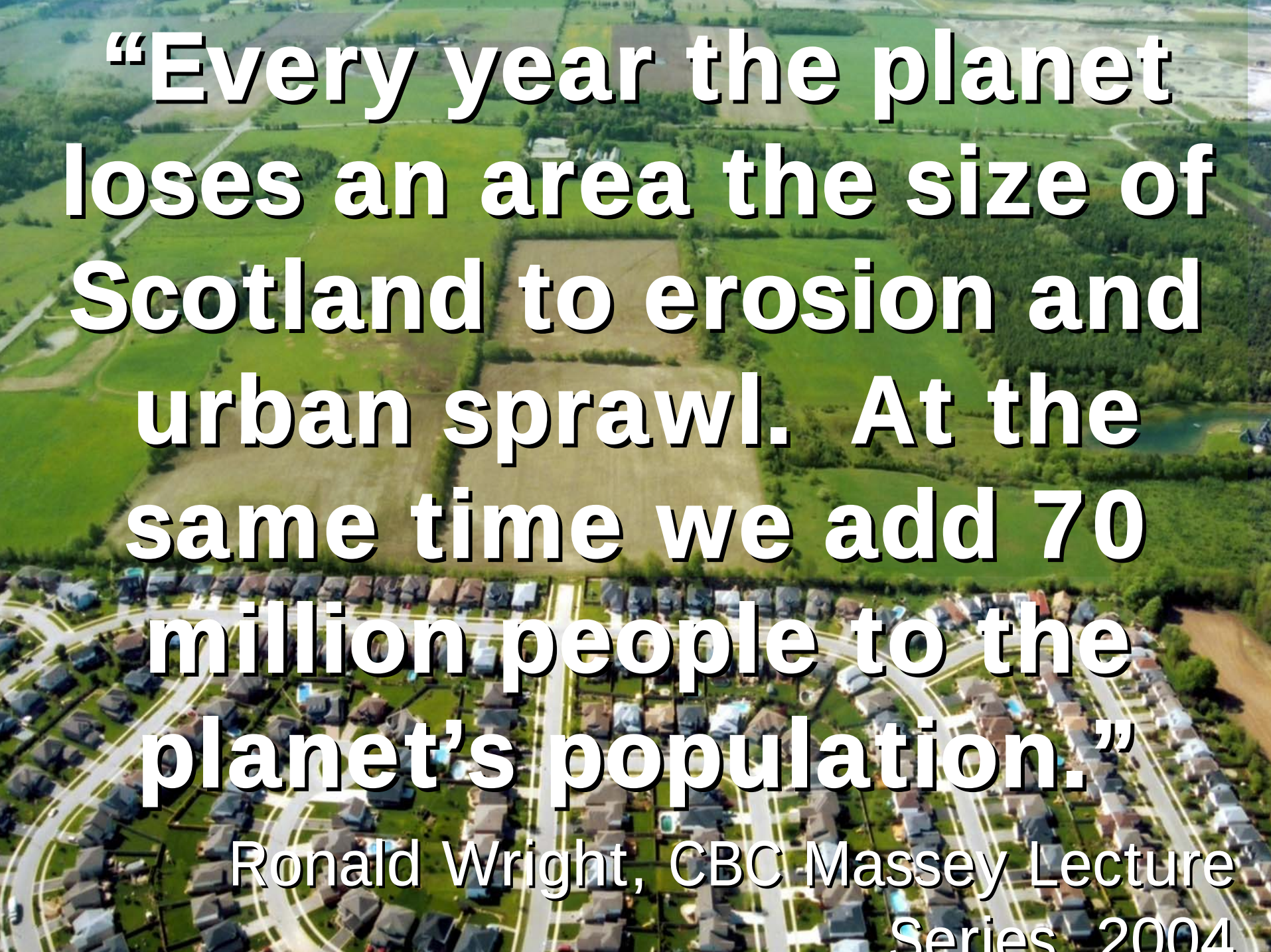


“Every year the planet loses an area the size of Scotland to erosion and urban sprawl. At the same time we add 70 million people to the planet’s population.”

