

# Agricultural and Rural Systems

## Peel 2041 Discussion Paper

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November 2019



*This policy discussion paper (including any attachments) has been prepared using information current to the report date. It provides an assessment of provincial policy conformity requirements, recognizing that Provincial plans and policies were under review and are potentially subject to change. The proposed direction contained in this discussion paper will be reviewed to ensure that any implementing amendments to the Regional Official Plan will conform or be consistent with the most recent in-effect provincial policy statement, plans and legislation. Additional changes will not be made to the contents of this discussion paper.*

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## Executive Summary

As part of the Region's Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review process this discussion paper examines the policy context in which agricultural and rural policies are to be reviewed. Based on this review the discussion paper then recommends policy revisions and mapping changes to bring the Official Plan into conformity with provincial policies and plans and achieve the Region's goals and objectives for Peel. This review is supported by the Agricultural Mapping Refinement report (Region of Peel. (2019c)) addressing the identification of prime agricultural areas that accompanies this Discussion Paper.

### The Agricultural and Rural Systems in Peel

The Region recognizes and values the contributions that the agricultural sector and the rural community make to Peel's economy, distinctive character and quality of life. Agriculture makes a significant contribution to the Region's economy while also playing a significant role in maintaining rural character and the natural environment. Agriculture in Peel faces significant challenges, though, arising from its location on the periphery of a large, rapidly growing urban area, but also significant opportunities.

### The Policy Context

Provincial policies and plans establish the framework for municipal planning in Ontario. The Ontario *Planning Act* requires that the Region's Official Plan be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conform with provincial Plans. Within the past five years the province has updated the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) guiding planning across Ontario and four of the provincial plans affecting Peel: the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The updated provincial policies and plans involve significant changes in policy and mapping affecting agriculture and rural areas that must be addressed in Peel 2041. Key changes include:

- identification of an agricultural system comprised of the agricultural land base and the agri-food network of businesses, services and infrastructure that agricultural operations depend on;
- development of provincial mapping of prime agricultural areas for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- requirement that the prime agricultural areas identified by the province be designated in official plans, with provision that, at the time that an upper tier plan is brought into conformity with the provincial plans, the upper tier municipality may refine the mapping in accordance with provincial guidelines;
- policies to support and enhance the agricultural system, as well as agricultural operations, both on rural lands and in prime agricultural areas;
- direction that integrated planning for growth management, including transportation, consider opportunities to support and enhance the agricultural system
- provision of additional scope and flexibility for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses;
- enhanced protection for agriculture from the impacts of non-farm development, including requirements for agricultural impact assessments;
- identification of rural areas and of policies supporting healthy, integrated and viable rural areas; and

- encouraging municipalities to implement strategies to sustain and enhance the agricultural system.

In 2018 the Province issued a Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement that focused on preventing and reducing food waste and recovering useful resources from them to be reintegrated back into the economy. Municipalities are required to ensure that their official plans are consistent with the Policy Statement.

### Regional Initiatives

The Region has undertaken a number of technical studies and other initiatives that are to be considered in the Agricultural and Rural System Policy Review:

- a Land Evaluation & Area Review (LEAR) to identify prime agricultural areas in Peel for protection;
- an 'Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper' to assess the applicability and need for enhanced policy guidance to improve land use compatibility adjacent to agricultural areas and suggest policy approaches;
- a review of the provincial Minimum Distance Separation Formulae and Implementation Guidelines to assess their effectiveness;
- refinement of the provincial prime agricultural system mapping that was issued pursuant to the Growth Plan; and
- collaboration with a broad coalition of stakeholders to develop the Peel Food Charter, focussed on the development of a just, sustainable and secure food system and preparation by Peel Public Health of an "Urban Agriculture Discussion Paper".

### Policy Recommendations

The final section of this discussion paper reviews the Agricultural Resource and Rural System policies and mapping in the current Regional Official Plan to identify gaps, policy issues and opportunities. The review concludes that modifications to the current policies and mapping are needed to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conform with provincial plans; to support the goals and objectives of the Official Plan; and to implement current Regional initiatives, including those related to the food system.

The discussion paper makes recommendations for changes respecting:

- incorporation of the agricultural system approach in the agricultural system and rural system policies;
- identification and mapping of prime agricultural areas;
- permitted uses in prime agricultural areas;
- Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae and Guidelines;



- addressing the impacts of development on the agricultural system, including agricultural impact assessment and edge planning;
- supporting the food system, including urban agriculture;
- the rural system;
- lot creation and lot adjustments; and
- mapping.

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## 1. Introduction

The Ontario *Planning Act* requires a municipality to update its official plan every five years in order to ensure that the official plan policies stay current, are consistent with provincial policy statements, conform with provincial plans, and achieve the goals and objectives of the official plan. The Region of Peel is undertaking Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review, a five-year review and update of the Region's Official Plan.

### 1.1 Ontario Land Use Planning Context

The Ontario government has the primary responsibility for agriculture and rural resource management, with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) being the principal ministry. Provincial land use planning direction for the protection of agricultural resources and support for the Agricultural System is provided through several plans and policies, including the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019) and the Greenbelt Plan (2017). Provincial policy guidance provides broad direction that applies province-wide, as well as direction for specific areas in the province, such as Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

The 2014 PPS updated policy direction for prime agricultural areas, rural areas and rural lands including improved definitions and permissions for agricultural uses. In 2017, the Province released amendments to the four provincial land use plans that work together to manage growth and protect the Agricultural System in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. One of the objectives of the updates was to enhance the provincial direction respecting natural heritage, agriculture and water resource systems. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan), Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan included revised policy direction to implement direction in the PPS for agriculture and rural areas and establish policy for the implementation of an agricultural system approach in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In May 2019, the Province released A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe which replaced the 2017 Growth Plan and will be addressed in the official plan review.

Municipalities are responsible for implementing provincial direction respecting land use planning. The Region does this through a series of policies, plans and programs including the Regional Official Plan (ROP) which provides guidance for managing agricultural resources and the rural system in Peel. The Regional Official Plan is one tool for implementing provincial policies and plans.

### 1.2 Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review

The Regional Official Plan provides a long-term policy framework for managing growth and development within the Region. It sets the Regional context for detailed planning by protecting the environment, managing resources, directing growth and setting the basis for providing Regional services in an efficient and effective manner. The review of the current Regional Official Plan, referred to as Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review (Peel 2041), is being undertaken to plan for growth to 2041.

Peel 2041 includes a focused review of the policy areas identified in the adjoining diagram to ensure conformity with recent provincial policies and guidelines and achieve the Region's goals and objectives. The review of agriculture and rural system policies is part of an environmental themed review which includes the Water Resources, Greenlands System, Wildland Fires and Climate Change policy areas.



### 1.3 Purpose of Discussion Paper

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to:

- describe the context for the Agricultural System and Rural System policy review in Peel;
- provide a review of the current Regional Official Plan's agricultural resource and rural system policies and how they relate to new provincial planning policy and address emerging needs and trends in agriculture;
- identify agriculture and rural related Regional Official Plan policy changes that are necessary to ensure the Region's conformity with provincial plans, policy and guidelines; and
- provide recommendations to update mapping of the Region's Prime Agricultural Areas (PAA) shown on Schedule B and mapping of the Rural System shown on Schedule D.

The objectives of the policy review are to better align the Region's agricultural resource and rural system policies with the PPS, provincial plans, provincial guidelines, to address the recommendations of the technical studies undertaken by the Region and to achieve the goals and objectives of the Region. In so doing, it will serve to protect the agricultural land base and support the Agricultural System in Peel while also conserving the environment and resources of the rural area, promoting healthy and complete communities, and providing opportunities for appropriate economic development.

The Rural System is the setting for most agricultural activity in Peel. The Rural System policies impact on agriculture and so the Agricultural Resource and Rural System policies are interrelated.

This Discussion Paper is being made available for review and comment by the public, stakeholders and agencies. The input received will be taken into account in developing recommended policy revisions.

The proposed policy amendments and mapping will be reviewed further through the public consultation process for Peel 2041.

## 2. An Agricultural System for the Region of Peel

### 2.1 Agricultural Profile of the Golden Horseshoe

Located within the Golden Horseshoe, Peel Region is situated within one of the largest agri-food clusters in North America. The Golden Horseshoe is home to 934,000 acres of farmland, producing over 200 agricultural commodities on 5,530 farms. In 2011, the agri-food sector in the Golden Horseshoe contributed \$6.3 billion in annual economic impacts to Ontario's economy (PlanScape, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2017).

### 2.2 Agriculture in Peel

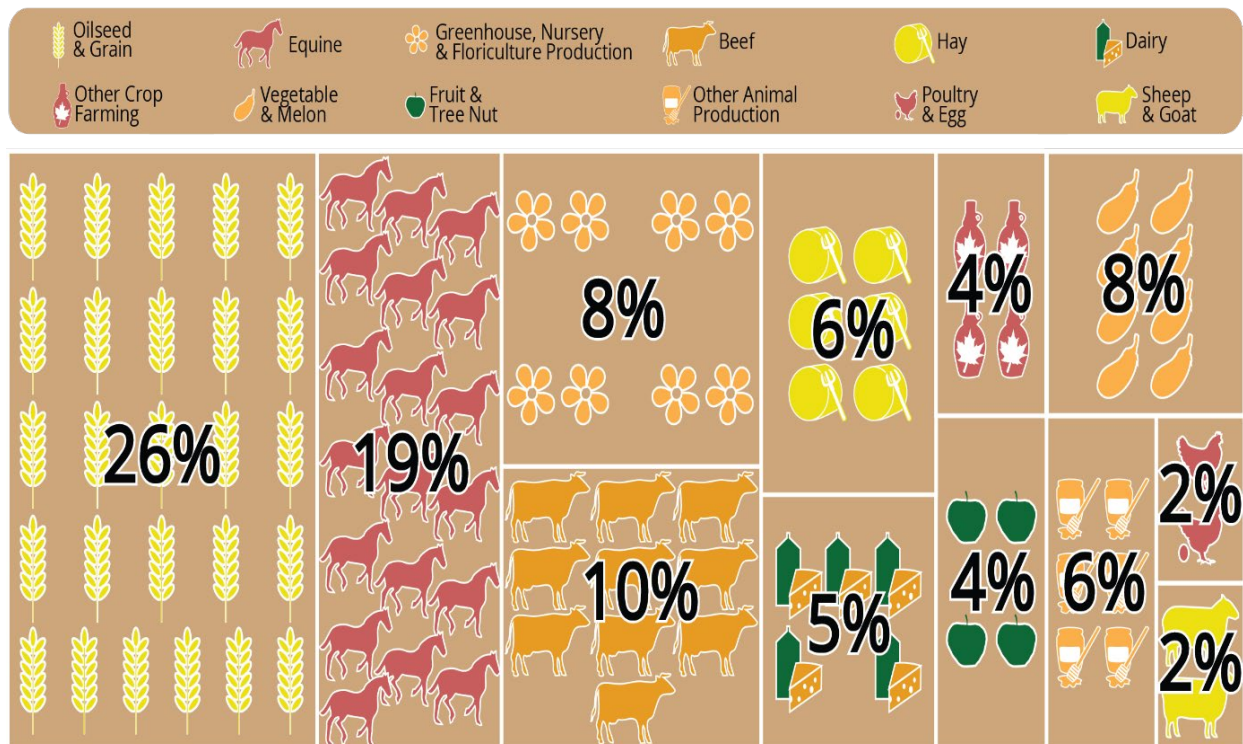
#### 2.2.1 Agriculture's Importance in Peel Region

The Region of Peel (the Region) recognizes and values the contribution of the agricultural sector to Peel's economy, its cultural heritage and the conservation of its natural environment. The protection of Peel's agricultural and rural resource areas and policies that support the viability of the sector ensure local food production and a healthy rural economy.

The 2016 Agricultural Census completed by Statistics Canada indicated that roughly 26% of the land in Peel Region is used for agricultural purposes. Additionally, Peel Region has the benefit of close proximity to a large consumer market with a population of roughly 6.4 million in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Statistics Canada, 2017; Region of Peel, 2017a and 2017b). The single largest sector of agricultural production in the Region is oil seed and grains production, followed by the equine industry. Sectors such as dairy and nursery also bring significant cash receipts due to their high value production. Figure 2.1 provides an illustration of the composition of the Region's agricultural sector.

In 2016, there were 408 farms in Peel Region, compared to 440 farms in 2011. Looking at trends since 2001, there has been an overall decline of 7.27% in the number of farms in Peel. There also has been a comparable rate of decline in the number of hectares of lands in agricultural use with a 11.2% decrease between 2001 and 2016, resulting in 34,265 hectares of land being owned, rented, leased or crop-shared for agricultural production in 2016. However, overall between 2006 and 2011 the Region saw a significantly slower rate of decline in lands in agricultural production than in the past and as compared to other Regions within the GTA.

**Figure 2.1: Peel Region Farms Classified by Industry Group**



Source: Region of Peel. (2017b). *2016 Agriculture Census Bulletin*

Peel Region farms also maintained their trend from earlier years of rising gross farm receipts (GFR) which were valued at \$94.13 million in 2016, a 6% increase since 2011. In terms of productivity, Peel’s agricultural land base generated approximately \$2,747 in gross farm receipts per hectare, a 17.4% increase since 2011.

