmland protection issue and an ambivalence as to the appropriate exercise of provincial government authority. Many of the speakers stressed the danger of inaction; their argument that the current trend of farmland withdrawal is undermining our future options was not effectively refuted. Nevertheless, there was no spontaneous move to adopt one of the possible provincial approaches as the obvious right answer. One option, though, was clearly unsatisfactory.

The option of economic supports alone was rejected, even by Robert Eaton, M.P.P. and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, who outlined programs aimed at bolstering productivity, markets, prices, and incomes in some detail. Because many of the pressures on rural land come from forces outside agriculture, efforts to support the agricultural industry itself were seen as a related but separate aspect of the land loss problem.

There were a few adherents to the Green Paper guidelines approach, conditional upon stronger and more consistent provincial back-up of municipalities in their attempts to implement countryside planning policies. It seemed to us that this minority which was prepared to go along with the Green Paper approach did not perceive the farmland situation to have the same degree of urgency as those who wished a stronger approach.

An essential unresolved issue regarding land use policies lay, then, in whether a provincial plan for agriculture (and indeed other resources) was required or whether a mandatory designation approach was sufficient. The former, as set out in Workshop A, would mean that the provincial/municipal process would be initiated by a provincial government declaration of an immediate holding action. How such a holding action would be implemented was not explained in detail in this workshop. Presumably, this hold would be a temporary one and encompass the major areas of Ontario where farming is viable.<sup>4</sup> The latter, as proposed by George McCague, would allow municipalities two years to comply with the provincial requirement to designate and so might provide greater flexibility or room for bargaining about the location of area boundaries.

While some of the costs and benefits of both the provincial plan and the mandatory designation approaches were touched upon, these were not dealt with in depth. A few members of the audience mentioned possible land and housing price increases, as well as higher costs for some municipal services like waste disposal arising out of land use restrictions.<sup>5</sup> Some pointed to possible assessment revenues that municipalities might have to forego.

Others did suggest complementary land use policies that would be needed. Examples were: an industrial growth strategy, policies to increase urban densities, public landbanking, other policies to encourage development away from good farmland, and the creation of a rural land bank which would allow the government to serve as a "buyer of last resort" if land designated for agriculture could not be sold in the open market. Again these were not discussed in significant detail.

Still, the clarification of the policy options and the assumptions underlying them was, in our view, an achievement of considerable importance.

Our own conclusions follow.

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1. For example, see "Cost of Saving Ontario Farmland is Paid at Supermarket", *Toronto Star* (April 20, 1977).
  2. Ottawa was blamed for significant inadequacies in the area of marketing and tariff policies. This was, for example, a dominant theme in the Hon. William Newman's luncheon address.
  3. An appropriate approach has already been developed and used in Huron County as a pilot project. See R. S. Rodd and W. van Vuuren, "A New Methodology in Countryside Planning", *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Workshop Proceedings, 1975, pp 109-140, and *Countryside Planning: A Pilot Study of Huron County* (Prepared for the County of Huron and the Ministry of Housing by James F. Maclaren Ltd., August, 1976).
  4. This idea of an initial holding action has been developed by Professor Stephen Rodd. Rodd referred to such a holding action during the conference as the first step in a sequence of steps in establishing a permanent agricultural priority zone or area. He has elaborated on this idea in an unpublished paper, "An Agricultural Priority Zone for Southern Ontario: The First Stages of the Process" (October, 1975).
  5. In our view, most of these concerns are unfounded. For example, with respect to housing costs, presumably any final agricultural "zone" would exclude lands already in plans of subdivision or lands designated for development in official plans. In this regard the recent UDI study (*Urban Residential Land Inventory, 1976-2001*) points to the same conclusion: enough land to meet projected housing requirements is now being approved for development and serviced. Also, since sand and gravel pits and waste disposal sites comprise only a fraction of the non-farm demands for rural land, such needs could probably be met, even in agricultural priority areas, without hardship to municipalities.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*(Our conclusions about the land side of agricultural policy are based on our assumption that policies to stabilize and support incomes, to develop domestic and foreign markets, to ensure fair prices to the farmer and to the consumer and to improve efficiency and productivity are obviously an essential thrust of a comprehensive policy for agriculture in Ontario. We understand that land policies alone, without concurrent efforts to alleviate the economic problems of farming, could be unjust.)*

1. On the basis of the most up-to-date and publicly available research, it is evident that the problem of the diminishing land base for agriculture in Ontario demands strong provincial planning measures. The recently released 1976 Census of Agriculture (preliminary figures) confirms the continuing loss of total land in farms in Ontario, with about 490,000 acres less in 1976 than 5 years earlier.<sup>1</sup> A significant amount of this loss is in our best farming areas and, while inevitably tied to growth pressures in general, most of the loss is unrelated to the direct expansion of cities.<sup>2</sup> The decline in terms of numbers of acres or class of land justifies action, but alone does not convey the full seriousness of the problem.