Ronald Wright, CBC Massey Lecture Series 2004

Land Use Planning, Farmland Preservation and Farm Viability

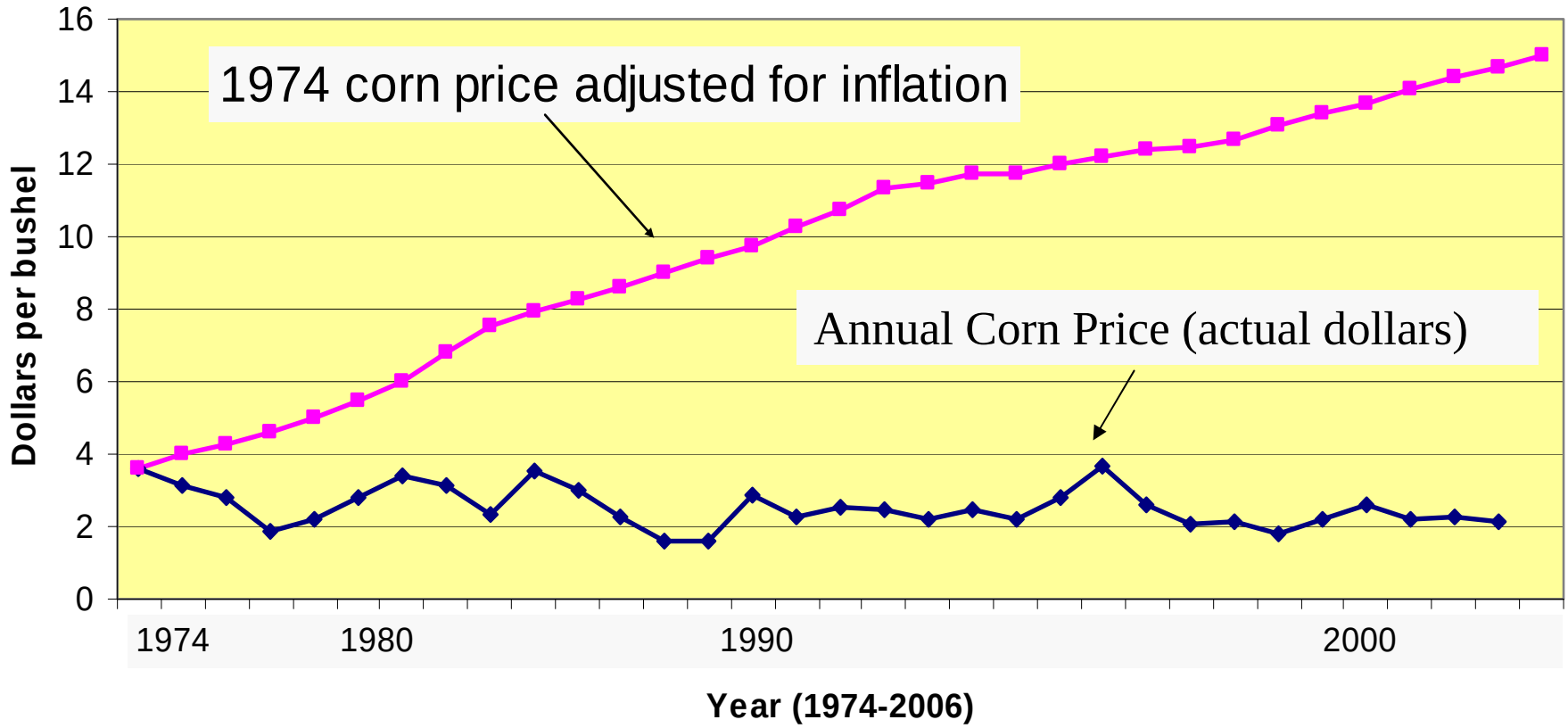
Wayne Caldwell

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
University of Guelph

County of Huron

www.waynecaldwell.ca

Annual Corn Price (Chicago) vs. 1974 Corn Price Adjusted for Inflation



(U.S. price for corn adjusted by the Cdn CPI)

How is agriculture in Ontario different today than it was a generation or two ago?

