POWER IN POLICY
MEASURING FARMLAND LOSS IN ONTARIO
AND TESTING THE STRENGTH OF THE GREENBELT ACT

RURAL SYMPOSIUM • MARCH 2019 • XIAOYUAN WAN & RACHEL SINGER
PROJECT BACKGROUND

● A lack of real-time data that documents development, zoning, or special policies that may impact farmland availability (prime agriculture) in Ontario
  ○ Census – Only documents land in production (e.g. commodity prices). It may be decades before land comes out of production following a land use decision. It also does not distinguish prime from non-prime lands.
  ○ Aerial imagery – Varies across the province and may or may not document the impact of land use decisions.

● The delay between approvals and development impacts the public’s perception of the efficacy of planning tools when confronted with sprawl
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Build on Phase 1 and compile data regarding farmland conversion to non-farmland uses across Southern Ontario
- Apply ROPA methodology in regions/counties that have a significant portion of prime agriculture
- Complete a jurisdictional scan of agricultural land use policies within Ontario and across Canada will identify potential best practices
- Identify land use policies that have the potential to better protect the long-term availability of agricultural land in Ontario
METHODOLOGY

- This research uses Official Plans and approved Regional Official Plan Amendments to identify the amount of prime agricultural land lost, capturing:
  - Redesignations to a development designation (such as urban, residential, commercial, industrial, recreational designations)
  - Redesignations to a rural designation
  - Site-specific, special policy amendments

- Captured both data before the 2005 PPS and before the Greenbelt Act
PHASE 1

- 15 regions have been completed covering years 2000-2017
- Hamilton and Kawartha Lakes are still underway
- County summaries for completed regions are available online
Prime Agricultural Land Redesignation by County/Region (2000-2017)

Development
Rural
Site-Specific
Prime Agricultural Area Redesignation:

- **6233 ha**
- **1755 ha**
- **0 ha**
**YORK REGION**

Before 2005:
- **257** ha within the Greenbelt
- **2887** ha outside the Greenbelt

After 2005:
- **0** ha within the Greenbelt
- **4844** ha outside the Greenbelt

Prime Agricultural Area Converted in York Region Relative to the Greenbelt Plan

- Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)
- Prime agriculture area redesignated to a development or rural designation (ha)
PEEL REGION

Prime Agricultural Area Redesignation:

3274 ha

201 ha

127 ha

Prime Agricultural Area Converted Through ROPAs in the Region of Peel (2000-2017)

- Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (ha)
- Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation (ha)
- Land designated as a prime agricultural area with additional site-specific permitted uses (ha)
PEEL REGION

Before 2005:
● 127 ha within the Greenbelt
● 2865 ha outside the Greenbelt

After 2005:
● 0 ha within the Greenbelt
● 409 ha outside the Greenbelt
HALTON REGION

Prime Agricultural Area Redesignation:

- 2656 ha
- 0 ha
- 287 ha

Prime Agricultural Area Converted Through ROPAs in Halton Region (2000-2017)

- Orange line: Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation
- Black line: Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation (ha)
- Blue line: Land designated as a prime agricultural area with additional site-specific permitted uses (ha)
HALTON REGION

Before 2005:
- **113** ha Within the Greenbelt
- **112** ha Outside the Greenbelt

After 2005:
- **0** ha Within the Greenbelt
- **2718** ha Outside the Greenbelt

Prime Agricultural Area Converted Through ROPAs in Halton Region Relative to the Greenbelt Plan

- Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)
- Prime agriculture area redesignated to a development or rural designation (ha)
RESULTS: TRENDS

Prime Agricultural Land Loss Within and Outside the Greenbelt Pre-2005 and After

Within Greenbelt
- Before 2005 (947 ha)
- After 2005 (32 ha)

Outside Greenbelt
- Before 2005 (10,261.5 ha)
- After 2005 (11,172 ha)
RESULTS: TRENDS

Prime Agricultural Land Loss Within Greenbelt
- Before 2005: 947
- After 2005: 32

Prime Agricultural Land Loss Outside Greenbelt
- Before 2005: 11172
- After 2005: 10261.5
PHASE 2: UNDERWAY

- South-Western Ontario is currently underway
- South-Eastern Ontario will be completed Summer 2019
- Data collection will be complete by Fall 2019
- Final Report will be completed by August 2020
THANK YOU!

We would like to thank OMAFRA for their support as well as the numerous planners and staff whose assistance was integral to the data collection process. Please visit www.waynecaldwell.ca to see County Summaries and Phase 1 Report.

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