The nature and scope of the process which undermines agriculture is such that it will not be sufficient for the Province to set out guidelines and then rely on the existing municipal planning system. The present planning system has not been capable of reducing the upward pressure on land values, for example, and creating the climate of security for farmers which is necessary to stop the conversion of agricultural land to non-farm uses. The farm community itself may be weakened before the losses resulting from the indirect and shadow effects of rising land values and increased uncertainty will show up in the statistics.

Our concern is to keep our long-term options open. We are convinced that if this trend is not stopped, we shall undermine our future food-producing capabilities and our position as an important exporter of food.

2. In our view, the provincial government's policy as enunciated in the Green Paper will not stop this trend for the following reasons:

- a) the *Guidelines* do not ensure that municipal planning decisions will reflect a priority for agriculture, even in areas where agriculture is the dominant activity. The provincial review process which should prevent significant deviations from the guideline suggestions will depend upon the degree to which the Ministry of Housing or the OMB judges agriculture to be the priority in each zoning by-law or official plan decision that comes before them. In the case of consents for severances, the discretion rests with local committees of adjustment and land division committees, which not infrequently function outside the normal planning approval process and whose decisions are rarely reviewed by the Province.
- b) the *Guidelines* do not show municipalities how to evaluate agriculture against the competing uses of recreation, urbanization, forestry and minerals, other than to say that if good food land is converted, this must be justified.
- c) The *Guidelines* do not explain how the Province will give the consistent support needed to equip municipal officials who wish to plan for agriculture (e.g. education and training, co-operation at the OMB); also lacking is the necessary backup to encourage municipalities to implement the *Guidelines*, such as incentives to put development on lower class lands, the linking of grants for roads, etc. to agricultural goals.

These are not faults of the *Guidelines* but rather intrinsic limitations of an approach which is permissive, which relies primarily upon municipal planning, and which does not spell out the complementary support and backup policies.

3. Two other approaches, each of which promise more effective planning for agriculture, were discussed at the conference. In contrast to the *Guidelines*, both would require municipalities to designate agricultural areas in their official plans or development strategies. These are:

- a) direct provincial government action to effectively hold all good farmland in existing use for a temporary period while a province-wide plan or framework was developed.
- b) mandatory designation of foodlands (as defined by the *Guidelines*), required by the Province but accomplished by municipal governments within a specified time period.



Although implementation of a) the provincial plan idea was not discussed in detail at the conference, we understand that this option would:

- create an abrupt break with the past by establishing a temporary freeze or holding action on all new land use changes and severances in good farming areas (land already in plans for development could be excluded).
- depart slightly from the present planning system which is based on the official plan and zoning by-law approval process in which the Ministry of Housing is involved. While the process of land use designation would be joint, involving provincial and municipal officials, the authority for the drawing of major and final boundaries would rest with a special provincial agency akin to the Land Commission used in British Columbia<sup>3</sup>;
- mean that a province-wide strategy, taking into account all of the various competing land uses and assigning priority to agricultural uses in certain areas, would have to be developed.

Similarly, we understand that option b) namely, the Province's making agricultural designations by local governments mandatory would:

- seem to be a more flexible approach, allowing more room for bargaining, due to the absence of an immediate holding action;
- work through the existing approval process rather than setting up a special agency, and depend upon municipal implementation to define even the general boundaries;
- not require a strategy for land use from an overall resource management perspective.

Thus both options would require municipalities to designate agricultural areas. *We endorse this requirement as our principal recommendation.*

The designation of an agricultural priority area would require that all uses in the selected area be compatible with the dominant use of farming. A clear consensus emerged at the conference that the *Guidelines* provide reasonable criteria for identifying these agricultural areas. In brief, the *Guidelines* propose four criteria for identifying the better agricultural lands: good land, ongoing viable agriculture, good local markets and specialty crop areas.<sup>4</sup>

There might be two types of agricultural designations. Within the areas designated, agricultural uses would dominate; this is not to say that such areas would be single-use areas but rather that permitted uses would be compatible with and not preclude future farming. The fringe agricultural areas would be more flexible in the uses permitted and would serve as buffers between the urban centre and the main, permanent agricultural priority areas.<sup>5</sup> We do not see these buffer areas as an excuse for development but rather as areas which would be controlled by a time frame as to what could be developed. This would increase the security for existing farm operations in the buffer area.