Agenda

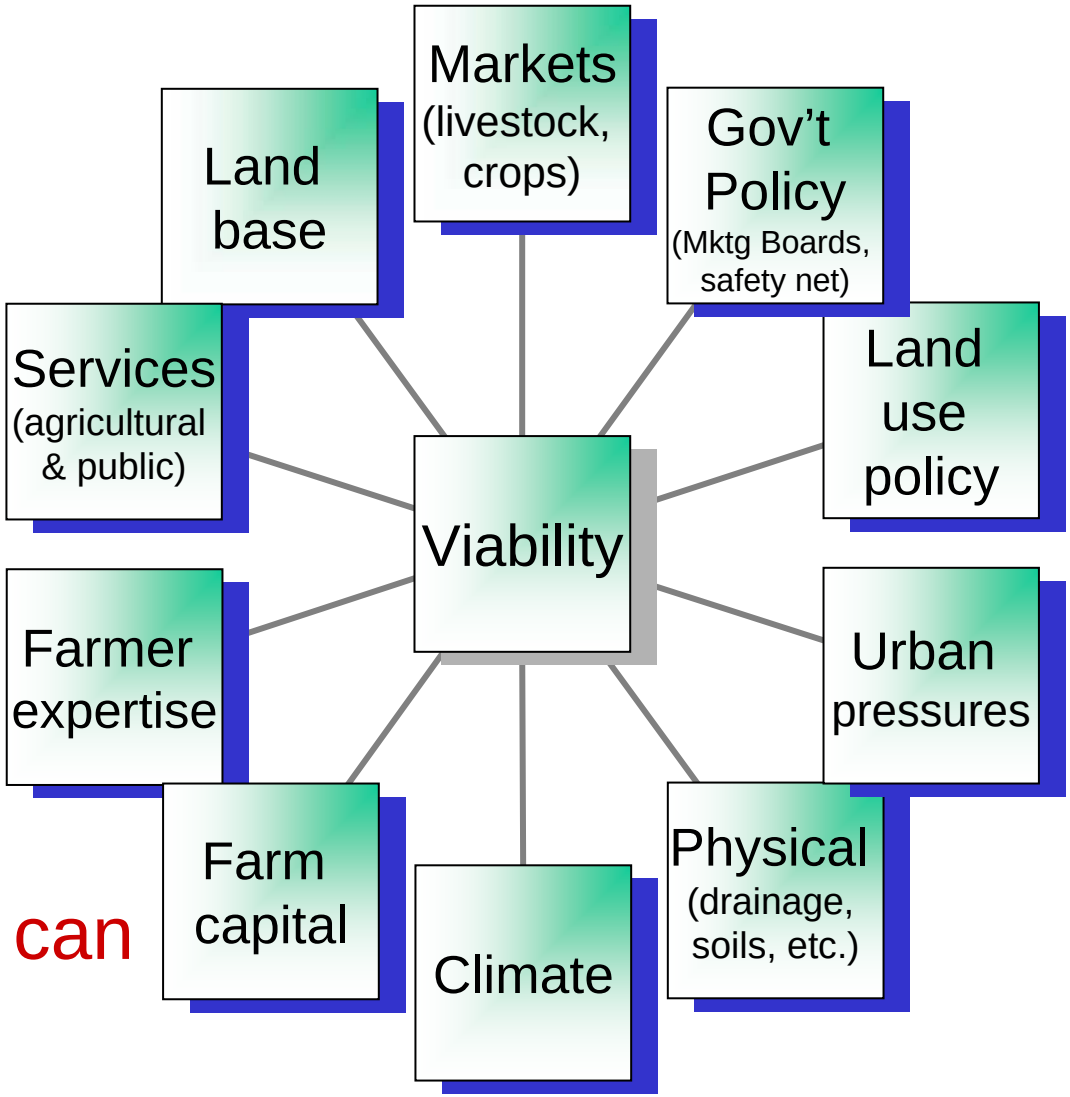
- **Land Use Planning and Viability**
- **Case Study: Viability and the Municipal Role – Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association**
- **Perspectives on Farmland Preservation- Innovative Strategies**

Why is the concept of viability important?