Farms in the Region are diversifying and taking opportunities to bring added value to their operations and develop additional sources of income. Between 2011 and 2016, 18% of Peel farms were involved in some form of direct marketing such as pick-your-own, farm gate or farm market sales, community shared agriculture (CSA) or value-added processing. Policies that support agriculture-related and on farm diversified uses within farming areas are important to the success of the Agricultural System in Peel.

Agriculture plays an important role in maintaining environmental quality in Peel. Best management practices contribute to protection of the water resources system and sources of drinking water, reduction of flooding and erosion, climate change mitigation, and the protection and enhancement of natural heritage systems and key natural heritage features.

### 2.2.2 Challenges and Opportunities

Agriculture in Peel faces challenges that are common to agriculture across Ontario, such as international trade, commodity prices and the cost of energy. Agriculture in Peel faces additional challenges, though, arising from its location on the periphery of a large, rapidly growing urban area. These include:

- competition for land, with a significant amount of agricultural land being owned by non-farmers within the urban periphery. In areas under pressure for urbanization Land prices can rise above levels that are economically viable for farming;
- growth in non-farm land ownership, enabling farmers to expand their operations by renting land. This is conducive to the growth of production systems that work well on rented land, such as field crop production, but does not offer the sense of security farmers need to invest in improvements;
- increasing land use conflicts between farm and non-farm land uses such as trespassing, vandalism and complaints about odours and noise;
- infrastructure and agricultural services required by farmers are less readily available; and
- increased traffic on local roads, making it difficult to move machinery and produce.

At the same time, proximity to large and diverse urban markets creates potential opportunities. These include:

- the development of new types of farming operations catering to specialized urban markets: organic produce, pick-your-own, ethnic vegetables, herbs, and equestrian facilities; and
- the development of agriculture-related uses and on-farm businesses that add value to farm products or supplement household income including:
  - manufacturing of value-added agricultural products such as jams and juices or cider;
  - retailing of farm products such as fruits and vegetables or flowers; and,
  - agri-tourism and recreational uses such as pumpkin farms or riding schools.

### 2.2.3 Peel Region's Objectives for Agriculture

The Region's Official Plan sets out the following objectives supporting agriculture in Peel:

- To protect the Prime Agricultural Area for long-term use for agriculture and to support Peel's farmers and agricultural organizations as valuable contributors to the community and the economy of Peel.
- To protect agricultural uses in the Prime Agricultural Area from incompatible activities and land uses which would limit agricultural productivity or efficiency or result in the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base.
- To support a diversified, healthy and productive agricultural industry as an important component of Peel's economic base and heritage.
- To work in cooperation with the Town of Caledon to increase and support diversification in local farming as a source of local food supply.

### 2.3 Regional Agricultural Initiatives

Peel's Official Plan plays a key role in achieving the Region's objectives for agriculture. To create a closer link with the agricultural community, the Region supports and participates in a number of agricultural partnerships and delivers programs serving the agricultural sector. Current Regional initiatives include:

- participation in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Framing Alliance and endorsement of the Golden Horseshoe Agriculture & Agri-Food Strategy - Food & Farming: An Action Plan, 2021;
- establishment of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) to provide a venue for closer communications between the Region and the agricultural community;
- preparation of the Grown in Peel local food guide;
- collaboration in the development of the Peel Food Charter and the Peel Food Action Council; and
- partnering with the Conservation Authorities in delivering the Region's Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) since 2004.



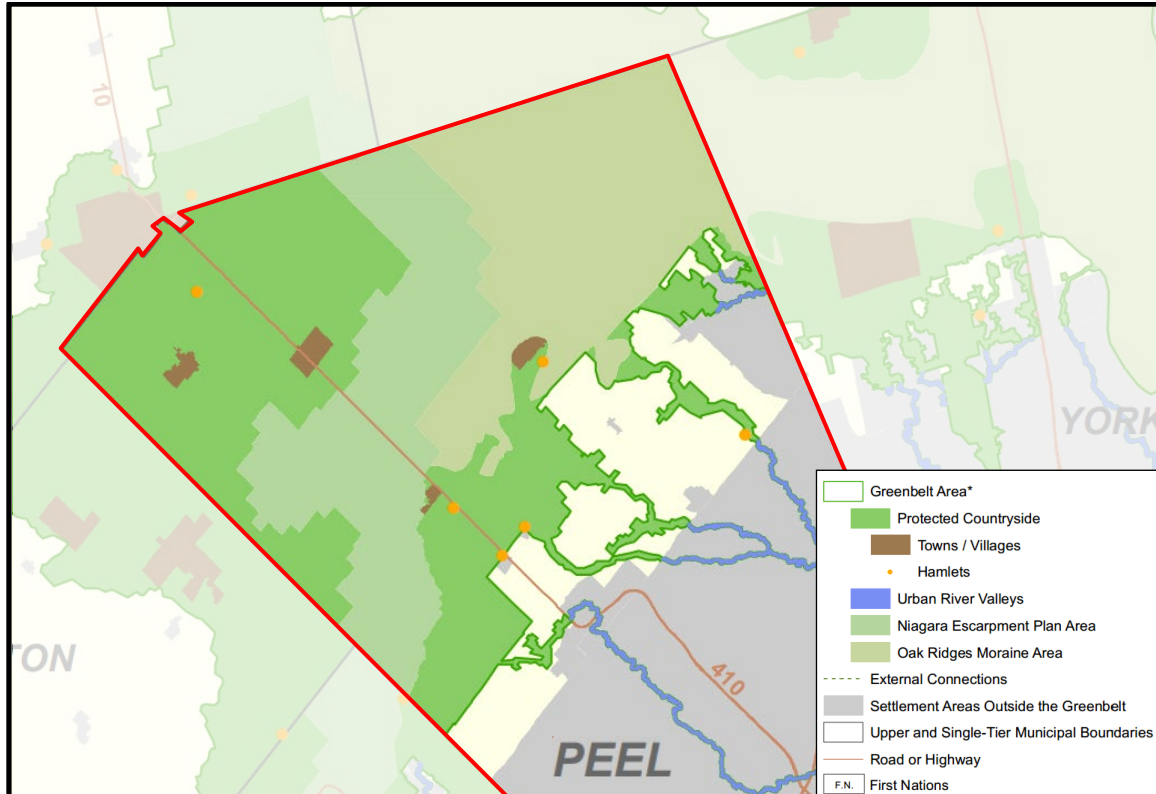
### 3. Policy Context

The following section will provide a discussion of the policy context that governs the development of agriculture and rural policies in the Region. Provincial policies, plans and guidelines establish the foundation for planning policies respecting agriculture and rural areas. The Region, through its Official Plan, builds on this foundation to establish policies specific to Peel. These policies are implemented by the Region and, at the local municipal level, through more detailed local policies and regulations and through decisions on planning applications.

#### 3.1 Overview of Provincial Plans, Policy and Guidelines

Provincial policies and plans establish a series of overlapping layers of policy respecting land use and development in Ontario. The Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS) provides policy direction for the development and use of land that applies across Ontario. The Provincial land use plans provide more specific direction for specific areas within the province. The Growth Plan, which sets out policy and mapping for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, building on the PPS, applies to all of Peel Region. More detailed policy direction is provided for specific areas within the Growth Plan through the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. Figure 3.1 shows the areas in Peel that are covered by the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

**Figure 3.1: Provincial Plan Areas in Peel (Excerpt)**



Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs. (2017a). *Greenbelt Plan*

The provincial *Planning Act* requires that municipal planning decisions, including official Plans:

- 1) be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement; and
- 2) conform with provincial plans.

While provincial plans build on the PPS they establish additional, more specific requirements and may set higher standards by, for example, providing a higher level of protection for agricultural land. Where the policies of a provincial plan address the same, similar, related, or overlapping matters as policies in the PPS, applying the more specific policies of the provincial plan satisfies the requirements of the PPS. Where matters addressed in the PPS do not overlap with policies in a provincial plan, those PPS policies must be satisfied.

Similarly, within the Greenbelt Plan Area, if policies of the Growth Plan address the same, similar, related, or overlapping matters as the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, or the Niagara Escarpment Plan those Growth Plan policies do not apply within that part of the Greenbelt Area covered by the relevant plan except where the policies of the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, or the Niagara Escarpment Plan provide otherwise.

As provided in the Places to Grow Act, 2005, where there is a conflict between the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation, or Niagara Escarpment Plans and the Growth Plan regarding the natural environment or human health, the direction that provides more protection to the natural environment or human health prevails. Detailed conflict provisions are set out in the Places to Grow Act, 2005.

Since the Region's last update of its Official Plan's agriculture policies in 2007, a number of amended and new provincial Plans, policies and guidelines have been released, including:

- Provincial Policy Statement (2014);
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas (2016);
- OMAFRA Minimum Distance Separation Document (2017);
- OMAFRA guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas (2016);
- amendments to the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017);
- OMAFRA Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe Area (2018); and
- A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019).

In addition, in 2017 the province issued draft Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidelines.

### **3.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement 2014**

The Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS) implements the Provincial vision for land use and development in Ontario. The PPS establishes a framework for long range planning to build liveable and

resilient communities, protect natural resources and the environment, support economic growth and protect public health and safety. The current PPS came into effect in April 2014, replacing the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement.

To recognize the importance of agriculture and rural areas, the 2014 PPS incorporated new and amended policies and definitions. These included:

- identification of the agri-food sector and local food interests as part of the Province's long-term economic prosperity (policy 1.7.1 h);
- recognition of and support for agricultural uses, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices outside of prime agricultural areas (policies 1.1.5.7 and 1.1.5.8);
- recognition of the importance of rural areas and establishment of policies supporting healthy, integrated and viable rural areas (section 1.4);
- application of the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae on rural lands and for settlement area expansions to address land use compatibility for the livestock sector (policies 1.1.3.8 d) and 1.1.5.9);
- clarification that nothing is intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue within the natural heritage system (policy 2.1.9);
- a requirement for the designation of prime agricultural areas in municipal planning documents to protect important agricultural areas for long term use for agriculture (policy 2.3.2); and
- clarification and broadening of the range, scope and size of agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses permitted on rural lands (policy 1.1.5.8) and in Prime Agricultural Areas (policy 2.3.3).

The PPS policies provide additional opportunity for municipalities to support agricultural operations and agri-food business and protect prime agricultural areas through their official plans. The following sections provide a more detailed discussion of the rural and agriculture policies within the 2014 PPS.

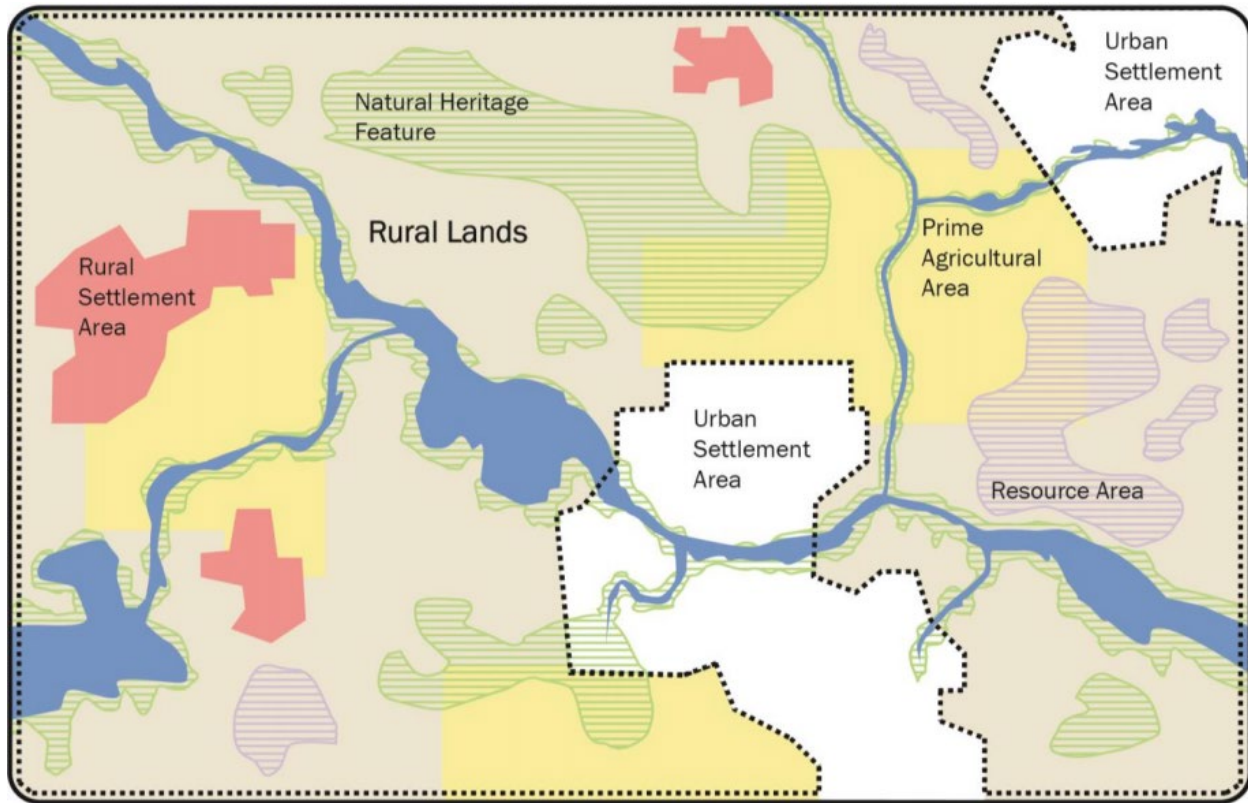
### **3.1.1.1 Rural Areas and Rural Lands**

The 2014 PPS introduced rural areas as a new element in the Province's approach to growth and development. It identified rural areas as a "system of land within municipalities that may include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas," (PPS, 2014). Figure 3.2 illustrates the rural areas concept.

