



December 6, 2022

Planning Consultation  
Provincial Planning Policy Branch  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
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Toronto, ON M7A 2J3  
Via email: PlanningConsultation@ontario.ca

To whom it may concern,

*Re: ERO 019-6163: Proposed Planning Act and City of Toronto Act Changes (Schedules 9 and 1 of Bill 23 - the proposed More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022)*

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Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) appreciates the opportunity to comment on *ERO 019-6163: Proposed Planning Act and City of Toronto Act Changes (Schedules 9 and 1 of Bill 23 - the proposed More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022)*. BFO represents 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario by advocating in the areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety, and domestic and export market development.

The provincial government's plan to address Ontario's housing crisis and prepare for the province's expected population growth over the next ten years by building approximately 1.5 million homes is ambitious and necessary, but advancing housing development throughout Ontario cannot be done at the expense of our province's finite agricultural lands.

We know that farmland in Ontario continues to be lost to urbanization or non-agriculture uses at an alarming rate. The most recent Agriculture Census data for 2016 to 2021 shows Ontario lost 582,392 acres of farmland. This adds up to over 1.5 million acres of farmland lost to development or non-agriculture uses between 2006 to 2021. Further, between 2016-2021, over 290,000 acres of tame and native grasslands were removed from the Ontario landscape. Agriculture lands, especially agricultural grasslands, not only provide a means to produce food and support our rural communities economically, but they provide a number of invaluable ecological services such as habitat for wildlife and pollinators, carbon sequestration and oxygen production, and water and nutrient cycling.

As aspects of the changes to the *Planning Act* may have direct and indirect impacts on the agricultural sector, we have provided our comments below on certain changes:

### **Third Party Appeals**

The government's initial proposal to limit third-party appeals for all planning matters (official plans, official plan amendments, zoning by-laws, zoning by-law amendments, consents and minor variances) was very concerning. We applaud the government's willingness to amend the proposal to allow third-party appeals to continue for official plan amendments and zoning by-law amendments; however, we firmly believe third-party appeals should not be limited and should be granted for land use planning matters including minor variances and consents.

The ability to appeal planning decisions can be a crucial tool for farmers when planning related mistakes are made that will impact their farm property. We understand there is a need to address the backlog of appeals at the Ontario Land Tribunal, but we believe there are alternatives other than removing third-party appeals to address the backlog. With that, we recommend the limiting of appeals to exclude municipal decisions that conform to the Provincial Policy Statement, provincial plan or other, preserving the end of de novo hearings as part of the Tribunal hearing format, and limiting hearings to those based on errors in law or procedures.

### **Conservation Authorities**

The changes to limit conservation authority appeals, except when acting as an applicant, of land use planning decisions under the Planning Act to matters related to natural hazards is also concerning. Considering the change of conservation authorities mandate to focus on the risk of natural hazards, such as flooding, unstable soils and bedrock, erosion and dynamic beaches, we believe limiting the ability for conservation authorities to appeal planning decisions is contrary to this mandate. We recommend conservation authorities ability to appeal planning decisions be maintained.

### **Other Recommendations**

- BFO believes the path to meeting Ontario's housing development goals while ensuring Ontario's finite agricultural lands are not lost in the process, is to ensure urban boundaries are fixed and that development focuses on density in urbanized areas. Especially in urban areas where density does not exist due to exclusionary zoning rules.
- BFO continues to express that land used for agriculture but not classified as prime agricultural land, or CLI Class 1-3 soils, must also be preserved to ensure future capacity for the production of food exists throughout the province and across commodity sectors. This is particularly important for agricultural uses that do not depend on CLI Class 1-3 soils, such as beef production, as such land is suitable for pasture use.
- BFO supports the use of agricultural impact assessments as a key tool for land use planning and for providing an opportunity for avoiding, minimizing and/or mitigating negative impacts on agriculture. We believe they should be required as part of the permit process for residential builds on Ontario's diminishing agriculturally productive land.

It is evident the preservation and protection of the existing agricultural land base is critical for the future sustainability of Ontario's food systems, the provincial economy and in the fight against climate change. Land use policy has a significant influence on competing interests for Ontario's farmland, which is one of Ontario's most valuable and at-risk resources. The current unsustainable loss of agricultural lands needs to be seriously addressed. Long-term actions to protect agricultural lands that do not pit areas of the province against one another need to be examined. The province must find a way to balance the need for increasing our housing supply with the need to better protect our farmland.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the changes to the *Planning Act*, and we encourage to the provincial government to view increasing Ontario's housing supply and the protection of Ontario's agricultural lands as interconnected issues.

Sincerely,



Jack Chaffe  
President