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Town of Hanover
341 10th St,
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RE: Farmland Protection and the use of Minister's Zoning Orders

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members across the province. OFA has a strong voice for our members and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. We are passionate and dedicated to ensuring the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability and growth of our farm businesses. We are represented locally by the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture (BCFA).

Ontario's diverse and innovative agri-food sector is a powerhouse for the province – growing and producing more than 200 farm and food products, fueling our rural communities and driving the provincial economy by generating more than 860,000 jobs and contributing over \$47 billion to Ontario's annual GDP. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

We would like to take this opportunity to outline our position with respect to farmland protection and the use of Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs). We understand this information may be timely as the Council considers requesting an MZO. However, we note that our provincial policy positions are not meant to speak directly to any specific local matter or application before Council. We would defer comment on local matters to our respective affiliate organization, in this case the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture.

OFA wishes to emphasize that there is only one Ontario landscape, meaning that the full range of landforms and land uses found across Ontario; urban, rural, agricultural, natural heritage, cultural heritage, aggregate extraction, etc. must share this one landscape. Inherent in this is the recognition that our agricultural areas not only provide us with food, fibre and fuel, but also a broad range of environmental and ecological goods and services that benefit all Ontarians.

Maintaining our agricultural lands to produce food, fibre and fuel is critical. It must be recognized that there is a finite and shrinking amount of agricultural lands. As stated in OFA's [Consolidated Agricultural Land Use Policy statement](#), OFA believes the highest and best use of Ontario's arable land is for agriculture. OFA also believes that the Provincial Government's role is to establish the overarching principles, policies and programs that will guide and direct municipal governments on issues relating to land use and the preservation of agricultural lands.

OFA endorses the [Provincial Policy Statement's \(PPS\)](#) agriculture policies [Section 2.3] that require municipalities protect their prime agricultural areas for their long-term agricultural use. We consider the policies of the PPS to represent the minimum standard in support of protecting the environment, farmland and public health and safety. In fact, OFA has stated that the PPS does not go far enough in protecting our finite agricultural lands. We have recommended strengthening of the PPS in order to require fixed urban settlement boundaries and policies requiring mandatory intensification within the existing built urban areas as well as mandatory "greenfield" density



requirements to better utilize infrastructure, improve the financial viability of public transit and protect our prime agricultural lands from sprawl.

OFA opposed amendments to the Planning Act to provide the Minister or any other planning authority the ability to make planning decisions which are not consistent with the PPS. We are concerned that legislative amendments giving the Minister the ability to issue MZO that are not consistent with the PPS is short-sighted. Further, it weakens the local planning process by providing developers and municipalities with a 'workaround' that could foster bad planning that will cause either individuals or government to incur the cost of dealing with poor outcomes later.

OFA understands the need for the Minister to have the power to issue an MZO and have supported its use in areas of the province that are without robust local planning processes. We have no objection to MZO being used within the lands that would be considered the Urban Envelope. Shortening the timelines on services such as long-term care facilities by re-developing lands within the urban settlement areas make sense, but this same lens cannot be applied to the use of MZO to fast-track non-agricultural development of agricultural lands.

OFA has recommended to the provincial government that the use of MZO powers should be curtailed in areas where there is already a robust planning process in place. OFA views the frequent use of MZO as a significant threat that will result in the permanent loss of farmland to development.

OFA encourages local municipal councils to refrain from requesting MZO and to instead work through their approved planning processes in matters concerning agricultural land and farming communities.

Land capable of supporting agricultural activities is a finite, strategic, non-renewable resource worthy of preserving for its ability to provide safe, affordable, and sustainable food/fibre/fuel. The world's population is projected to rise to 9.8 billion by 2050, underlining the need to keep Ontario's highly productive agricultural land producing food for Bruce County, Ontario, Canada, and the world.

Regards,

Chris Cossitt, BCFA President

cc: Municipality of Brockton

Ontario Minister of Agriculture

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

IN UNITY THERE'S STRENGTH