Rural areas are important to the viability of the Provincial economy and the agricultural sector. Defining the rural areas as a system that is different from the urban system acknowledges that rural areas have a unique character and provide their own distinctive contribution to local and Provincial economic viability and healthy communities. The concept of rural areas within the PPS corresponds to the Rural System policies in the Regional Official Plan. The rural areas policies in the PPS indicate that municipalities should support rural areas by building on rural character; accommodating an appropriate range and mix of housing; promoting economic diversification, including tourism; conserving natural

heritage; providing economic opportunities in prime agricultural areas; and making rural settlement areas the focus for growth and development.

**Figure 3.2: Provincial Policy Statement - Rural Areas Concept**



Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs. (2016). *An Introduction to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014: Rural Ontario*

### 3.1.1.2 Prime Agricultural Areas

The PPS provides policy direction for the identification and protection of prime agricultural areas (PAA).

Prime agricultural areas are defined in the PPS as those areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. They include prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Class 4 through 7 lands plus additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms exhibiting characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural lands are defined by the Province as those lands that are generally specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands (OMAFRA, 2016; PPS, 2014). These lands represent areas having the greatest potential and capability for agriculture. The PPS directs municipalities to identify and designate prime agricultural areas based on an assessment using guidelines developed by the Province:

- Planning authorities shall designate prime agricultural areas and specialty crop areas in accordance with guidelines developed by the Province, as amended from time to time (PPS Policy 2.3.2).

Currently, these guidelines are the Province's Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) system for agriculture. Using a LEAR, prime agricultural areas can be assessed to confirm if mapped boundaries reflect areas having the greatest potential for agriculture based on local factors for agricultural land classification. In 2016, the Region and the Town of Caledon (Town) completed a LEAR to provide the basis for the local identification of the prime agricultural area in Peel. The LEAR methodology and technical recommendations of the Region and Town study are discussed in Section 4.1. Subsequently the Province completed a LEAR for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) as part of the identification of an Agricultural System required under both the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan. This is discussed further in Section 3.1.3.3 of this report.

### **3.1.1.3 Permitted Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas**

The Province revised the PPS to include new policies and definitions for agricultural and agriculture-related uses. The 2014 PPS clarified the definition of agriculture-related uses, removing the previous limitation that these uses are to be small-scale. These uses also no longer are required to be directly related to the farm operation but are to be directly related to farm operations in the area. The PPS also clarified permissions for on-farm diversified uses, replacing the previously permitted secondary uses, but requiring that these uses be limited in area. These changes permit a wider diversity of agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses within prime agricultural areas to support the viability of the agricultural sector, including agri-tourism.

In October 2016, the Province released Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas. These guidelines provide direction to municipalities respecting objectives, criteria and principles to be applied in implementing the policies respecting permitted uses. Land uses that the Province encourages and permits within prime agricultural areas are identified. The guidelines provide examples of uses that would meet the definitions for agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses (see Figure 3.3 for examples). They also discuss the tools available to municipalities to implement the policies and identify methods to mitigate impacts on agriculture. Overall, the guidelines provide Provincial criteria and direction on how these agriculture supporting uses should be permitted.



**Figure 3.3: Permitted Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas and Rural Lands**

Examples of Agricultural Uses			
			
Cropland (all crops including biomass and sod)*	Pastureland	Barns, manure storages and other associated buildings and structures	Grain dryers and feed storages (e.g., bunkers, silos or gravity bins for farm's own use only)
Examples of Agriculture-Related Uses			
			
Apple storage and distribution centre serving apple farm operations in the area	Farmers' market primarily selling products grown in the area*	Auction for produce grown in the area	Farm input supplier (e.g., feed, seeds, fertilizer (serving farm operations in the area)
Examples of On-Farm Diversified Uses			
			
Value-added uses that could use feedstock from outside the surrounding agricultural area (e.g., processor, packager, winery, cheese factory, bakery, abattoir)	Home occupations (e.g., professional office, bookkeeper, land surveyor, art studio, hairdresser, massage therapist, daycare, veterinary clinic, kennel, classes or workshops)*	Home industries (e.g., sawmill, welding or woodworking shop, manufacturing/fabrication, equipment repair, seasonal storage of boats or trailers)	

Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs. (2016c). *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas*.

The guidelines also provide direction when non-agricultural uses are proposed in prime agricultural areas, such as proposals for new or expanding settlement boundaries or limited, non-residential uses. The PPS discourages such uses from locating in prime agricultural areas but provides that in specific circumstances these uses may be considered. The guidelines provide direction for the completion of agricultural impact assessments (AIA) to satisfy provincial policy requirements and the factors to be considered as part of an AIA.

While these permitted use guidelines are neither regulation nor policy, they represent the Provincial standard which municipalities are expected to meet or exceed to be consistent with the PPS.

Municipalities are encouraged to meet or exceed these standards through the criteria for permitted uses in their official plans and zoning by-laws, while reflecting local standards and circumstances.

The 2005 PPS had provided that land may only be excluded from prime agricultural areas for settlement area expansions; for extraction of mineral aggregates, minerals and petroleum resources; and, subject to certain criteria, for limited non-residential uses. The 2014 PPS only permits lands to be removed from prime agricultural areas for settlement area expansions. The other uses may be permitted in prime agricultural areas, but the lands on which they are located may not be removed from the prime agricultural area designation.

#### **3.1.1.4 Natural Heritage and Agriculture**

The PPS defines and directs municipalities to identify a natural heritage system (NHS). The Province recognizes the co-existence and overlap of natural heritage systems, features and areas with agriculture. As such, the PPS natural heritage policies are not intended to limit agricultural uses, but to permit agriculture to continue and evolve within the NHS while also protecting the natural heritage features within the system (PPS, Section 2.1.9). To achieve this, the Province removed the caveat that an agricultural use had to be previously existing for the activity to continue within the NHS.

- Nothing in policy 2.1 is intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (Policy 2.1.9).

Further discussion on the NHS will be found in the Greenlands System Discussion Paper to be prepared as part of the Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review.

#### **3.1.1.5 Provincial Minimum Distance Separation Document**

The Provincial Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Document is a Provincial planning tool used to address livestock odour in agricultural areas. Implemented through official plan policy and zoning by-laws, the MDS Document establishes guidelines and formulae to calculate and apply required setbacks to separate:

- New or expanding livestock barns and/or manure storage from existing non-farm uses; and,
- New or expanding non-farm uses (e.g., urban expansions) from existing livestock barns and/or manure storages.

The purpose of MDS is to minimize nuisance complaints due to livestock odour from normal farm practices, thereby reducing potential land use conflicts between agriculture and non-farm uses. It ensures that existing or proposed farm operations can operate and remain viable for continued production and expansion. The 2014 PPS introduced policy requiring that settlement area expansions also comply. MDS does not address noise, dust or other farm-generated impacts which may arise from normal farm practices.

In 2017, the Province updated its MDS formulae and implementation guidelines through The Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Document: Formulae and Guidelines for Livestock Facility and Anaerobic

Digester Odour Setbacks. Together, the PPS and the MDS formulae and guidelines direct municipalities to apply MDS setbacks within rural areas and prime agricultural areas. Therefore, the Region is to apply the MDS formulae and guidelines through broad policy direction to the local municipalities to implement MDS policies at the local level and through implementation at the Regional level at the time of a Municipal Comprehensive Review for a settlement boundary expansion.

The Region and Town of Caledon have jointly reviewed the application of the MDS policy within the Region in the report entitled Review of Minimum Distance Separation Formulae and Implementation Guidelines (2014). The analysis and recommendations of this report are discussed in Section 4.3.

### 3.1.2 Provincial Plans

On May 18, 2017, the Province released amendments to the following provincial plans:

- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which was replaced by A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019) in May 2019;
- Greenbelt Plan;
- Niagara Escarpment Plan; and
- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

As noted earlier, all four plans apply to parts of Peel.

The four provincial plans provide an integrated policy framework to guide planning for growth and development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) while protecting the natural environment and resources. The plans, individually and collectively, encourage the development of compact, complete communities that make better use of available lands to maintain a viable economy, and protect natural heritage and agricultural assets.

The agricultural policies in the provincial plans were updated to improve consistency among the plans and provide flexibility for the development of the new agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses identified in the PPS. Through the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan there is now direction to provide a continuous agricultural land base through the identification and designation of prime agricultural areas and rural lands across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The plans go beyond protection of the agricultural land base, though, to establish a framework supporting the broader agricultural system as outlined below in Section 3.1.3.

The following sections identify the key new agriculture and rural system policy areas for each of the provincial plans. Further information on the Region's process to achieve conformity with the amended Provincial Plans can be found in the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan Discussion Papers prepared as part of the Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review.



### 3.1.2.1 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was introduced in 2006, updated in 2017, and replaced in May 2019 by A Place to Grow- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It is intended to provide a 25-year vision and direction for development and population growth. The Growth Plan emphasizes management of growth through balancing Provincial and municipal priorities and recognizing the need for collaborative decision-making.

The 2019 Growth Plan expanded on the agricultural system concept contained in the 2005 Greenbelt Plan, establishing the agricultural system concept as an important component of agricultural policy. The 2005 Greenbelt plan described the agricultural system as being made up of specialty crop, prime agricultural and rural areas. The 2019 Growth Plan describes the agricultural system as being comprised of:

- The agricultural land base, consisting of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and rural lands; and
- The agri-food network which includes infrastructure, services, and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.

The components of the agricultural system are discussed in more detail in Section 3.1.3.

The Growth Plan builds on the PPS, incorporating additional and more specific land use planning policies. It supports and enhances the long-term viability and productivity of agriculture by protecting prime agricultural areas and the agri-food network. The Plan includes policies:

- identifying the agricultural system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (policy 4.2.6.1);
- requiring that prime agricultural areas be designated in municipal official plans in accordance with the mapping developed by the province and be protected for agricultural use (policy 4.2.6.2). Upper tier municipalities may refine the provincial mapping at the time of initial implementation in their official plans, based on implementation procedures issued by the Province. Further refinements may only be made through a *municipal comprehensive review* (policy 4.2.6.9);
- directing that integrated planning for growth management, including transportation, consider opportunities to support and enhance the agricultural system (policy 4.2.6.6);
- requiring that planning for new or expanded settlement areas, infrastructure corridors, and new mineral aggregate operations include agricultural impact assessments where prime agricultural areas may be impacted (policies 2.2.8.3 h), 3.2.5.1 c), and 4.2.8.3);
- indicating that adverse impacts on agriculture and the agri-food network from new or expanding settlement areas, or elsewhere where agricultural and non-agricultural uses interface, are to be avoided or, where this is not possible, minimized or mitigated (policies 2.2.8.3 h) and 4.2.6.3));
- encouraging the retention of existing lots of record for agricultural use (policy 4.2.6.5);
- indicating that the geographic continuity of the agricultural land base and the functional and economic connections to the agri-food network are to be maintained (policy 4.2.6.4); and

- encouraging municipalities to implement strategies to sustain and enhance the agricultural system such as access to healthy, local, and affordable food, urban and near-urban agriculture, food system planning and promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food, and agri-product businesses (policy 4.2.6.7).

As well, through the Growth Plan, the Province has provided policy direction for intensification in existing built up areas, which leads to slower consumption of greenfield areas and greater protection and certainty for highly valued prime agricultural areas and rural lands.

### 3.1.2.2 Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan was issued by the province in 2005 and updated in 2017. It encompasses the area in Peel shown on Figure 3.1. The intent of the Plan is to provide permanent protection for agricultural lands and for natural heritage and water resource systems in the countryside within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to support agriculture as the predominant land use, to provide for a range of rural and social economic activities, and to build resilience to and mitigate climate change.

The Greenbelt Plan designates a Protected Countryside, which is similar in concept to the Rural Areas identified in the PPS and the Growth Plan. The Protected Countryside is comprised of an Agricultural System, a Natural System and settlement areas. The Plan also includes policies respecting parkland, open space and trails; recreational uses, infrastructure; renewable and non-renewable resources; and other non-agricultural uses. Figure 3.1 shows the area that is within the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside in Peel.

Municipalities are responsible for implementing the Protected Countryside policies of the Greenbelt Plan through their official plans and through their decisions on development applications. While the Greenbelt Plan Area includes and builds upon both the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan, the requirements of those Plans continue to apply within the areas that they each encompass, and the Protected Countryside policies of the Greenbelt Plan do not apply.

Agricultural land uses and the economic network that supports agricultural activities are to be protected through an Agricultural System policy framework in alignment with the policy framework in the Growth Plan.

Prime Agricultural Areas (PAA) are to be identified in municipal official plans and protected through Greenbelt Plan policies intended to prevent the loss or fragmentation of the agricultural land base due to new non-farm lot creation and introduction of non-agricultural uses. Additionally, policies for the Protected Countryside support normal farm practices and provide flexibility for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses, all with the intent to protect and encourage investment in agriculture.