The major differences between the two approaches revolve around whether a *hold* is declared and whether a *plan* is developed.

4. The advantages of a temporary *hold* on all land use changes and severances appear to be as follows: it would establish an abrupt break with the past, thereby heightening public consciousness of the problem and accentuating the importance of prompt planning action to save the better farmland in Ontario for agricultural purposes; an interim hold, to be lifted when agricultural designations had been made, would likely intensify the effort by municipal planners to accomplish the rural planning; above all, it would contain the upward pressure on land values and prevent a wholesale rush of severance applications. Land division committees and committees of adjustment, which operate outside the normal planning approval process, cannot reasonably be expected to hold the withdrawal of farmland in check while the designation process is underway without strong provincial encouragement.<sup>6</sup>

One major disadvantage of an interim freeze or hold is that it would be politically unpalatable. Because private ownership and property rights are deeply embedded in our Canadian value system, recommendation of a hold as a first step in the process could create a public backlash and distract attention from the essential step which urgently needs to be taken, namely the designation and legislative protection of our good agricultural land. Such a backlash would, of course, be counter-productive and weaken the resolve of municipal councillors, planners and appointed board members to incorporate agricultural land planning into their day-to-day decisions. A second disadvantage is the administrative burden which would arise from requests for exemptions. A third disadvantage is that a freeze or



hold is a rather blunt instrument which could impose unjust hardship on certain farmers who wish to sever for legitimate reasons.

Because of these disadvantages, we do not propose a blanket hold on both changes in land use and the creation of lots through severances. We recommend a compromise. With respect to changes in land use, we urge that the Province must be prepared to initiate some form of development control if there is an influx of development applications in good farming areas while the agricultural boundaries are being defined.

With respect to the creation of new lots through severances, the case for an immediate hold is more compelling. The practice of allowing severances for non-farm uses is generally acknowledged to be the single most important cause of foodland withdrawal. Still, bearing the political and administrative constraints in mind, a hold seems inappropriate. We have concluded that the Province must instead impose tougher restrictions on the granting of severances during the period of drafting the agricultural boundaries: first, the Province must monitor the granting of severances closely; second, the Province must use the provisions of the Planning Act to appeal decisions of the local committees to the OMB; third, it must be ready to suspend the powers of local land division committees and committees of adjustment to issue consents to sever if these bodies grant certain types of severances which contravene provincial objectives for agriculture. (The criteria for severances set out in the *Guidelines* seem reasonable);<sup>7</sup> fourth, the Province must even be prepared to impose a hold on severances, either generally or in specific areas, if necessary in order to protect the viability of farming areas.

5. The notion of an overall provincial resource strategy or *plan* which would give priority to agriculture where appropriate is an appealing one. Indeed, it is difficult to appreciate how the Province would evaluate proposed official plans, development strategies, zoning by-laws or any other municipal planning actions without reference to some kind of overall planning framework.

However, the Ontario Government's past experience with comprehensive planning (viz, Design for Development) raises the fear that to make planning for agriculture dependent upon the development of an overall strategy may result in inaction.

In our view, the application of a joint provincial-municipal planning process<sup>8</sup> would make the issue of "a plan or no plan" of less consequence. The primary purpose of the process would be the joint determination of the major agricultural boundaries; in itself this would naturally lead to some form of province-wide plan or strategy for agricultural land which would have taken account of competing claims. The general framework or plan would continue to evolve and be refined by the municipal day-to-day decision-making combined with provincial review and support.

A second and more subtle purpose of the process would be to foster a willingness on the part of local officials and planners to plan for agriculture. Since the best of plans can be undermined by the cumulative impact of individual day-to-day decisions, local politicians and staff must be educated and motivated to regard agricultural designations as much more than holding categories. It is up to the Province to create the momentum and climate for this, and to provide the necessary policy and staff resources to support and uphold municipalities in their decisions to preserve farmland.

An important advantage of the joint process is that it would overcome the objections raised at the conference about either level of government having primary responsibility for protecting farmland. An effective joint effort would respect both provincial requirements and local concerns.

6. To sum up briefly, the weight of evidence makes it clear that the continuing withdrawal of farmland is undermining the future prospects for Ontario agriculture; the *Guidelines* will not effectively deal with the problem unless designation is made mandatory; tougher restrictions are required so that land use changes and severances will not continue to erode our farmland base before the designations are in place; and a joint provincial-municipal process would result in some sort of province-wide plan, at least for agriculture, which reflected local considerations.