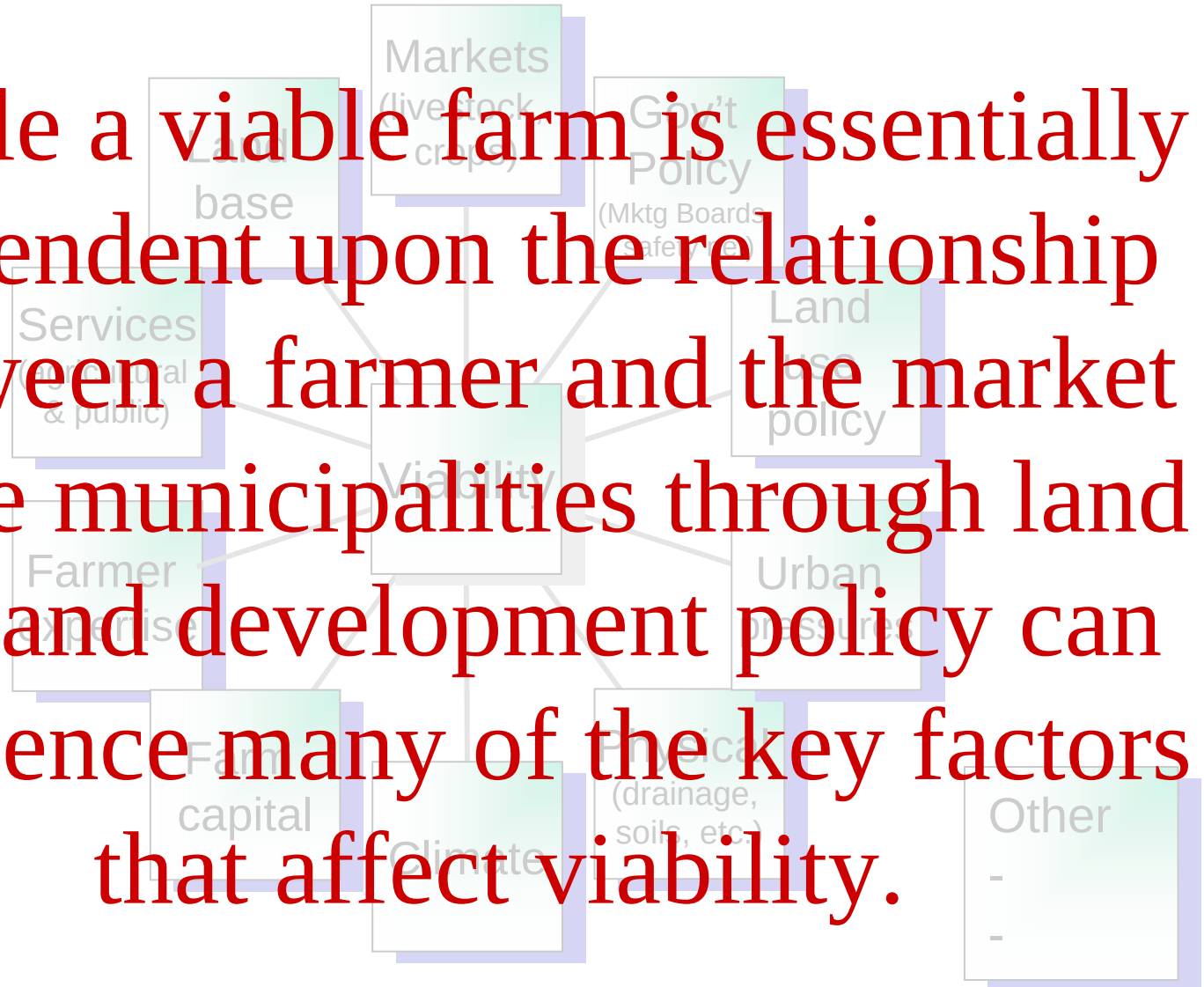
What do we mean by viability?

- Viable (dictionary):
  - capable of living, capable of growing or developing
- In an agricultural context it implies the ability to make a living; to be sustainable (economic, social and environmental); profitable. A viable farm would be a farm that provides (or substantially contributes to) the livelihood of the family.
- From a land use planning perspective viability requires more than the protection of the land base – it requires helping to establish the conditions that promote agricultural viability

Factors that affect farm viability



Which of these factors do you think municipalities can influence?