Within the Greenbelt Plan, the Natural Heritage System (NHS) is an overlay on the Protected Countryside designation and the component prime agricultural area and rural lands designations in municipal official plans. Agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses are permitted

within the NHS by the underlying Protected Countryside, prime agricultural area and rural lands designations. New buildings and structures are permitted near key features within the NHS provided that a vegetation protection zone is maintained and best practices are implemented. Expansions to existing buildings and structures may be considered within key features. This approach enables agriculture, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses to establish and evolve while still providing protection for key natural heritage and key hydrologic features. Further discussion on agriculture and the NHS will be found in the Agricultural System Mapping Refinement Report, Greenlands System Discussion Paper, and Greenbelt Plan Discussion Paper to be prepared as part of the Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review.

The Greenbelt Plan requires that:

- New or expanding infrastructure avoid prime agricultural areas unless need has been demonstrated and it has been established that there is no reasonable alternative; and
- Where infrastructure crosses prime agricultural areas, an agricultural impact assessment is to be completed.

### **3.1.2.3 Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan**

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) was introduced in 2002 and updated in 2017. The ORMCP is an ecologically based plan established by the Province to provide land use and resource management direction for the Oak Ridges Moraine which is an ecologically and hydrologically significant landform that stretches from the Trent River in the east to the Niagara Escarpment in the west. Figure 3.1 on page 7 shows the area within Peel that is within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The ORMCP policy framework establishes municipalities as responsible for implementing the ORMCP through their official plans and when making decisions on development applications within the ORMCP Area.

The objectives of the ORMCP include protecting the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Moraine and providing for land and resource uses and development that are compatible with the objectives of the Plan, such as agriculture. The ORMCP divides the Moraine into four land use designations: Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Areas, Countryside Areas and Settlement Areas. The Countryside Areas designation accounts for 30% of the Moraine and is meant to provide both an agricultural and rural transition and buffer between the Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Areas and Settlement Areas.

The Provincial Agricultural Land Base mapping extends into the ORMCP Area although its extent represents only a limited area of land in Peel. Through the updates to the ORMCP, there is now greater consistency with the PPS and other Provincial Plans regarding permissions for agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. However, within each of the four land use designations, there are specific policies regarding where these uses are permitted or excluded based on the level of natural heritage protection provided within the designations. These policies are described in more detail in the discussion paper on the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan prepared for Peel 2041.

### 3.1.2.4 Niagara Escarpment Plan

The Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) was introduced in 1994 and updated in 2017. In the event of a policy conflict, any policies contained within the NEP take precedence over policies of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), other Provincial Plans and municipal official plans.

The NEP provides policies to maintain the Niagara Escarpment and land in its vicinity substantially as a continuous natural environment, and to ensure only such development occurs as is compatible with that natural environment. The Plan recognizes that compatible farming operations contribute to maintaining the open landscape character of the Escarpment. Figure 3.1 shows the area in Peel within the Niagara Escarpment and the NEP land use designations.

The NEP was updated in 2017 to align more closely with the PPS and Provincial Plans by recognizing the Agricultural System concept, including additional policies respecting prime agricultural areas, and providing for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. The Plan includes Escarpment Natural, Escarpment Protection and Escarpment Rural Area land use designations. The Plan permits existing agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses in the Escarpment Natural Area designation. Existing and new agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses are permitted in the Escarpment Rural and Escarpment Protection Areas, but these uses must meet development criteria that are more specific than those in the PPS and the Greenbelt Plan, in particular size limits. In the Escarpment Protection Area designation agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses are permitted in prime agricultural areas only.

Prime agricultural areas and rural lands designated and mapped in municipal official plans may extend into the area subject to the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Municipal official plans may establish policies that are more stringent than the requirements of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, provided that the policies do not conflict with the Plan. The mapping of prime agricultural areas and rural lands by municipalities assists in the interpretation and implementation of the Niagara Escarpment Plan's land use designations and policies.

### 3.1.3 Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Through the policies of the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan, the Province defines an Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as a:

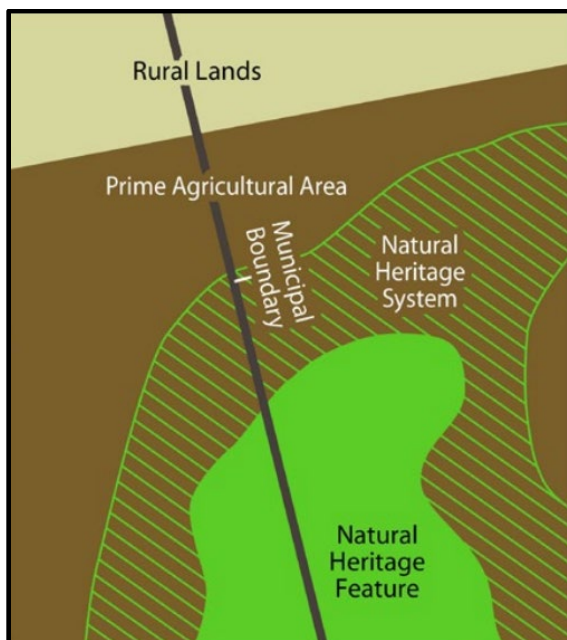
“...group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agricultural sector. It has two components: 1) an agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas including specialty crop areas and rural lands that together create a continuous, productive land base for agriculture; 2) an Agri-Food Network, which includes infrastructure, services and agri-food assets important to the viability of the sector.” (Greenbelt Plan, 2017)

These two components will be discussed in the following sections.

### 3.1.3.1 The Agricultural Land Base

Figure 3.4 illustrates the components of the Agricultural Land Base as set out in the Growth Plan. In order to identify the agricultural land base, the Province has mapped a recommended prime agricultural area through a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) study along with candidate areas, which may be designated as prime agricultural areas or rural lands in official plans with refinements. As indicated in Section 3.1.2.1, municipalities are required to incorporate mapping in their official plans in conformity with this Provincial mapping. The Growth Plan requires municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to map an agricultural land base maintaining continuity across municipal boundaries. It requires municipalities to identify the Natural Heritage System as an overlay on top of prime agricultural area and rural lands designations to clarify permissions for agriculture. Upper-tier municipalities, through a municipal comprehensive review, may refine the Provincial mapping in accordance with provincial guidelines.

**Figure 3.4: The Components of the Agricultural Land Base**



Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs or Ministry of Municipal Affairs. (2018). *Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe Area*.

### 3.1.3.2 What is a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR)?

A Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) is a technical assessment of the relative importance of lands for agriculture. The Province, through its LEAR guidelines, provides a methodology through which prime agricultural areas are to be identified. The LEAR methodology was first developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) in 1997. It serves as the provincial standard for the identification, refinement and mapping of prime agricultural areas by municipalities. The LEAR guidelines also can be used to reassess previously identified and designated prime agricultural areas, when municipalities are preparing to review and amend their official plans. As well, they can be used by

municipalities to assess additional lands that could be significant for long-term viability of the agricultural industry and possible official plan designation.

A LEAR takes into account soil and climatic conditions for agriculture plus other local, physical and socio-economic factors impacting on agricultural potential, such as the presence of non-farm uses and fragmentation of the agricultural land base. The selected factors are scored, weighted and applied to land parcels within a study area to identify recommended or refined prime agricultural areas. The higher that a factor is scored on a land parcel, the greater the potential for that land to be considered as prime agricultural land for inclusion in a prime agricultural area designation.

### **3.1.3.3 Provincial LEAR for the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

Through the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan, the Province requires that municipalities identify prime agricultural areas in accordance with Provincial mapping and with the provincial "Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe" (OMAFRA, 2018a). To develop this mapping, the Province completed a LEAR Study for the GGH.

The Province's LEAR for the Greater Golden Horseshoe encompassed the lands covered by the four provincial plan areas. The Province's LEAR for the GGH analysed two groups of factors that were identified as aligning with the objectives and policies of the Provincial Plans and PPS. The two groups of factors were:

- inherent soil and climatic conditions for agriculture; and
- other factors important to agricultural potential such as the fragmentation of the land base and the percentage of the area currently in agricultural use.

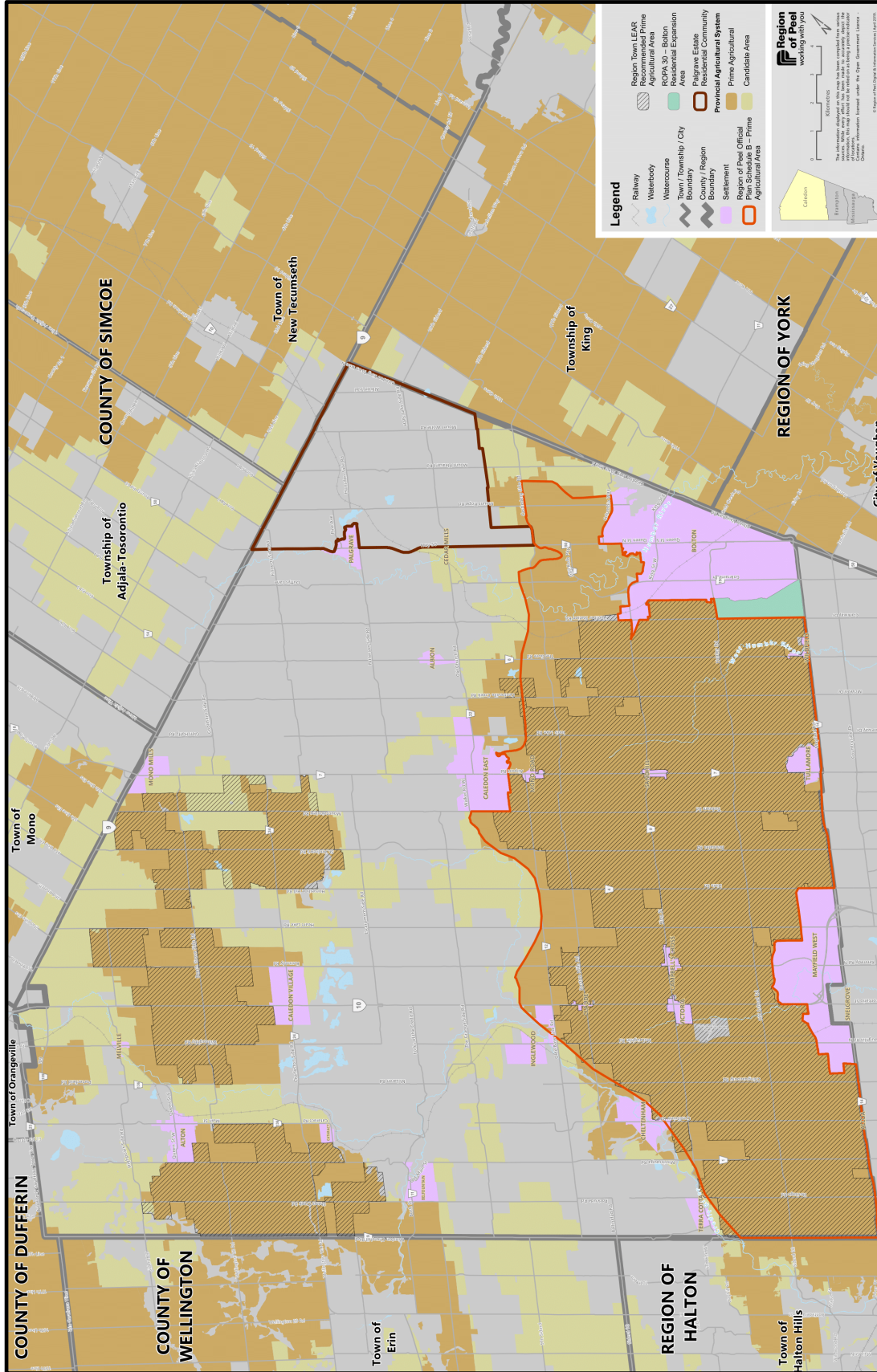
Lands were scored based on these factors and each of these factors was weighted by the Province based on Provincial priority. Agricultural soils were given a higher weighting as provincial policies prioritize prime agricultural lands as an important Provincial resource (OMAFRA, 2018b). The weighted scores then were combined to produce an overall score.

Lands that were higher scoring in the Province's LEAR study were identified as recommended prime agricultural areas to be refined and designated in municipal official plans as part of the agricultural land base. Large areas greater than 250 hectares in size which received medium LEAR scores were identified as candidate areas with direction that municipalities have the option to designate candidate areas as prime agricultural areas or include them in a rural lands designation, as appropriate.

The intent of this process was to ensure that prime agricultural areas were identified uniformly across the four provincial plan areas. The provincial mapping of prime agricultural areas through the LEAR was then combined with existing prime agricultural area mapping in municipal official plans along with the recommended candidate areas for further refinement and adoption by municipalities. The provincial agricultural land base mapping of prime agricultural areas and candidate areas within Peel is shown in Figure 3.5.



