

**March 4, 2021**REGION OF PEEL  
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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**Subject:** FW: Communication for Peel Council March 11,2021  
**Attachments:** PFA March Council of Peel Region.pdf

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**From:** tom dolson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** March 4, 2021 2:04 PM  
**To:** Thomson, Christine <[christine.thomson@peelregion.ca](mailto:christine.thomson@peelregion.ca)>  
**Cc:** Peel Federation of Agriculture <[peelfederationofagriculture@gmail.com](mailto:peelfederationofagriculture@gmail.com)>; Leah Emms <[Leah.Emms@ofa.on.ca](mailto:Leah.Emms@ofa.on.ca)>  
**Subject:** Communication for Peel Council March 11,2021

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Christine,  
Please include the following attachment from Peel Federation of Agriculture to Communications for the March 11,2021  
Region of Peel Council meeting.  
Thank You  
Tom Dolson  
President  
Peel Federation of Agriculture

REFERRAL TO \_\_\_\_\_  
RECOMMENDED \_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTION REQUIRED \_\_\_\_\_  
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED ☒ \_\_\_\_\_

March 4, 2021

Region of Peel Council

10 Peel Centre Drive,

Suite A,

Brampton, ON L6T 4B9

Regarding GTA West Corridor Study  
From: Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA)

The past few weeks have seen many groups and individuals address municipal councils throughout the GTA in support of requesting a Federal Environmental Assessment on the proposed GTA West Corridor. These same groups have had extensive press and online coverage to further their various agendas.

We are beyond disturbed by the fact that these groups claim to represent the interests of agriculture in the Region of Peel. PFA is concerned that their delegations and newspaper articles are one sided and not reflective of important impacts to our farming community.

Peel Federation of Agriculture represents 384 farmers in the Region of Peel. It comes as no surprise that our farms and farmers have been in steady decline for the past few decades. As Brampton and Mississauga approach build out, Caledon will be next to absorb expanding urban growth in the Greater Toronto Area. This growth will materialize predominantly in the White Belt lands south of the Greenbelt. Caledon's growth is projected to increase from its current 60,000 to 70,000 people in 2021 to 300,000 people and over 100,000 jobs by 2051.

Following the implementation of the Greenbelt Act in 2005, investors and land developers focussed on acquiring these lands in the White Belt for long term development. Currently over 75% of these White Belt lands are no longer owned by farmers, although much of it remains rented for conventional farming purposes. The farmers who still retain ownership of their farm operations within the White Belt are not making capital investments in an area that is planned for urban growth. Our margins are small and with long term returns, there is no appetite to reinvest in a shrinking land base so the probability of the next generation continuing to farm in this area is remote.

Environmental Groups are constantly appealing to save our farmland and prime agricultural lands without fully understanding the implications of what they seek. With little or no representation from farmers, these groups generalize the terms farmland and prime agricultural land. An environmental group's definition of farmland tends to be entirely different from that of a farmer. From the perspective of a farm operator, land is only viable for farming if it is a large enough parcel for big equipment, if it can be accessed with all equipment required at different times of the year and if there is adequate separation between cropland and homes.

Farming on the fringe of development presents numerous challenges;

Increased Trespassing

Increased theft

Dumping of fill and garbage in our fields

Increased farm traffic on our rural roads by commuters seeking more affordable housing beyond the Greenbelt

Load limits for trucking our commodities

Stormwater fees assessed to our farmers

Tillable acreage has also been lost to many of our conventional farmers in the Green Belt. Estate homes and riding arenas now dominate the landscape in the southern portion of Caledon's Green Belt where considerable land has been lost to the growing of commodities.

What is farmland and why is it so loosely defined? There is a reason most of our farming practices in the Region of Peel continue to be conventional and not specialty crop. Even though our lands are designated as prime agricultural, the Peel Plain is comprised predominantly of heavy clay. Our soil structure is not suitable for specialty crops seen in Niagara or the areas in and around the Holland Marsh. The Canada Land Inventory soil classification system dates back to the 1950's and is an antiquated method by which to classify soils, particularly in Peel.