*Therefore, we would support a land policy for agriculture which contained these three key elements:*

1. a requirement that all municipalities with farmland resources make permanent agricultural designations within a specified time period, not exceeding two years.<sup>9</sup> These agricultural priority areas would have legislative protection. (If municipalities fail to comply, the Province should impose a blanket hold until the necessary planning policies are developed). These designations could differentiate between permanent agricultural areas and urban-rural fringe areas.
2. a commitment by the Province to impose tougher restrictions where there is an obvious need — on land use changes or on severances — so that the main objective of saving the remaining farmland in Southern Ontario is not undermined while the planning is being done.
3. the application of a joint provincial-municipal rural planning process which would help to ensure that municipalities with farmland resources would incorporate agricultural concerns into their day-to-day decisions as well as their official plans or development strategies.

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1. It is true that the Census also shows that the amount of improved farmland has increased slightly, but there is substantial disagreement as to the significance of this statistic. There are a number of variables such as the current strong market which account for this increase. In the long run this slight increase in improved farmland, much of it on former woodlots, is not reassuring.

2. See Part I, "Disappearing Farmland: So What?" in this *Civic Affairs*. Also see reference to a new study by R. S. Rodd, "The Use and Abuse of Rural Land", *Urban Forum* (Fall, 1976), pp 5-12.

3. It could also rest with a selected Ministry or the Resources Development Secretariat (note that the Provincial Throne Speech in April, 1977, referred to the creation of a new co-ordinating committee within this Secretariat).

4. See Appendix C, "Identifying Agricultural Resource Lands (Green Paper)".

5. The priority area approach is outlined in the Green Paper, and elaborated in both the Ministry of Housing Study (*Countryside Planning: A Pilot Study of Huron County*, 1976) and the Ministry of T.E.I.G.A. study (*Northumberland Area Development Strategy*, 1975).

6. While the focus of the Niagara Escarpment Commission has not been solely to preserve farmland, its experience is relevant here: the creation of lots through severances has gone on virtually unabated while the plan for the escarpment area is being developed. The local bodies are not obliged to take heed of the Commission's recommendations. In the views of some, these severances could undermine the very objectives of the planning effort.

7. See Appendix D for Chapter Four, Section A (4) of the *Green Paper*.

8. This joint process would presumably include a two-level structure, with provincial and municipal (county/regional) representation at both levels, although the proportions could vary. It could be coordinated by an independent Commission or Tribunal or by an inter-ministerial committee such as the new land use Committee of the Resources Secretariat.

9. The two-year time frame which was part of MPP George McCague's proposal seems reasonable in our view. We understand that the Regional Municipality of Durham was able to draft its entire official plan statement in two years; this statement was a comprehensive land use plan which included consideration of agricultural priorities. The British Columbia Land Commission, working intensely, was able to forward Agricultural Land Reserve plans for the province to the Cabinet within one year.



## APPENDIX A

### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30TH

- 5:00 p.m. REGISTRATION AND HOSPITALITY  
(Foyer, Dominion Ballroom)
- 6:00 p.m. DINNER  
(Dominion Ballroom South)
- 7:00 p.m. EVENING ADDRESS:  
(Dominion Ballroom North)  
**Stephen Lewis, M.P.P.**  
Opposition Leader, Government of Ontario

- 7:30 p.m. SESSION I  
*Disappearing Farmland: So What?*

*Introduction:*

**Anne Golden**, Research Co-ordinator,  
Bureau of Municipal Research  
*"What are the Issues?"*

Response Panel

**Stephen Rodd**, Agricultural Economist,  
University of Guelph  
**Gordon Hill**, Past President, Ontario  
Federation of Agriculture  
**Gary Davidson**, Planning Director,  
Huron County  
**Joe Reid**, Former Mayor of St. Catharines  
**N. Barry Lyon**, Consultant and  
Director of the Urban  
Development Institute

*This session — Disappearing Farmland: So What? — will look at the problem from five different viewpoints, those of the academic, farmer, planner, local politician and developer. Topics include: what are the main causes of the problem? how significant is it? can we solve it using the present system?*

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 31ST

- 8:45 a.m. Coffee
- 9:00 a.m. MORNING ADDRESS:  
Dominion Ballroom North  
**Dr. Stuart Smith, M.P.P.**  
Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario
- 9:30 a.m. SESSION II  
*Four Strategic Options for Provincial Action*
- Introduction to Workshops: **Anne Golden**
- 9:40 - 11:30 a.m. WORKSHOPS (Concurrent; please choose one)

*In the workshop sessions participants will examine possible provincial roles in the management of our land resources.*