Figure 3.5: Provincial Agricultural System Mapping



Source: Region of Peel. (2019c). Agricultural Mapping Refinement Report

### 3.1.3.4 Agricultural System - Agri-Food Network

Through the provincial plans, the Province defines an agri-food network as a component of the Agricultural System that:

"...includes elements important to the viability of the agri-food sector such as: regional agricultural infrastructure and transportation networks, on-farm buildings and infrastructure, agricultural services, farm markets, distributors and first-level processing, and vibrant, agriculture-supportive communities." (Greenbelt Plan, 2017)

The Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan direct that municipalities shall maintain and enhance the agri-food network. While the agri-food network is not a land use designation in a municipal official plan, the Province directs municipalities to identify and mitigate impacts to the Agri-Food Network through the use of agricultural impact assessments (AIA) when making land use or infrastructure planning decisions. The Province also encourages municipalities to undertake strategies that plan for the long-term economic viability of the agricultural sector. These have been identified by the Province as including but not limited to:

- providing opportunities to support local food, urban and near-urban agriculture and promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food and agri-product businesses by protecting agricultural resources, and minimizing land use conflicts;
- undertaking long-term planning for agriculture integrating agricultural economic development, infrastructure, goods movement and freight considerations with land use planning;
- preparing regional agri-food strategies or establishing and/or consulting with agricultural advisory committees, or liaison officers; and,
- providing opportunities for agriculture-supportive infrastructure both on and off farms. (

The Region is undertaking a number of these initiatives currently through its Region of Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) and its participation in the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance (GHFFA) to implement the 'Golden Horseshoe Agriculture & Agri-Food Strategy - Food & Farming: An Action Plan, 2021' (Action Plan).

### 3.1.3.5 Provincial Agriculture Impact Assessment Guidelines

The Provincial Policy Statement and the provincial plans direct municipalities to require an agricultural impact assessment for non-agricultural development proposed adjacent to or within proximity to agricultural, agriculture-related or on-farm diversified uses. The purpose of an agricultural impact assessment is to identify and avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts on agricultural operations and the agricultural system.

The Province provides some guidance respecting the preparation of an agricultural impact assessment, through its Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas" (OMAFRA, 2016c). The Province also released draft guidelines for the undertaking of agricultural impact assessments in March 2018.



Updated policy direction in the Regional Official Plan will be required to direct the local municipalities to require agricultural impact assessments for non-agricultural development. More information on mitigating impacts where rural and -urban uses interface can be found in Section 4.2 of this Discussion Paper.

### 3.1.4 The Food System and Urban Agriculture

The food system consists of all the interconnected processes and activities that make up the steps in the food chain involved in the growing, harvesting, production, processing, distribution and consumption of food and in the recovery and disposal of food waste. The food system encompasses the agricultural system but is broader in scope. Currently in Ontario, key concerns include: access to locally grown and healthy food; urban agriculture; and reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste.

The Growth Plan supports the achievement of complete communities that improve access to healthy, local, and affordable food options, including through urban agriculture. As indicated above, the Growth Plan encourages municipalities to develop and implement strategies to support access to healthy, local, and affordable food, including urban and near-urban agriculture; to support food system planning; and to promote the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food, and agri-product businesses.

In 2018 the Province issued a Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement that focuses on preventing and reducing food waste, effectively and efficiently collecting and processing food and organic waste to extract useful materials from them, and reintegrating those recovered resources back into the economy. Municipalities are required to ensure that their official plans are consistent with the Policy Statement in accordance with the timing requirements of the *Planning Act*. The Policy Statement includes policies to:

- maintain and enhance curbside collection of food and organic waste;
- require that multi-unit residential buildings provide for source separation and collection of such wastes; and
- require that specified commercial, industrial and institutional uses source separate and manage these wastes.

The Policy Statement encourages municipalities to pursue regional approaches to address food and organic waste resource recovery collection and capacity needs. It indicates that municipalities should protect existing and planned resource recovery systems that handle and process food and organic wastes, such as composting facilities, from incompatible land uses. Municipalities are to employ provincial land use compatibility guidelines in addressing approvals for new or expanded resource recovery systems.

## 3.2 Municipal Official Plans

A municipal official plan describes a municipal government's policies on how land within its jurisdiction should be used. An official plan reflects the municipal Council's and the public's vision for how the community should develop addressing matters such as such as economic development, housing,

infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, etc.), natural resources, environmental conservation, and community services (MMAH, 2010).

### 3.2.1 Region of Peel Official Plan

The Region of Peel Official Plan (ROP) was adopted by Regional Council and approved by the Province in 1996. It is a comprehensive document which contains Regional goals, objectives, policies, schedules and figures. Subsequent amendments to the ROP have occurred, with the latest consolidation being in 2018.

The purpose of the ROP is to:

- provide Regional Council with a long-term regional strategic policy framework for guiding growth and development in Peel while having regard for protecting the environment, managing renewable and non-renewable resources, and outlining a regional structure that manages this growth within Peel in the most efficient manner; and,
- interpret and apply the intent of Provincial legislation and policies within a Regional context using the authority delegated or assigned to the Region from the Province.

As required by the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Region reviews its Official Plan every five years to ensure that it conforms to Provincial Plans, takes into account matters of provincial interest, and is consistent with policy statements issued under the Act. In addition, this five-year review is the opportunity for the Region to work with the community to identify emerging issues and develop a strategic policy framework to address them.

The Regional Official Plan provides a framework for the Region, the local municipalities (i.e., Town of Caledon, City of Brampton and City of Mississauga), other government agencies, and public stakeholders to work together to identify the Region's Prime Agricultural Area (PAA), support active agricultural uses within the PAA and Rural System, encourage on-farm innovation and diversification, and to enhance the food system. The agricultural policies are discussed later in this Discussion Paper with an analysis of the ROP agricultural policies in Section 5.0.

The Official Plan addresses the broader Rural System in Section 5.4. The Rural System consists of those lands that lie outside the Urban Boundary in Peel, almost all of those lands being within the Town of Caledon. It is an objective of the Region to promote healthy rural communities that collectively contain living, working and recreational opportunities within the Rural System, while respecting the natural environment and resources. The Rural System includes the Prime Agricultural Area, other rural lands, the Palgrave Estate Residential Community, three Rural Service Centres and other smaller rural settlements. The rural area contains important water resources and Greenlands systems, such as the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine, and mineral aggregate resources. The Official Plan policies are directed at conserving the natural environment and resources, recognizing the *integrity* and characteristics of existing communities maintaining and enhancing the quality of the Rural System, promoting healthy rural communities, and enabling residents to live in their own communities as they age.

Growth within the Rural System is primarily directed to the three Rural Services. The three Rural Service Centres are Mayfield West, Bolton and Caledon East. The Official Plan objectives are concerned with fostering the distinctive character and village atmosphere of the Rural Service Centres. These three communities are designated as the primary locations for growth outside of Peel's Urban System to provide a range and mix of land uses and services to those living and working in the Rural System.

### **3.2.2 Town of Caledon Official Plan**

The Town of Caledon Official Plan, as amended, recognizes agricultural activity in its Prime Agricultural, General Agriculture and Rural Area land use designations. In 2014, through Official Plan Amendment 237, the Town updated its Official Plan agricultural policies and definitions (Sections 5.1., 5.2 and 6.7) to bring them into conformity with the new Provincial Policy Statement's direction and definitions for Rural Areas and Rural Lands. It also amended the Official Plan's policies and definitions for on-farm diversified and agriculture-related uses, removing the limitations on their building size within the Prime Agricultural Area. The Official Plan was also amended to recognize emerging agricultural businesses, such as microbreweries, and provided greater support for the growing, processing and consumption of local commodities within the Town (Town of Caledon, 2015).

### **3.2.3 City of Brampton Official Plan**

In 2005, through Region of Peel Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 15 and City of Brampton Official Plan Amendment OP93-245, the City expanded its urban boundary to incorporate the prime agricultural area. However, the City of Brampton continues to have an active agricultural sector, one that the City supports through its current Official Plan. This support includes policies that protect and promote small-scale urban agriculture, agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses within its existing agricultural areas in the City's Open Space system and adjacent lands (City of Brampton Official Plan, Section 4.16). For example, the City applies Provincial Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae and Guidelines, supports voluntary agri-environmental practices and directs phasing of development and urban infrastructure to minimize impacts to ongoing farm operations. Section 4.6 of the City of Brampton's Official Plan policies also directs that existing agricultural uses are permitted within the City's Natural Heritage System (City of Brampton, 2015).

### **3.2.4 City of Mississauga Official Plan**

While the City of Mississauga Official Plan does not identify prime agricultural areas, it does include policies on urban agriculture in 'Section 6.0 Value the Environment' and 'Section 7.0 Complete Communities'. Urban agriculture is identified as a supportive use as part of the City's public and private open spaces within its Green System. Urban agriculture is encouraged as a way to "live green" to contribute to a healthy, sustainable environment. Urban agriculture also is recognized to be a component of a complete community. As such, the City's Official Plan provides policies that support social capacity building and urban agricultural practices such as farmers markets, rooftop gardens and community gardens (City of Mississauga, 2016).

In 2018 the City adopted an Official Plan Amendment to bring a narrow strip of land adjacent to the Halton Region boundary, known as the Ninth Line lands, into the City' urban boundary. Provincial mapping identifies these lands as prime agricultural area. In the Agricultural Mapping Refinement Study described in Section 4.4 of this report Peel Region staff have recommended that the lands identified as prime agricultural area be removed from the provincial prime agricultural area mapping and from the Prime Agricultural Area map in the Region's OP. The Region intends to include the Ninth Line lands within the Urban Boundary in the Region's Official Plan.

### **3.3 Conservation Authorities**

The Region of Peel is within the jurisdictions of five Conservation Authorities (CAs) with the Credit Valley Conservation Authority (CVC) and the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) covering most of the Region. The primary role of a Conservation Authority is to ensure public health and safety and the protection of life and property with respect to natural hazards. This includes protecting watershed health by preventing pollution and destruction of natural features and areas.

With respect to agriculture, CVC and TRCA each have individual and jointly administered agricultural programs that provide technical and financial assistance to support Peel's agricultural community in the voluntary implementation of agri-environmental practices to protect and enhance water quality and the natural environment. Many of these programs are directed to support agricultural uses within both the Urban and Rural Systems of the Region. CVC and TRCA also support new agricultural initiatives and ongoing farm operations through their agricultural leased lands programs.

## 4. Regional Agriculture and Food System Initiatives

The Region has undertaken technical studies and other initiatives related to the Agricultural and Rural System Policy Review that have provided policy options and recommendations for the Peel 2041 Official Plan Review. The Region, jointly with the Town of Caledon (the Town), undertook four technical studies dealing with the agricultural system and rural areas policies. In addition, the development of the Peel Food Charter and the focus on creating environments supportive of healthy eating identified opportunities to incorporate healthy food system policies in the official plan. The following section describes these initiatives and their recommendations.

### 4.1 Land Evaluation & Area Review

The review of the Region's prime agricultural areas (PAA) is a land use planning conformity exercise that was undertaken to ensure that the mapping of prime agricultural areas in the Region is consistent with: the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS); the Provincial Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as directed in the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan; and Provincial implementation guidelines for the identification of prime agricultural areas.

The Region and the Town jointly undertook a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) following Provincial LEAR guidelines (OMAFRA, 2002) to provide technical information for the identification of recommended prime agricultural areas. As stated in Section 3.1.3.2, a LEAR is a technical study that is used to identify and map potential prime agricultural areas for the purpose of designation in municipal official plans. The Peel-Caledon LEAR Study was undertaken to identify recommended amendments to Schedule B – Prime Agricultural Areas, in the Regional Official Plan. This study may also be used by the Town to inform conformity exercises undertaken for their Official Plan. The study was completed in 2016 (MacNaughton, Hermsen, Britton, Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC). (2016)).

Conducting a LEAR study is only one step in the process of updating prime agricultural area mapping for the Regional Official Plan (ROP). The Province's implementation guidelines provide the option for upper-tier municipalities to refine the provincial agricultural system mapping which also recommends prime agricultural areas based on a provincial analysis of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In addition, consultation through the Peel 2041 Agricultural Policy Review will provide the opportunity for community input on changes to prime agricultural areas and rural system policies and mapping. After the prime agricultural area has been identified the Region will recommend amendments to designate these area(s) in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

Designating prime agricultural areas in the Regional Official Plan ensures that these lands are clearly identified and protected to support the viability of the Region's agricultural sector. It also helps with the overall planning of the Region as it informs new or expanding settlement area boundaries, locating infrastructure and planning for the natural heritage system.

#### 4.1.1 Study Findings

As described in Section 3.1.3.2, a LEAR assesses a number of factors, which are each weighted, to analyze and rank individual properties having the greatest potential for agriculture. After each property is assessed, a threshold is set to establish a baseline for a property to be considered for inclusion in a prime agricultural area. For the Region's LEAR, these factors, weighting and threshold were determined in consultation with the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG), and Provincial and Conservation Authority staff, who formed a LEAR Review Committee to provide advice throughout the study.

The LEAR study identified a smaller recommended prime agricultural area in the south of Caledon, where the prime agricultural area had previously been identified as depicted in Schedule B of the current Regional Official Plan. In addition, new prime agriculture areas were identified north of the Niagara Escarpment, where a prime agricultural area had not previously been mapped. Together, these lands identified a LEAR recommended prime agricultural area for the Region.

Provincial guidance recommends that prime agricultural areas have a minimum size of approximately 250 hectares. A contiguous area analysis (CAA) was applied to each of the potential prime agricultural areas recommended by the LEAR Study to determine if they met the size criterion.