If the Region of Peel is sincere in their concern with the impact that the proposed GTA West Corridor will have on agriculture, then we urge you to speak with our farm organizations and not with environmental groups who have no expertise in farming.

We strongly oppose any request for additional environmental assessments beyond the time frame that is currently in place and set-in motion by the Province. Farm property owners with land in the GTA West Corridor Study Area have had their farms virtually frozen since the process was initiated in 2007. These affected farmers have been unable to sell and relocate their operations because there is no demand for land that is frozen. They have been unable to finance these lands for expansion and capital improvements because banks are not willing to provide mortgages or loans on farms that have an uncertain value and an uncertain future. Our lands have already undergone extensive assessments relating to birds, wildlife, plants, tree and



wetlands. Additional studies only serve to create more uncertainty to our farming community. Fourteen years is enough. If a federal EA is requested on these lands, then we ask that it be carried out in a parallel process resulting in no further delays to this project.

In summation, the impact to our farmers of dealing with a corridor traversing the White Belt is no different than the impact of a residential and regional road network in an urban growth area. If the Region of Peel has any regard for agriculture, it is vitally important to understand that our industry cannot survive having our homes and farm operations frozen. Agriculture in Peel will not remain viable with such an uncertain future.

We respectfully submit our position paper regarding the GTA West Corridor Study below,  
Peel Federation of Agriculture.

Feb 2021 Peel Federation of Agriculture position paper regarding GTA west Corridor

The original GTA West Transportation Corridor process was initiated in 2007 with stage 1 and took some 7 years to complete. The corridor is expected to be 170 m. in width and is described as a multimodal transportation corridor. By the time, the study is complete farm families will have been in limbo for 14 years.

In 2019, The Province of Ontario under the Progressive Conservative government reactivated the Environmental Assessment of the GTA West Corridor. It is proceeding with Stage 2 of a study that began in 2014. The process has recently confirmed the preferred alignment of the project and is proceeding to the preliminary design stage. The project connects the following 400 series highways. Highway 400 in the east, 427 and 401 and 407 in the west. The process was suspended by the previous Liberal government in mid 2015. This segment of the process is expected to be completed sometime in 2022.

It should be noted that this discussion in part is driven by the Liberal governments decision in 2005 to implement the Greenbelt Plan that assessed land needs to accommodate future growth and to identify where growth should be directed within the GTA. By creating the Greenbelt Planning area, the government also created the Whitebelt area for future growth considerations. The Whitebelt is an area snuggled between the Greenbelt and the urban boundaries across the GTA.

This decision sent a clear signal to land investors that the area should be considered and be potentially added to the development industry portfolio. Many parcels have already been acquired by the development industry thereby sealing the fate of the area.

According to the Ministry of Finance in a 2020 report, population projections for the GTA will see a 36.7% increase by 2046. That equates to 9.5 million people.

The people most affected by these decisions are being challenged in many significant ways. The farm families that have land holdings on one or both sides of an arbitrary unscientific line drawn by government have struggled to find the future since the declaration of the Greenbelt. Many family farms in Caledon have in some ways become what is best described as terminal in nature. Due to high costs, lack of available services and uncertainty around initiatives driven by projected future population growth, farming families are forced to make tough decisions about their future. Low margins in the business of agriculture dictate that investments are generational with long term payback being the norm. The next generation will not farm on a land base in the Whitebelt. The cost to remain puts it out of reach and in fact current land prices in the Greenbelt nearby the Whitebelt border are generally out of reach for expansion of existing farm operations. In short, farmers need certainty to remain viable in Caledon. We are 14 years into this holding pattern. How many more years will be consumed by this process? The Farm community is fed up with the "We have to save the farmland" cliché being used by a society with no investment in and little understanding of the economics and general workings of the industry.

The Peel Federation of Agriculture is calling on this and successive governments to put to bed the GTA West Transportation Corridor once and for all. We cannot continue to guess where we should make investments and what that time frame may look like. It is not sustainable. Either build it or not but decide now.