- A. Province-wide land use plan  
(Dominion Ballroom North)  
Chair: **Ken Cameron**, Executive Secretary, Royal Commission on Metro Toronto  
Presentation: **Pat Johnston**, NDP Research  
Response: **Peter Hannam**, President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- B. Mandatory designation by local authorities of all class 1, 2, 3, 4 and unique lands  
(Huron Room)  
Chair: **Mary Collins**, Pres., Mary Collins Consultants Ltd.  
Presentation: **George McCague**, M.P.P. Progressive Conservative  
Response: **Jack Riddell**, M.P.P. Liberal Agriculture Critic
- C. Stronger provincial guidelines for local land use policies (Kent Room)  
Chair: **John Farrow**, Urban and Regional Planning Consultant; Currie, Coopers and Lybrand  
Presentation: **Jim Blair**, Planner for Region of Durham  
Response: **Elbert van Donkersgoed**, Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario
- D. Emphasis on ensuring the economic viability of farm operations (Simcoe Room)  
Chair: **Gary Davidson**, Planning Director, Huron County  
Presentation: **Robert Eaton**, M.P.P. Parliamentary Assistant to the Ontario Minister of Agriculture  
Response: **Douglas Hoffman**, Director, Centre for Resources Development, University of Guelph.

11:30 a.m.

#### SESSION III:

#### *Four Options — Problems & Prospects* (Dominion Ballroom North)

Chair: **Pamela Bryant**, Research Associate,  
Bureau of Municipal Research

*Reports by session chairpersons on potential of each provincial role. The purpose is to identify how far the Province should extend its control over the use of land.*

12:30 p.m.

#### CASH BAR AND LUNCHEON (Dominion Ballroom South)

#### LUNCHEON ADDRESS:

**Hon. William Newman**,  
Minister of Agriculture and Food  
"The Policy of The Provincial Government"

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2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

#### INFORMAL POST-CONFERENCE DIS- CUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THEMES (Dufferin Room)



## APPENDIX B

### REGISTRATION LIST — FOOD FOR THE CITIES CONFERENCE

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Abbott, Clarence            | Regional Mun. of Haldimand-Norfolk                          |
| Acton, Cliff                | Soil Survey Unit, Agri. Canada, Univ. of Guelph             |
| Afsar, Mohammed             | Planner, Regional Mun. of Hamilton-Wentworth                |
| Alexander, Norman           | Hullett Twp., Londesboro                                    |
| Archer, Paula               | Central Mtge & Housing Corp., Ottawa                        |
| Archer, William             | Commissioner, Niagara Review Commission                     |
| Arens, William              |   |
| Armstrong, Neil             | Farmer, Caledon East  |
| Arseneault, Jacob           | Global Community Centre, Kitchener                          |
| Avey, K.                    | St. Catharines Standard, St. Catharines                     |
|                             |   |
| Bacon, M.                   | Proctor & Redfern Limited, Toronto                          |
| Bain, G. Keith              | Ministry of Housing, Toronto                                |
| Balfour, J. R.              | M. M. Dillon Ltd., Toronto                                  |
| Beamish, Carole             | Millbrook Realty Ltd., Toronto                              |
| Bell, Harry                 | Farmer, Bolton  |
| Bird, Glenn                 | Bird and Hale Ltd., Toronto                                 |
| Bloetjes, Case              | Middlesex County Fed. of Agriculture, Dorchester            |
| Bloomfield, Reeve Garnet M. | Township of London, Arva                                    |
| Bodnar, Laszlo              | Min. of TEIGA, Econ. Policy Branch, Toronto                 |
| Booth, George               | Ministry of Natural Resources, Toronto                      |
| Boylen, Diana M.            | Res. Econ., Alberta Agri., Edmonton                         |
| Brechin, Maryon             | BMR Council, Etobicoke                                      |
| Burkus, John                | Policy and Program Dev. Sec., Min. of Housing,<br>Toronto   |
|                             | Town of Halton Hills, Halton Hills                          |
| Burnett, Ron                | Councillor, Town of Richmond Hill                           |
| Burnie, Mike                |   |
|                             |   |
| Cardiff, Murray             | Ontario Bean Producers, Marketing Board, London             |
| Carroll, Barbara            | Regional Econ., Central Mtge & Housing Corp.,<br>Toronto    |
|                             | Corp. of the City of Oshawa, Oshawa                         |
| Chan, Andrew                | Planner, Region of Peel, Brampton                           |
| Ciuman-Eger, Marilyn        | Queen's University, Kingston                                |
| Cotton, Ross R.             | Queen's University, Kingston                                |
| Cotton, Larry               | Ecologistics Ltd., Kitchener                                |
| Cressman, David R.          |   |
|                             |   |
| Davidson, N. Edward         | Region of Peel, Brampton                                    |
| Dean, P. B.                 | Canadian Wildlife Services, Dept. of Fish & Env.,<br>Ottawa |
|                             | The Independent, Grimsby                                    |
| Dechman, Phil               | Min. of TEIGA, Econ. Dev. Branch, Toronto                   |
| Denov, A.S.                 | Preservation of Agric. and Land, Fonthill                   |
| Denton, Kady                | The Cadillac Fairview Corp. Ltd., Willowdale                |
| Diamond, A. E.              | Can. Imp. Bank of Commerce, Toronto                         |
| Dobson, R. H.               | Ontario Liberal Party, Toronto                              |
| D'Onafrio, Lou              | Woods, Gordon & Co., Toronto                                |
| Douglas, David J. A.        | Ministry of Housing, Toronto                                |
| Drieger, John               | Soil Research Institute, Dept. of Agric., Ottawa            |
| Dumanski, Julian            |   |