As an outcome of the recommendations of this study, the boundary of the prime agricultural area is proposed to be refined through the Peel 2041: Region Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) process in accordance with provincial guidelines. Further information on how the prime agricultural area recommended in the Peel-Caledon LEAR Study was considered in the refinement of prime agricultural area mapping for the Region in accordance with the Growth Plan direction is provided in Section 4.4 and in the Region's Agricultural Mapping Refinement Report (Region of Peel. (2019c)). Implementation of these proposed changes will require mapping revisions and an Official Plan amendment through the Peel 2041 process.

#### 4.2 Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper

Settlement expansions and the introduction of sensitive land uses into agricultural areas often present conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. Agricultural operations can be discouraged to continue their operations due to factors such as complaints related to normal farm practices, loss of agricultural support network assets (e.g., farm supply companies), traffic congestion, and uncertainty about continued urban boundary expansions. These challenges to agricultural operations discourage investment in agriculture and increase pressure for the conversion of agricultural lands to residential and other non-agricultural uses, as well as impacting access to a local, stable food supply.

The establishment of urban growth boundaries provides stability for land uses and the opportunity to implement policy and guidelines to mitigate impacts through land use planning. Planning for edges of new development considers several important factors: introduction of conflicting land use, provision of visual and physical separation between land users, and the opportunity to introduce an aesthetic edge to define new development.

The Region and the Town of Caledon jointly prepared an 'Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper' to document case studies, evaluate best practices, and develop recommendations on the applicability and need for enhanced policy guidance to improve land use compatibility adjacent to agricultural areas (MacNaughton, Hermsen, Britton, Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC). (2015)). The objective of the 'Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper' was to address land use conflicts that occur between agricultural uses abutting non-agricultural uses and their supporting infrastructure.

#### 4.2.1 Study Findings

The study identified a need to identify and consider opportunities to mitigate impacts early in land use planning process, using a variety of planning tools as available to municipalities.

Understanding the type of edge being planned provides the basis for recommending appropriate mitigation. The study recommended comprehensive planning for compatible land uses along urban boundaries to better integrate urban and rural non-farm uses with agricultural areas. Therefore, the rural-urban edge should consider the:

- type and intensity of agricultural practices abutting the new, non-farm use;
- sensitivity of the introduced land use (e.g., residential, industrial, employment, etc.); and,
- permanence of the boundary (e.g., is it abutting the Greenbelt Plan area).

The 'Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper' provides policy recommendations for the Region to consider in the Peel 2041: Regional Official Plan Review (Peel 2041), to complement existing policies in the ROP. These include:

- edge planning for agriculture should be considered early in the planning process when the type and location of land uses are being established;
- detailed consideration/guidance for edge planning for agriculture should be addressed as part of an urban or settlement boundary expansion process;
- recommendations and direction for edge planning for agriculture should be developed for use at the secondary plan, subdivision plan and site plan stages;
- edge planning for agriculture policies would require appropriate phasing-in of requirements;
- edge planning for agriculture would ideally be addressed within an agricultural impact assessment (AIA); and
- Terms of Reference for an AIA study should be prepared to specifically consider where these tools may be suitable for implementation.

#### 4.3 Minimum Distance Separation Formulae and Guideline Analysis

As discussed in Section 3.1.2 the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae and its associated guidelines is a Provincial planning tool to address odour in agricultural areas. It separates:

- new or expanding livestock barns and/or manure storage from existing non-farm uses; and,

- new or expanding non-farm uses (e.g., urban expansions) from existing livestock barns and/or manure storages.

The direction to apply the MDS Formulae and Guidelines is provided in the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial direction is then implemented through the Region, Town of Caledon and City of Brampton Official Plan policies and local zoning by-laws. The Regional Official Plan directs the local municipalities to implement MDS policies in accordance with provincial policy.

In 2013, the Region and Town initiated a joint review of the MDS Formulae and Guidelines entitled "Review of Minimum Distance Separation Formulae and Implementation Guidelines" (MacNaughton, Hermsen, Britton, Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC). (2014)). This was commenced in response to comments received during the 2007 Peel Region Official Plan Review regarding the consistent and appropriate application of MDS at time of a development application.

#### 4.3.1 Study Findings

The Region and Town's MDS review concluded that the Provincial MDS Formulae and Guidelines were an effective planning tool to mitigate land use conflict from odour in agricultural areas. The review found that the Region and Town have appropriately implemented these policies within their respective official plans in compliance with Provincial direction. However, the review provided recommendations for consideration by the Region and Town:

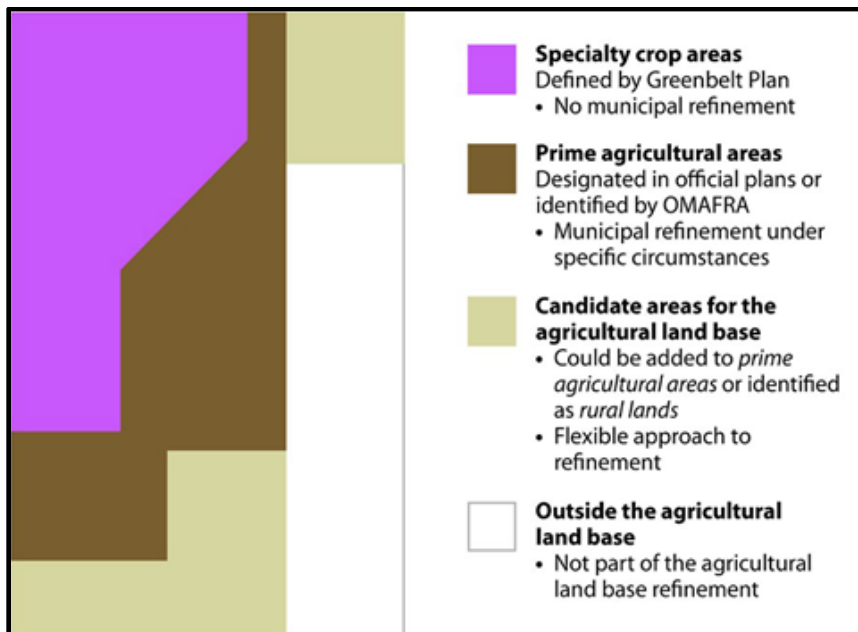
- more technical guidance is needed from the Province for municipalities to apply and interpret the MDS Formulae and Guidelines;
- the Region and the Town should develop guidelines for mitigating impacts to normal farm practices along the fringe of agricultural areas and urban and rural settlement boundaries; and,
- the Town of Caledon's Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Guidelines should be revised and updated to ensure appropriate reference is made to MDS.

As noted above, the Province issued updated MDS guidelines in 2016.

#### 4.4 Refinement of Provincial Agricultural Mapping

The 2019 Growth Plan provides that upper- and single-tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping of the agricultural land base prior to or during a municipal comprehensive review, based on implementation procedures issued by the Province. Figure 4.1 illustrates how refinements are to occur in keeping with the provincial guidance.



**Figure 4.1: Provincial Agricultural Land Base Mapping Requirements**

Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs. (2018a). *Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe Area*.

As part of the Agricultural Policy Review, the Region is proposing updates to the prime agricultural area mapping in the Region of Peel Official Plan based on refinement of the Province's agricultural land base mapping and recommendations in the Peel-Caledon Land Evaluation and Area Review Study (MacNaughton, Hermsen, Britton, Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC). (2016)). The refinement process was carried out in consultation with Town of Caledon and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs staff and is documented in the Region's **Agricultural Mapping Refinement** report (Region of Peel. (2019c).

A refinement methodology was developed and applied to ensure a consistent approach to identification based on the Province's mapping method, purpose and outcomes. The refinement considered the objective of the provincial Growth Plan policies to provide a continuous land base for agriculture. The method undertaken considered factors recommended by the Province including the option to utilize the completed Peel-Caledon LEAR Study results, which provide a more refined analysis of prime agricultural areas based on local factors. The refinement process considered opportunities to provide continuous prime agricultural area designations aligned with agricultural designations in adjacent municipalities and whether it was appropriate to include candidate areas identified by the Province in the prime agricultural area designation.

The mapping refinement process provided detailed recommendations for the mapping of prime agricultural areas in the Region of Peel Official Plan and general direction for the mapping of rural lands in the Town of Caledon and City of Brampton Official Plans to ensure that the agricultural land base components of prime agricultural areas and rural lands were considered comprehensively in accordance with provincial direction.

#### 4.4.1 Study Findings

The refinement of the provincial prime agricultural system mapping recommended amendments to the provincial mapping of prime agricultural areas to better align with local study results and factors. Candidate areas recommended by the Province were included in the final recommended mapping of the prime agricultural area in locations where the local Peel-Caledon LEAR Study scored lands above the recommended threshold for inclusion in the prime agricultural area. The mapping refinement also recommended identifying a prime agriculture area south of Belfountain to align with proposed agricultural designations in Wellington County and provide a continuous agricultural land base connection across the municipal boundary. The net result is a recommended reduction in the prime agricultural area in the southern portion of Caledon as compared to the provincial mapping and the addition of three new prime agricultural areas north of the Niagara Escarpment.

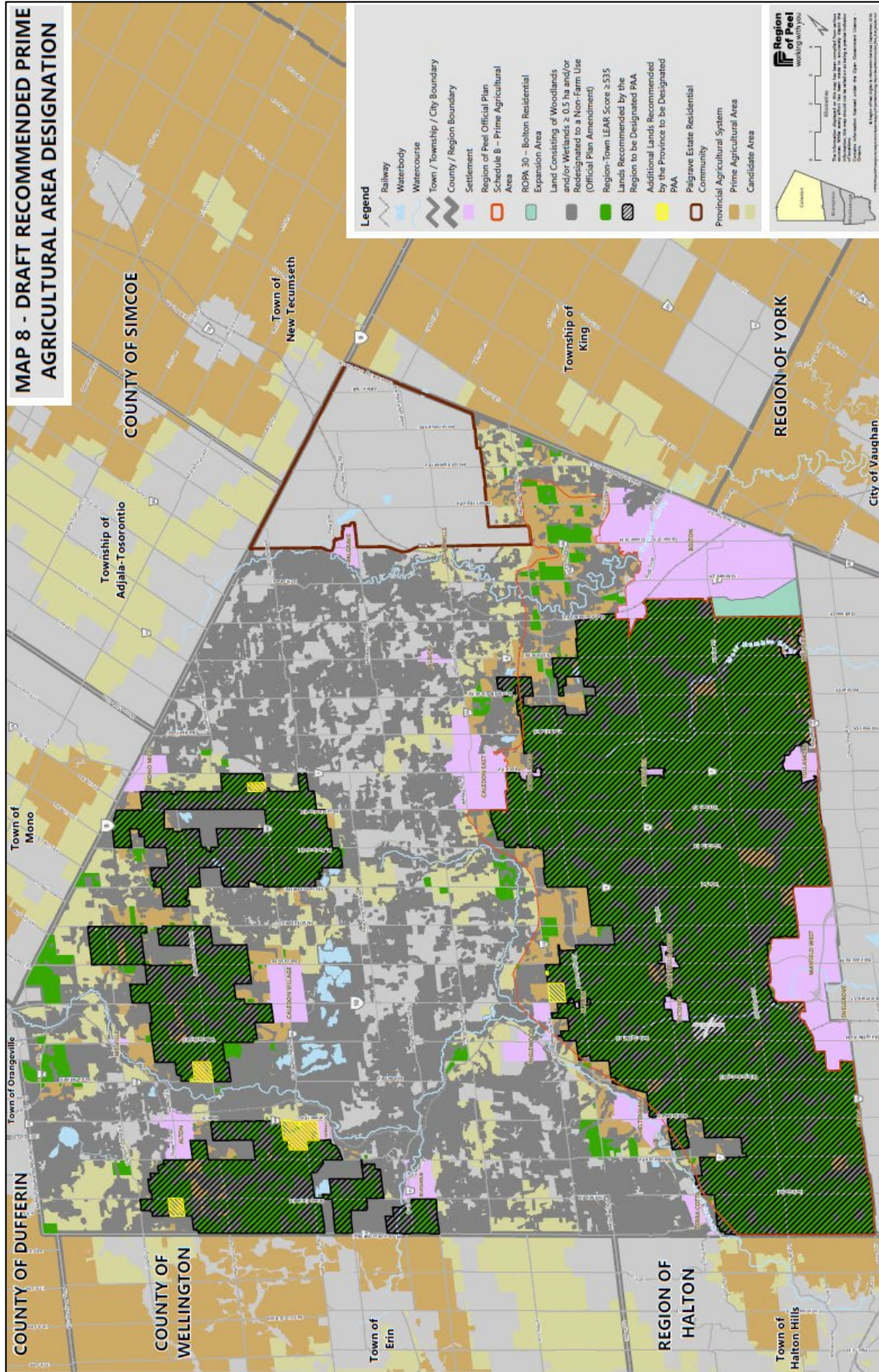
In May 2019, the draft mapping refinements were circulated to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) staff for review and comment. Although supportive of the majority of areas recommended to be included in the prime agricultural area designation, OMAFRA recommended five additional areas be added as prime agricultural areas. Table 4.1 itemizing the differences between the existing prime agricultural area on Schedule B and the new proposed new prime agricultural area is provided below. Figure 4.2 shows the recommended boundary for the prime agricultural area designation including the additional refinements recommended by the Province.

**Table 4.1: Proposed Change in Size of Prime Agricultural Area in Peel**

Existing Prime Agricultural Area – Schedule B	Proposed Prime Agricultural Area – Schedule B	Net Change in Size of Prime Agricultural Area
22,144 ha	24,336 ha	2,192 ha Increase

The mapping refinement methodology and results are provided in detail in the Agricultural Mapping Refinement Report that accompanies the Discussion Paper (Region of Peel. (2019c)).

