

A statement from the Perth County Federation of Agriculture, February 2021:

The Perth County Federation of Agriculture (PCFA) believes the protection of prime agricultural land for agricultural use is of paramount importance.

We represent the unique farming interests of Perth County farmers. After 75 years, we are proud to represent over 1,800 farming families in Perth County. PCFA believes the protection of prime agricultural land for agricultural use is of paramount importance.

As of 2016, Census data indicates that the county of Perth contains 518,023 Acres of farmland, over 4% of the farmland in Ontario.

With boundaries adjacent to the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Perth County agriculture is being exposed to development “leapfrogging” over the Green Belt.

PCFA must express its strong opposition to the recent proliferation of Municipal Zoning Orders (MZOs) issued for municipalities such as ours with robust planning systems, Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.

In fact, the County of Perth has been in the process of updating their Official Plan during their five-year review. Such frequent use of MZO’s undermines Ontario’s long-established system of land use planning under the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.

Ontario has a well-established system for amending municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to accommodate population and employment growth, including a system for appeals. The recent, short sighted issuance of multiple MZOs, short circuits these long-established planning principles and policies. It deprives citizens impacted by these MZOs the ability to be consulted on proposed amendments to municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.

PCFA has calculated that *1540 acres of farmland* have been lost to the city of Stratford in the last 20 years.

We remind our municipalities that without fulsome and aggressive planning designed to preserve farmland above all; we will fail in this important task for the future.

This county will have to do much better to save our Class 1 farmland from further assault. PCFA thought the official Perth County Plan would be taken seriously. We never expected The County of Perth and our Municipalities to ignore the concerns expressed to them by PCFA and to fail so massively in the application of their own Official Plan.

Without these partners at the table where does this leave the preservation of farmland in Perth County?

Perth County, its lower tier members, and the cities of Stratford and St. Marys must prioritize the saving of agriculture land during planning.

In a recent letter of concern, we asked the Minister of Agriculture and Food to support our position on the use of MZO’s.

*We stated, “The use of MZO’s to change land from agriculture to non-agriculture is against the policy of PCFA. We believe it is important for OMAFRA to support our position. The protection of agricultural lands is important to all the citizens of Ontario.”*

Perth County Federation of Agriculture