Ewing, Francis  
 Favot, Peter  
 Featherstone, Paul  
 Ferri, Nick  
 Ferri, Quint  
 Finchman, Les  
 Fitzpatrick, Gerry W.  
 Fleming, John D. F.  
 Flowers, John F.  
 Foster, Ted  
 Frisch, Paula  
 Fuller, Anthony (Dr.)

Gartner, John  
 Glogowski, Mary Anne  
 Goar, Allen R.  
 Gray, M.  
 Green, Larry

Hadfield, Roger (Mrs.)  
 Halwa, T.  
 Haslett, Earl  
 Heaps, Frank N.  
 Hobbs, Jon  
 Hodgson, C. David

Hoicka, John  
 Holmes, A. M.  
 Hope, Spencer

Hunsberger, Brian  
 Hussey, Don

Ion, Caroline

Jackson, John N. (Prof.)  
 Jackson, Thomas  
 Janes, S. H.  
 Johnston, R.

Kanter, Ron  
 Kardish, David  
 Kawun, Lydia  
 Kennedy, David  
 Kennedy, R.  
 Kennedy, Sheryl  
 King, Wendy  
 Kisby, Merle  
 Klosler, George  
 Kotseff, Lawrence E.  
 Krick, J. R.  
 Kusner, M. E. (Prof.)

Administrator/Clerk Treasurer, Twp. of Chatham  
 Cadillac Fairview Corp., Willowdale  
 Min. of Housing, Toronto  
 Farmer, Norval  
 Farmer, Norval  
 Min. of Housing, Sub-Divisions Br., Toronto  
 Min. of Housing, Toronto  
 Whitehall Dev. Corp. Ltd., Toronto  
 Borough of East York, Toronto  
 Min. of Treasury & Economics, Orillia  
 Min. of TEIGA, Econ. Dev. Branch, Toronto  
 Rural Devel. Outreach Project, Univ. of Guelph

Corp. of the City of Oshawa  
 Min. of Housing, Toronto  
 Group 2 Devel. Limited, Niagara Falls  
 M. M. Dillon Ltd., Toronto  
 Faculty of Environ. Studies, York Univ., Toronto

T. F. Macharen Ltd., London  
 Min. of Agriculture & Food, Toronto  
 Prov. Secretariat of Resources Development, Ontario  
 School of Urban & Reg. Planning, Queen's University  
 Policy & Program Dev. Sec., Min. of Housing,  
 Toronto  
 Min. of TEIGA, Econ. Pol. Branch, Toronto  
 Proctor & Redfern Limited, Toronto  
 Min. of TEIGA, Central Ontario Reg'l Office,  
 Willowdale  
 Regional Mun. of Waterloo, Waterloo  
 Waterloo

Assoc. of Counties and Regions of Ontario, Orillia

Brock University, St. Catharines  
 Farmer, Caledon East  
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## APPENDIX C

### Identifying Agricultural Resource Lands (Chapter 2 of the Green Paper on Foodland Guidelines)

The first step in preserving agricultural lands is to identify the better agricultural lands of the planning area. An inventory of the agricultural resource must be assembled as part of the larger review of the resource base found in any planning study.

In identifying agricultural resource lands, the concern must be with those lands with the capability or potential for agriculture, not just the lands presently in production. Many areas which are currently lying idle, in rough pasture or scrub bush, have a capability to produce food which is not currently utilized.

The Government of Ontario considers the better agricultural land to include the four categories outlined below. How these are identified, and how this may be tailored for the specific area are explained further on.