Figure 4.2: Draft Recommended Prime Agricultural Area Designation



Source: Region of Peel. (2019c). *Agricultural Mapping Refinement Report*

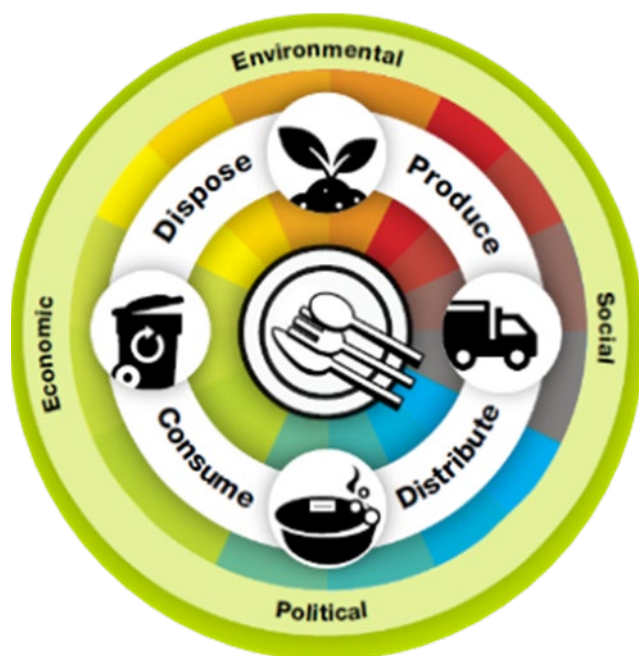


#### 4.5 Access to Healthy and Local Food

Over the past decade Peel has developed a new focus in public health on the development of environments that are supportive of healthy eating and physical activity. This has been reflected in the adoption of ROPA 27, supporting the creation of a healthy built environment and healthy communities, and in the development of the Region’s Healthy Development Assessment User Guide.

The 2012-2015 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy identified access to safe, secure and sufficient food as one of five issues to be addressed. The work done through the Poverty Reduction Strategy led to the development of the Peel Food Charter, which involved a broad coalition of stakeholders including the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAWG) and input from Regional staff. The Food Charter adopted as its vision a just, sustainable and secure food system for now and for the future (Peel Food Security Taskforce. (2017)). The Peel Food Charter states that “A food system includes the steps of the food chain (e.g., produce, distribute, consume, and dispose) and the factors that influence it (e.g., political, social, economic and environmental)” (see Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3: The Food System**



Source: Peel Food Security Taskforce. (2017). *Peel Food Charter*

Food security for all people at all times was a key concern. The Food Charter defined food security as existing when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In 2017 Regional Council endorsed the Food Charter and supported the creation of the Peel Food Action Council to advance the Charter’s objectives. The formation of the Council is now under way.

Peel Public Health has recognized access to healthy food as a key health concern and, as input to the Region's Official Plan Review, has examined how the food system might be addressed through planning policy. It has found that best practices have evolved in other regional and local municipal official plans that now incorporate policies related to food access and availability, urban agriculture and food systems planning providing opportunities for beneficial initiatives within a broader food system framework. The review identified gaps in Peel's Regional Official Plan and opportunities to incorporate food system policies. The *Urban Agriculture Discussion Paper* prepared by Public Health for Peel 2041 examined the impacts and benefits of urban agriculture; reviewed the Federal, Provincial, Regional and local policy contexts; and recommended updates to the Region's Official Plan to support urban agriculture and access to healthy and local food (Region of Peel, (2019e)).

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## 5. Analysis of Current Region of Peel Official Plan: Recommendations

This section of the Discussion Paper reviews the Agricultural Resource and Rural System policies and mapping in the current Regional Official Plan to identify gaps, policy issues and opportunities. This review is guided by the *Planning Act* requirements for the Official Plan to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conform with provincial plans; by the goals and objectives of the Official Plan; and by Regional initiatives and interests, including those related to the food system. The review makes recommendations respecting policies, definitions and mapping.

The Region of Peel Official Plan establishes the framework for more detailed policy and implementation by the area municipalities. It provides broad direction to the area municipalities to include policies and land use designations in their official plans while enabling the area municipalities to develop more detailed policies and designations to address their specific objectives and circumstances.

### 5.1 Agricultural Policies and Definitions

#### 5.1.1 The Agricultural System

The Agricultural Resource policies in the Region's current Official Plan focus on the protection of the Prime Agricultural Area and on supporting a diversified, healthy and productive agricultural industry. As described in section 3.1 of this Discussion Paper, with the release of the updated Greenbelt Plan in 2017 and Growth Plan in 2019, the Province put in place a broader agricultural system approach to planning for agriculture in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. While the agricultural system approach continues to address the protection of prime agricultural areas and agricultural operations, it also is concerned with the agri-food network: the network of services, farm markets, primary processors and infrastructure that are important to the viability of the agricultural sector. The province identified an Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that extends across municipal boundaries. The provincial plans stress the importance of maintaining the continuity of the agricultural land base and the functional and economic interconnections among the components of the System.

The health and sustainability of the Agricultural System involves more than the protection of the Prime Agricultural Area and of the agricultural operations in the Prime Agricultural Area. It should be addressed not just through the agricultural policies in Section 3.2 of the Official Plan but through the Rural System policies in Section 5.4 of the Plan and by policies in other sections of the Plan dealing with matters such as settlement area expansions and infrastructure planning.

##### 5.1.1.1 Policy Recommendations

The ROP's Agricultural Resource and Rural System policies and related Schedules and Figures have been reviewed to identify measures to incorporate an agricultural system approach conforming with provincial plans. It is recommended that the title of Section 3.2 of the Official Plan be changed from Agricultural Resources to Agricultural System and that the following changes be made to the policies and related definitions:



- incorporate the Provincial definition of Agricultural System as set out in Section 3.1.3 of this Discussion Paper;
- make support and enhancement for the diversity, health and productivity of the Agricultural System an objective of both the Agricultural System and Rural System policies, recognizing that the Agricultural System includes not only prime agricultural areas but also rural lands containing agricultural operations as well as other components of the agri-food network;
- adopt policies to maintain a continuous and productive agricultural land base consisting of prime agricultural areas and rural lands;
- update the Region's Prime Agricultural Area mapping to ensure that it is consistent with provincial policy and mapping as described in Section 5.1.2 below;
- add policies specifying where an agricultural impact assessment (AIA) is required to assess the impacts of non-agricultural development plus a definition of agricultural impact assessment indicating that an AIA is to evaluate impacts on the Agricultural System as well as on agricultural operations;
- modify existing policies to support the development and implementation of regional agri-food strategies, food system planning and other approaches to support and enhance the Agricultural System; and
- incorporate policy requiring that integrated planning for growth management, including infrastructure planning, will consider opportunities to support and enhance the Agricultural System.

Recommended changes to the Rural System policies are discussed in Section 5.2 of this Discussion Paper.

### **5.1.2 Identification of Prime Agricultural Areas**

Prime Agricultural Areas are identified on Schedule B to the Region of Peel's current Official Plan. In 2018 the Province issued prime agricultural area mapping for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Region has reviewed the Provincial mapping and made refinements as described in Section 4.4 of this Discussion Paper and, in more detail, in the 2019 Agricultural Mapping Refinement report that accompanies this Discussion Paper.

#### **5.1.2.1 Policy Recommendations**

As set out in the Provincial Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan municipalities are required to designate prime agricultural areas in their official plans in accordance with provincial mapping, subject to refinement by the municipality. The Region of Peel does not designate land uses in its Official Plan but instead identifies them on a Schedule to the Official Plan and requires that they be designated in the applicable local municipal official plan. It is recommended that:

- Schedule B be amended to incorporate the refined provincial prime agricultural area mapping recommended in the Agricultural Mapping Refinement report that accompanies the Discussion Paper (Region of Peel. (2019c)); and

- the Region's Official Plan require that these prime agricultural areas be designated in the Town of Caledon Official Plan.

### 5.1.3 Permitted Uses in the Prime Agricultural Area

The Region's current Official Plan protects prime agricultural areas for agricultural use. The Agricultural Resource policies in Section 3.2 direct the Town of Caledon, in its Official Plan, to allow primary agricultural uses, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses in the Prime Agricultural Area, provided that such uses are limited in scale and are compatible with surrounding agricultural activity. They also direct the Town only to permit a non-residential use in the Prime Agricultural Area subject to an area municipal official plan amendment and provided that there are no reasonable alternatives, need is demonstrated, and impacts on surrounding agricultural operations and lands are minimal or will be satisfactorily mitigated.

Section 2.2 of the ROP sets out permissions for agricultural, agriculture-related and secondary uses, as permitted by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and Greenbelt Plan, at the time of the last ROP review. These include uses that provide added-value to agricultural production and farm-related industrial and commercial activities.

#### 5.1.3.1 Policy Recommendations

The Regional Official Plan agricultural policies for permitted uses in prime agricultural areas and related definitions should be updated to be consistent with the 2014 PPS and the corresponding provincial implementation guidelines for permitted uses in prime agricultural areas. As described in Section 3.1.1.3 of this Discussion Paper, the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) revised the definition of agriculture-related uses, resulting in broader permissions for those uses in prime agricultural areas. The PPS also introduced a definition of on-farm diversified uses to replace secondary uses in the previous PPS and added a definition of agri-tourism uses.

The 2005 PPS provided that lands may only be excluded from prime agricultural areas for settlement area expansions; for mineral aggregates, minerals, and petroleum resources; and, subject to certain conditions, for limited non-residential uses. The 2014 PPS only permits lands to be removed from the prime agricultural area designation for settlement area expansions. Mineral aggregates, minerals, and petroleum resources and non-residential uses still may be permitted but the lands involved may not be removed from the prime agricultural area designation.

In order to be consistent with the 2014 PPS it is recommended that the Region's Official Plan be amended to:

- update the definitions of agricultural uses and agricultural related uses;
- delete the definition of secondary uses and add the PPS definitions of on-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism uses;

- update the permitted uses policies to permit agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses in the Prime Agricultural Area;
- revise the policy permitting non-residential uses in the Prime Agricultural Area to only permit mineral aggregates, minerals, and petroleum resources and limited non-residential uses but not to permit removal of the lands involved from the prime agricultural area. The policies respecting settlement area expansions will be dealt with in the review of the Urban System policies in the Region's Official Plan.

As each of the four provincial plans have been amended to be consistent with the new terms and definitions in the PPS, the proposed revisions to the Regional Official Plan will bring the Region's agricultural terms and definitions into conformity with those in the Growth Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan, ORMCP and Greenbelt Plan.

#### **5.1.4 Minimum Distance Separation Formulae and Guidelines**

The Regional Official Plan Agricultural Resource and Rural System policies reference the application of the Provincial Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae and Guidelines by:

- requiring compliance with the MDS formulae in the Prime Agricultural Area and the Rural System; and
- directing the local municipalities to require that new agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and secondary uses meet MDS requirements.

These policy directions are found in Regional Official Plan Section 2.2 Large Environmental Systems, Section 3.2 Agricultural Resources and Section 5.4 Rural Systems. In addition, Policy 7.10.2.12 requires that an application for a settlement boundary expansion demonstrate compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae.

The Regional Official Plan also directs the Region, jointly with the Town, to undertake a review and assess the application of the Provincial MDS Formulae and Guidelines in Peel Region (Section 7.6.2.17). This study has been undertaken and is described in Section 4.3 of this Discussion Paper. The study concluded that the MDS Formulae and Guidelines have been appropriately implemented and that the policy direction to the local municipalities within the Regional Official Plan is in compliance with Provincial direction. This policy direction in the Region's current Official Plan remains consistent with new Provincial MDS Formulae and Guidelines.

##### **5.1.4.1 Policy Recommendations**

The 2014 PPS and the 2019 Growth Plan added a provision specifying that non-residential uses that may be permitted in prime agricultural areas are required to demonstrate compliance with MDS. In addition, the definition of MDS has been amended to include reference to the Provincial MDS guidelines as well as the MDS Formulae.

The following modifications to the MDS policies in the Region's Official Plan are recommended:

- modify the definition of MDS to conform with the Provincial definition;
- update the policies requiring compliance with MDS in the prime agricultural areas in order to conform to the PPS by making it clear that the requirement applies to all land uses, including the creation of lots and new or expanding livestock operations;
- add a policy requiring that new land uses in rural lands, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding livestock operations, comply with the minimum distance separation formulae.
- include policy indicating that, where non-residential uses may be permitted in prime agricultural areas, they are to demonstrate compliance with MDS.
- direct local municipalities to require MDS for new development in the Rural System, rather than consider doing so as required in the current Regional Official Plan.

### **5.1.5 Addressing the Impacts of Development: Agriculture Impact Assessment & Edge Planning for Agriculture**

MDS addresses specific concerns regarding odours that may arise when non-farm development occurs in proximity to livestock operations. Non-farm development may have many other impacts on agriculture, however, affecting a farmer's ability to farm, such as increased traffic and the introduction of sensitive land uses that can generate nuisance complaints and impede normal farm practices. The Region's current Official Plan contains policies:

- protecting agricultural operations and normal farm practices in the Prime Agricultural Area;
- directing the Town of Caledon to only permit agriculture-related and secondary uses, and non-residential uses, in the Prime Agricultural Area if they are compatible with surrounding agricultural operations; and
- requiring that planning for settlement area boundary expansions identifies impacts on nearby agricultural operations and mitigates the impacts to the greatest extent feasible.

