



President  
Joanne Foster

5685 Perth Line 8, St. Marys, Ontario N4X 1C4  
Phone 519-229-8866 Or 1-866-829-8866  
Email: perthcountyfedorag@gmail.com

Secretary  
Agnes Denham

Allan Rothwell, Director of Planning  
The Corporation of the  
County of Perth  
Courthouse  
1 Huron Street  
Stratford, Ontario  
N5A 5S4

Re: Perth County Proposed Official Plan Amendment (OPA) application for the purpose of considering changes to the current severance policies in the County Official Plan relating to surplus farm dwellings.

The Perth County Federation of Agriculture (PCFA) works in an advocacy role on behalf of our farm family members and supporters. Along with our Commodity partners in Perth, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the PCFA is committed to a profitable and sustainable future for farm families.

As a County wide organization, we support an approach that sees farming operations to be consistently affected by planning policies regardless of where they are located within the County.

PCFA supports the current County Official Plan as it puts a strong emphasis on the need to protect the agricultural base we have.

We especially support the goal that is written within the Official Plan to provide agriculture with an area free from conflicting and/or incompatible land use activities - especially non-farm development.

From the County Official Plan: *“Agricultural or farming areas have been kept for farming activities while land use activities which are incompatible with agricultural or farming activities have either been severely restricted or prohibited. This Official Plan carries forward the principles and importance of protecting and preserving Perth County’s good agricultural land resource base to ensure future food and fibre production by present and future generations of farmers in Perth County.”*

Section 5 of the current Official Plan has also set out some goals for the agriculture designation that we feel are important for our industry:

- a) to ensure that prime agricultural land in Perth County are protected and preserved for the production of food, fibre and fuel;*
- b) to provide agriculture with an area free from conflicting and/or incompatible land use activities, particularly non-farm related development;*

- c) to support the needs of agriculture and the agricultural community by permitting land use activities that are complementary to and supportive of agriculture;*
- d) to ensure maximum flexibility for farmers to engage in differing types of agricultural operations;*
- e) to prevent the break-up of farms into smaller holdings for non-farm use;*
- f) to encourage the carrying out of good farm management and land stewardship practices on farm properties; and*
- g) to state a strong municipal commitment to agriculture as the predominant land use activity in Perth County and a major economic importance to the County*

In regard to the specific topic of allowing the severance of a surplus farm dwelling in the “Agriculture” designation in the County of Perth.

We realize that there is a desire for those who own surplus farmhouses, to be able to sever them and not continue to be landlords.

We also see the issue from the Municipal perspective, who do not wish to see these houses demolished, resulting in a loss of future tax income.

We realize that there are differing opinions on this issue within the Perth Agricultural community. When seeking advice and feedback from County Commodity organizations, it was clear that there are those farmers who support, and oppose, to allowing the severing of surplus farm houses.

We recognize that the time and debate at County Council has come a considerable distance from previous proposals put to the public, and that there will likely be a policy change to allow severances under the proposed criteria.

The primary issue we are hearing from those with concerns around these severances, is the threat of normal farm practices being subject to nuisance complaints.

**This concern needs to be recognised by County Council and those who support these severances.**

The wording in the Official Plan suggests that it supports normal farming practices, however words in a document need to be supported by action in order for all farm businesses to have faith in the Official Plan.

Should County Council decide to allow the Official Plan amendment to proceed, it is critical that Council reaffirms their goals to protect agriculture as set out in the current Official Plan, and also establish an official Committee of Council, and Agricultural Advisory Committee.

In our previous submission from September 2013, we encouraged Council to expand the role of the Agriculture Review Committee to fulfil the additional role of an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee, should be an official Committee of County Council, and would be able to apply actions to the current words of support for agriculture found in the Official Plan. There are many examples of current Ag Advisory Committees working in other parts of Ontario, and with such a strong ag sector in Perth, and the predominant land use activity, it makes sense

to have an active committee operating here.

Such a committee could operate and be structured as the Ag Review Committee once did, and could be used to support inquiries around farming practices, curtail nuisance complaints before they get to the point of being heard by the Provinces Normal Farm Practices Protection Board (which is a costly process in time, energy and finances for farmers defending themselves).

The committee could develop proactive approaches and messaging about normal farm practices, as well as function as a communication tool between farmers and County Council and Staff. The potential for the Committee is great, and we feel it's establishment needs to be part of any decision to allowing surplus farmhouse severances.

As the farming industry changes, there will be the real possibility that County Council will not have as strong of representation of farmers around the table in the future. Many decisions coming from Council impacts farmers, and with a lessening of the farm voice at Council, there is a risk that the farmer perspective will be lost. An Ag Advisory Committee would be critical to ensure the importance of agriculture continues to be recognised in the County.

This PCFA submission is supported by the:

- Perth County Soil & Crop
- Perth County Beef Producers
- Perth County Dairy Producers
- Perth County Pork Producers

Thank you.

Joanne Foster,  
President  
Perth County Federation of Agriculture.

Copy: PCFA Board of Directors  
Perth Commodity/Farm groups  
OFA Policy Research Staff  
Randy Pettapiece, MPP Perth-Wellington  
Submission posted to PCFA website - [www.perthcountyfarmers.ca](http://www.perthcountyfarmers.ca)