High capability agricultural lands are considered to include the following:

- All lands which have a high capability for the production of specialty crops due to special soils or climate.
- All lands where soil classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 predominate as defined in the Canada Land Inventory.
- Additional areas where farms exhibit characteristics of ongoing viable agriculture.
- Additional areas where local market conditions ensure agricultural viability where it might not exist otherwise.

#### Specialty Crop Areas

Specialty crop areas depend upon special soils or climate or a combination of both. The Niagara fruitlands, the Holland Marsh, and the Georgian Bay apple area are three examples of specialty crop areas. Such areas are of particular importance because they are limited in extent within the province, and produce crops which would not be otherwise available. An inventory of agricultural resource lands must identify areas suited to specialty crops. These include, among others, the following:

- Tender fruit areas: peaches, grapes, cherries, plums, etc.
- Apple and pear growing areas.
- Tobacco areas.
- Potato lands.
- Greenhouse areas.
- Vegetable areas.
- Processing crop areas.
- Organic soils.

Organic soils, some of which are useful for specialty crops, have been classified separately from the mineral soils identified in the Canada Land Inventory. With the exception of organic soils, there are no maps that fully identify specialty crop areas. County soil surveys and local knowledge of agriculture are required to locate specialty crop areas. All specialty crop areas should be identified to determine whether separate policy consideration is necessary.

#### The Canada Land Inventory

The Canada Land Inventory of Soil Capability for Agriculture <sup>1</sup> is a recognized and readily available system of classifying lands according to their inherent capability for agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

This system provides an inventory of all lands in Ontario. It takes climatic factors and the hundreds of soil types in the province, and groups them into seven classes based on their capability to produce common field crops, using current economically feasible farming methods.<sup>3</sup> Field crops include such crops as corn, wheat, oats and barley. They do not include the specialty crops previously discussed.

Class 1 lands are the most productive for agriculture, and Class 7 lands are not of any use for agricultural purposes.

The specific breakdown is as follows:

- Class 1 —No significant limitations for the production of common field crops.

- Class 2 and 3 —Moderate limitations for common field crops.
- Class 4 —Marginal in capability for field crops.
- Class 5 and 6 —May be suited for pasture.
- Class 7 —No agricultural capability.

In addition to rating mineral soils on this basis, the Canada Land Inventory also indicates any limitations such as stoniness, wetness, slopes and susceptibility to erosion. Some of these limitations may be removed through capital expenditure on such improvements as drainage and stone removal.

Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 soils are capable of the sustained production of common field crops, even though some limitations may exist. Normally, Class 5 and 6 soils are suitable only for pasture which can be converted by grazing animals to animal protein, for consumption by man. These soils therefore may be important for future meat supplies. Where such soils exist in conjunction with better soils they deserve consideration.

For the purpose of identifying agricultural resource lands, Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 soils should be outlined. In many cases these soils will be associated in complexes of more than one soil type with certain restrictions upon productivity. Areas to be identified, therefore, are those in which Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 soils predominate. It may also be desirable to identify some Class 5 and 6 soils which occur in conjunction with higher class land, and which together with the better soils may provide for contiguous areas of farming.

### **Areas of Ongoing Viable Agriculture**

Although the specialty crop areas and the Canada Land Inventory Soil Classes 1 to 4 will cover most lands that are of significance for agriculture, some areas that are in crop production because of other special circumstances may not have been identified.

The first of these would be additional areas where farms exhibit characteristics of ongoing viable agriculture. These may include individual farms or farming areas, which, because of management skills or particular farming techniques, are able to conduct successful farm enterprises where they might not otherwise be expected. They may also include areas with a complex of soils which together create conditions for viable agriculture where separately they might not. Where these areas are significant, they should be added to the inventory of agricultural resource areas.

### **Areas Viable Due to Local Market Conditions**

The second example is additional areas where local market conditions ensure agricultural viability where it might not otherwise exist. This criterion would apply to areas adjacent to major urban markets as well as to Northern Ontario, where distance from primary sources of supply, particularly for dairy products and fresh vegetables, provide local farms with an economic advantage. Because of the importance of local sources of agricultural produce to these communities, agricultural areas serving local markets should be identified and protected.

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1. The Canada Land Inventory also provides capability ratings for forestry, recreation, wildlife and waterfowl. These may be useful for other facets of plan preparation.  
 2. To order Canada Land Inventory maps, see Appendix.  
 3. It should be noted that the Canada Land Inventory of Soil Capability for Agriculture is based on the Ontario Soil Survey. The Ontario Soil Survey provides a soil report for each county in Ontario, and these reports could be used as an alternative method to identify soils with agricultural capability.