#### **5.1.5.1 Policy Recommendations**

In the Region's current Official Plan, Regional Council made a commitment to investigate the impacts of non-farm development in agricultural areas. Subsequently, the Edge Planning for Agriculture study and the MDS review investigated these impacts and provided recommendations to address the impacts as described in Section 4.2 and 4.3 of this Discussion Paper.

The 2014 PPS introduced new policy to address the impacts of non-farm development on agricultural operations within rural lands, in addition to those in prime agricultural areas. The 2019 Growth Plan added additional policies to address such impacts, applying not just to impacts on agricultural operations but to impacts on the Agricultural System including the agri-food network. It also introduced requirements for agricultural impact assessments.

It is recommended that, to address the Regional study recommendations and align with Provincial policies and plans, the Region's Official Plan be modified to:

- direct the area municipalities to include policies in their official plans requiring that new or expanding non-agricultural development on rural lands minimizes impacts on the Agricultural System;
- direct the Town of Caledon to include policies in its Official Plan requiring:
  - that new or expanded non-farm uses in Prime Agricultural Areas, or interfacing with agricultural uses in the Rural System, are to avoid or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize or mitigate impacts on the Agricultural System;
  - that mitigation measures are to be incorporated in the proposed non-farm uses; and
  - that an agricultural impact assessment is to be submitted in specific circumstances;
- make a commitment to work with the Province and the area municipalities to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts in planning for new or expanded infrastructure; and
- adopt a definition for agricultural impact assessments specifying that such assessments are to deal with impacts on the Agricultural System as well as individual farm operations.

The Growth Plan also added policies to require that agricultural impacts be addressed in planning for settlement area expansions, infrastructure corridors and mineral aggregate applications. Those policies will be addressed in the components of the Region's Official Plan Review dealing with those subject areas. It is recommended that impact assessment and mitigation be included in the study scope for the Region's settlement boundary expansion study.

### **5.1.6 The Food System**

A number of initiatives to support agriculture are identified in the current Regional Official Plan, such as investigating the challenges and needs experienced by near-urban agriculture. These investigations generally have been completed. With the recent updates to the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan the Province has put in place a broader agricultural systems approach, encouraging municipalities to develop and implement strategies to sustain and enhance agriculture and the agri-food network.

The Region's Official Plan also includes a policy generally supporting urban agriculture but does not position it within the broader context of the food system and the Peel Food Charter's concern for food security and access to healthy food. A number of other municipalities in Ontario have adopted official plan policies addressing the food system more comprehensively and containing specific measures to foster urban agriculture and food access.

#### **5.1.6.1 Policy Recommendations**

The Growth Plan now encourages municipalities to develop and implement strategies to support access to healthy, local, and affordable food, including urban and near-urban agriculture, support food system planning, and promote the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food, and agri-product businesses. In endorsing the Peel Food Charter, Regional Council expressed its support for a just, sustainable and secure food system.

It is recommended that Peel Region strengthen its efforts to support the Agricultural System, and to support local municipal efforts to foster urban agriculture and improve food access by adopting policies to:

- support initiatives to maintain and enhance the Agricultural System;
- collaborate with agricultural sector organizations, the area municipalities and other public agencies to support the development of regional agri-food strategies;
- support urban agriculture by encouraging the use of vacant and underutilized lands for community gardens;
- encourage the area municipalities to include official plan policies to:
  - permit urban agriculture;
  - permit farmers' markets, mobile fresh food markets and community food centres;
  - require that local planning initiatives such as secondary plans, district plans, neighbourhood plans and transportation and mobility plans, are designed and developed to in a manner that facilitates access to healthy food and locally grown food within in neighbourhoods and in adjacent neighbourhoods; and
- collaborate with the area municipalities and other stakeholders to improve access to healthy food and locally grown food and foster the development of urban agriculture.

As outlined in Section 3.1.4 of the Discussion Paper, the Province issued a Food and Organic waste Policy Statement concerned with reducing food and organic waste and increasing resource recovery from those wastes. It is recommended that policies be added to the Regional Official Plan to conform with this Policy Statement by:

- promoting resource recovery and collaborating with the area municipalities to facilitate the collection and resource recovery of food and organic waste;
- protecting existing and planned resource recovery systems from incompatible land uses and planning for new systems; and
- directing the area municipalities to include policies in their official plans requiring accessible facilities for the collection of source-separated food and organic waste in development of multi-unit residential buildings; larger retail, office, and hotel and restaurants uses; large manufacturing establishments; and educational institutions and hospitals.

It is recommended that, to support these policies, the following new definitions be added to the Region's Official Plan:

- urban agriculture;
- mobile fresh market;
- food and organic waste;
- resource recovery; and
- resource recovery system.

## 5.2 Rural System Policies and Definitions

### 5.2.1 The Rural System

The ROP identifies a Rural System for the Region as a component of the Regional Structure. This system is comprised of the Region's Prime Agricultural Areas, the Palgrave Estate Residential Community, Rural Service Centres, Rural Settlements and the Rural Area. It includes the Region's Greenlands System, the Protected Countryside identified in the Greenbelt Plan and the lands within the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan.

Section 5.4 of the ROP sets out general policies applying throughout the Rural System as well as specific policies applying to Rural Service Centres, the Palgrave Estate Residential Community, other settlement areas and the rural area.

Through the Rural System policies, the Regional Official Plan supports the ongoing viability of agricultural operations located both within and outside of the Region's Prime Agricultural Area. The policies in Section 5.4 also conserve the rural environment and resources, preserve and enhance the distinctive character and heritage of the rural area and the quality of the Rural System, direct growth to settlement areas, maintain and enhance the quality of the Rural System and allow choice in rural lifestyles including opportunities for residents to live in their own communities as they age.

#### 5.2.1.1 Policy Recommendations

The 2005 PPS included policies for rural areas, defining them as lands which are outside settlement areas and outside prime agricultural areas. The 2014 PPS introduced a change in policy approach and terminology. It defines "rural areas" more broadly as meaning a system of lands that may include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas. The Rural System as identified in the Region's current Official Plan corresponds to the "rural area" concept as defined in the 2014 PPS. "Rural lands", a new term introduced in the 2014 PPS, has the same meaning as rural areas in the previous PPS.

It is recommended that:

- in keeping with the systems approach to Regional Structure embodied in the Region's Official Plan, the Region's Official Plan continue to identify the Rural System as defined in the Region's Plan;
- the term "rural areas" be replaced with the term "rural lands" to align with the new PPS and Growth Plan terminology;
- the 2019 Growth Plan introduced "rural settlement" as a new term in the Growth Plan. The term is defined to mean "existing hamlets or similar existing small settlement areas that are long-established and identified in official plans". It is narrower in scope than the term "rural settlement" as identified in the current Regional Official Plan, which includes villages and industrial/commercial centres as well as hamlets. It is recommended that the term "rural settlements" in the Regional Official Plan be replaced with the term "rural settlement areas" cross referenced to the "settlement areas" definition in the Growth Plan so that the term "rural



settlement areas” as used in the Region’s OP encompasses more than just hamlets and includes the full range of rural settlement areas dealt with in the Region’s policies (e.g. villages, hamlets and industrial/commercial centres).

The Growth Plan identifies the Agricultural System as consisting of a continuous and productive land base, comprised of prime agricultural areas and rural lands; and a complementary agri-food network of infrastructure, services and other elements that together enable the agri-food sector to thrive. Thus the Agricultural System involves lands and activities in the Rural System beyond prime agricultural areas. It recognizes that rural lands also can contain agricultural operations and can play an important role in maintaining the continuity of the agricultural land base by providing linkages among prime agricultural areas.

To support the Agricultural System and align with provincial plans and policies it is recommended that the Rural System policies be amended to:

- make support and enhancement of the Agricultural System an objective;
- identify the Agricultural System as consisting of Prime Agricultural Areas, shown on Schedule B, and rural lands designated in the area municipal official plans and the agri-food network as a component of the Rural System;
- commit to implementing the Agricultural System policies; and
- clarify that agricultural uses and normal farm practices, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are permitted uses in rural lands.

The 2014 PPS added a new set of policies for rural areas. The policies address rural character and the leveraging of rural assets; housing; infrastructure and public service facilities; growth and economic development; and environmental conservation. The Growth Plan contained policies providing additional direction respecting development on rural lands.

It is recommended that the Rural System policies in the Region’s Official Plan be modified to:

- make the provision of economic opportunities compatible with the rural character and natural environment an objective;
- encourage planning by the area municipalities for a healthy, integrated and viable Rural System addressing the matters set out in the PPS, such as building upon rural character; and
- clarify that the following uses are permitted on rural lands in conformity with the PPS:
  - home occupations and home industries;
  - non-intensive, resource-based recreation uses;
  - forestry;
  - conservation of the natural environment; and
  - other rural uses.

### 5.2.2 Rural Service Centres

The Region's current Official Plan designates Bolton, Caledon East and Mayfield West as Rural Service Centres. The Plan envisions them as providing a range of goods and services for those living and working in the Rural System. Its objectives include fostering the distinct character and village atmosphere of the Rural Service Centres. These three Rural Service Centres serve as the primary focus for growth in the Rural System. These communities have grown substantially and have become increasingly urban in character. The policy direction of the Growth Plan does not distinguish rural service centres as a settlement area category; however, the Growth Plan's policy framework requires intensification and designated greenfield area planning including identifying built up areas, designated greenfield areas, major transit station areas and employment lands all of which are applicable to these communities and indicate that an urban policy framework may be more appropriate. It is recommended that the Growth Management related components of the Peel 2041 official plan address how Rural Service Centres fit into the Region's evolving Regional Structure.

### 5.3 Greenlands System Policies and Definitions

The Region's natural heritage policies are found in Section 2.3 Greenlands System. The intent of these policies is to work in synergy with the Region's Agricultural Resource policies and support agricultural uses within the Greenlands System while protecting key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features (labelled as Core, NAC and PNAC Greenlands System components in the policy framework). This same approach of supporting and clarifying agricultural permissions within the Greenlands System is being carried forward and updated to reflect new provincial policy direction in the review of the Regional Official Plan (Peel 2041) and will be addressed in more detail in the Greenlands System Discussion Paper to be prepared as part of the Peel 2041 Review.

### 5.4 Lot Creation

The Region's current Official Plan includes some policies respecting lot creation through severance. The severance process provides the opportunity to ensure that Plan's policies with respect to matters such as ground water protection are implemented. It also provides the means to address important Regional interests such as the protection of road rights-of-way and transit corridors. The existing policies do not, however, provide a comprehensive policy framework to ensure that the Plan's policies and the Region's interests are adequately addressed.

It is recommended that a new set of policies be incorporated in the Official Plan:

- indicating that creation of lots by severance may only be permitted where a plan of subdivision is not needed to implement planning policies;
- requiring that severances comply with the provisions of the *Planning Act* and with applicable Provincial, Regional and local plans and policies;
- supporting severances only where the lots can be serviced and existing and future infrastructure needs are addressed;
- supporting consents to enable Greenlands securement; and

- identifying conditions that lot line adjustments must meet.

## 5.5 Schedules

The Regional Official Plan includes Schedules to support the interpretation and implementation of Regional policies. These Schedules form part of the Regional Official Plan and are used in conjunction with the Plan's written policies.

### 5.5.1 Schedule B – Prime Agricultural Area

The mapping of the Prime Agricultural Area is depicted in Schedule B to the Region's Official Plan. This mapping was undertaken and came into effect in 1996. It designates the Region's Prime Agricultural Area based on Canadian Land Inventory (CLI) soil capability for Class 1-3 lands, which are considered by the Province to be the most viable agricultural lands based on their soil type.

#### 5.5.1.1 Policy Recommendations

Schedule B depicting the Prime Agricultural Area in the Region is recommended to be amended in accordance with the findings of Region's Agricultural Mapping Refinement report.

### 5.5.2 Schedule D – Regional Structure

The ROP identifies Peel's Regional structure in Schedule D. The Rural System is mapped and depicted in this Schedule but, while the Official Plan policies indicate that the Palgrave Rural Estate Community and the Rural Service Centres are components of the Rural System, they are not shown as being part of the Rural System on Schedule D. The rural settlement areas also are not shown on Schedule D as part of the Regional structure.

#### 5.5.2.1 Policy Recommendations

It is recommended that Schedule D be amended to:

- depict the Rural System as including all of the lands outside the Urban Boundary, including the Palgrave Rural Estate Community;
- clearly indicate whether the communities currently designated as Rural Service Centres (i.e., Bolton, Caledon East and Mayfield West) be considered as part of the Urban System; and
- identify the rural settlement areas (including Villages, Hamlets and Industrial/Commercial Centres as designated in the Caledon Official Plan).

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## 6. Conclusion and Next Steps

The current Region of Peel Official Plan protects prime agricultural areas and supports a diversified, healthy and productive agricultural industry. Section 5.4 of the Plan sets out policies to maintain and enhance the Rural System. Through this discussion paper it has been found, however, that modifications to the current policies and mapping are needed in order to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conform with provincial plans; to support the goals and objectives of the Official Plan; and to implement Regional initiatives, such as those related to the food system.



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