## APPENDIX D

### Guidelines for Land Severances (Chapter 4, sec. A (4), of the Green Paper)

#### A. (4) Severances

In May of 1975 a revised severance policy was adopted by the Government of Ontario. A significant statement in that policy was that the Government intended to give greater protection to resource lands, and particularly agricultural lands.<sup>1</sup> The policy stressed that Official Plans should contain criteria for granting severances. These policies are to encourage rural-residential development to locate on other than prime resource lands, and preferably in existing urban areas (towns, villages, hamlets) where urban type services are readily available. In agricultural areas, it was indicated that the only permissible severances are those related to agricultural needs.

The following is an amplification of these policy suggestions on severances with respect to agricultural designations. It is recognized that farm related severances may be expected within agricultural designations. Non-farm severances are discouraged in the most restrictive agricultural designation but may be located in areas of limited agricultural capability.

#### (a) Farm Related Severances

Farm related severances in areas designated agricultural can be grouped into several distinct types:

- (1) The parcel to be severed and the parcel to be retained are viable farm units. Viability depends on the type of farm operation and local conditions. It can be determined in consultation with staff from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.
- (2) The severance is required for technical reasons. These may be for boundary adjustments where one land owner is deeding part of his property to the adjacent land owner, or for other legal or technical reasons, such as easements or rights-of-way or any other purpose that does not create a separate lot.
- (3) Farm consolidation has rendered a farm house surplus, and a severance is requested to dispose of the second house. In this instance, the size of the lot should be kept to a minimum. If the farm buildings formerly associated with this second house are in close proximity to the house, as determined by the MDS formula, the farmer should be encouraged to rent the house rather than create a potential future problem for himself by risking a non-farm resident adjacent to his livestock barn.
- (4) A farmer who has been farming a substantial number of years and who is retiring from active working life needs to sever one lot on which to build a house in which he intends to retire. Because the lot may subsequently be taken over by others and create problems for the adjacent farm operations, the farmer should be encouraged to consider a mobile home on the farm or to retire in a nearby village or town.
- (5) A residential lot is required to provide accommodation for full-time farm help. This may be for hired help or family members (son or daughter) whose working activity is primarily devoted to the farm operation and where the nature of the farm operation is such that it requires this help to be accommodated close to the farm. This accommodation should be provided as part of the farm unit rather than on a separate lot. The accommodation could be a conventional dwelling or a mobile home.

In both 4 and 5 above, the lot, if created, should be kept small to avoid using excessive land area. Its size should be no larger than is necessary to support a well and private sewage disposal system as determined by the Medical Officer of Health.

#### (b) Non-Farm Severances

The familiar non-farm residence on a half or 1 acre lot, or the estate type residence on a 2, 5, 10 or 25 acre lot is wasteful of agricultural land resources, since the lot size is usually too small for commercial agriculture. More important, the proliferation of such housing is creating conflicts with farming since the expectations of rural life of these urban-oriented residents differ from those of the farm community. The owners of these lots often complain about noise, manure odours, and dust from cultivation which may drift onto their property.

They may not respect the privacy of adjacent farmland. They may trespass on foot or snowmobile, and damage crops and fences. Their children and pets may also damage crops and frighten livestock. Increased numbers of vehicles on rural roads make it more difficult to move farm machinery.

The rural-residential dwellers may also make demands on municipal services. This can include better road upkeep, dust control on roads, early and more frequent snowplowing, and regular garbage pickup. Better parks and recreational facilities may be demanded, or better fire and police protection. While all such services may be desirable, they are generally more expensive to provide to scattered rural dwellings than to residents clustered in villages or towns. Scattered development also sharply increases provincial costs because many of the services demanded by rural non-farm residents are subject to provincial subsidy.

In spite of the problems associated with scattered development, there has been a strong demand for such lots. The trend is alarming because of the cumulative impact this has been having on farmland, and because of its effect of eroding the traditional role of villages and hamlets. Policies should redirect this activity away from agricultural land.

To protect agricultural land from this pressure, other areas may have to be provided into which this demand can be guided. First and foremost, residential development of this type should be encouraged in the villages and hamlets. The traditional role of these communities as residential area and local service area has been eroding in many parts of the province, and this may help to re-establish their role. Secondly, since all such development is not appropriate for hamlets, provision may have to be made for estate residential or rural residential development in rural areas which are not suitable for designation as agricultural. Where estate residential development is permitted it should be on limited areas of low potential resource land and in a separate designation. Severance applications which may create rural-residential lots must not be allowed within a high priority agricultural designation.

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1. This policy is available through a Ministry of Housing publication entitled "Land Severance".



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