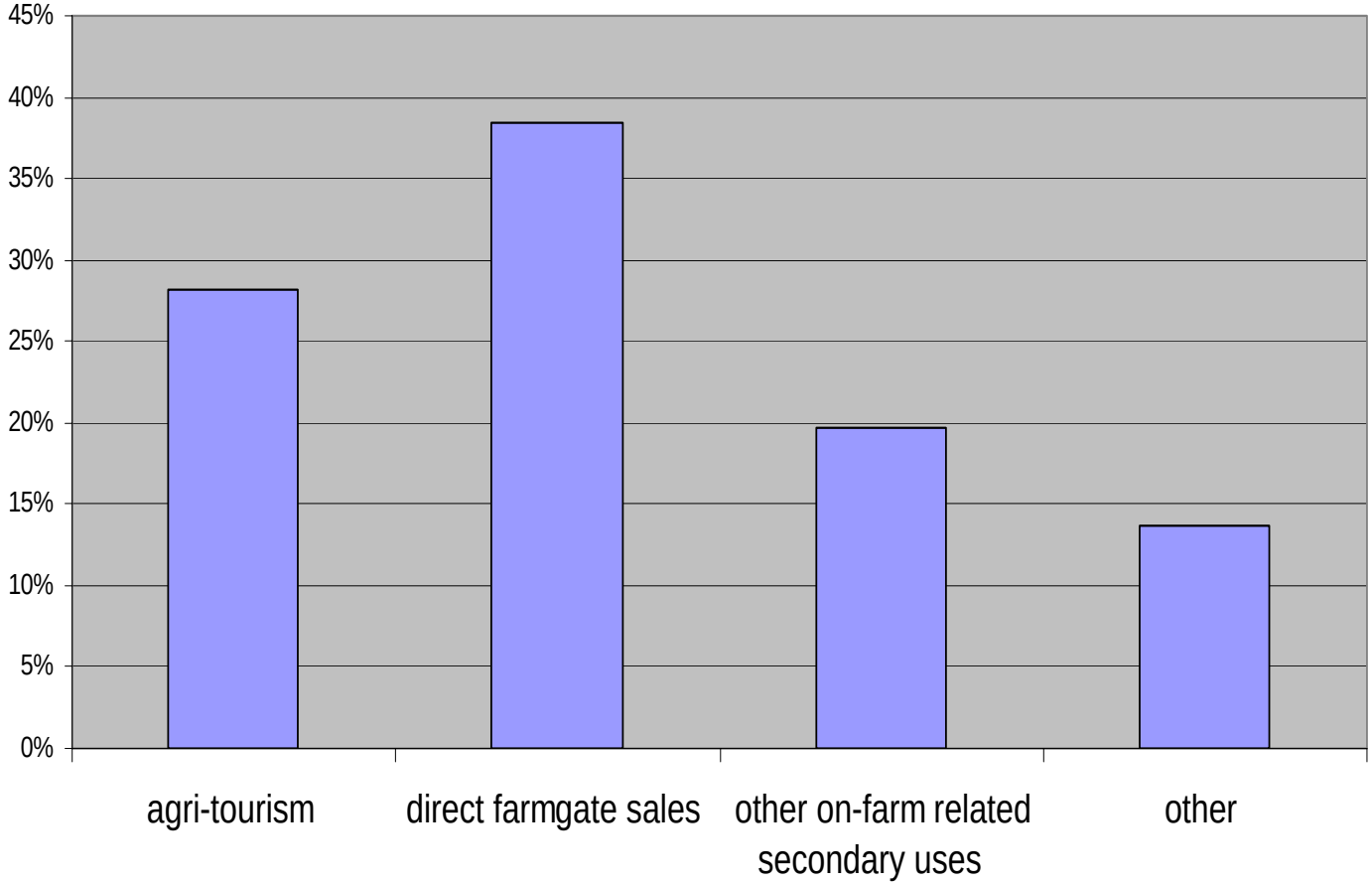


While a viable farm is essentially dependent upon the relationship between a farmer and the market place municipalities through land use and development policy can influence many of the key factors that affect viability.

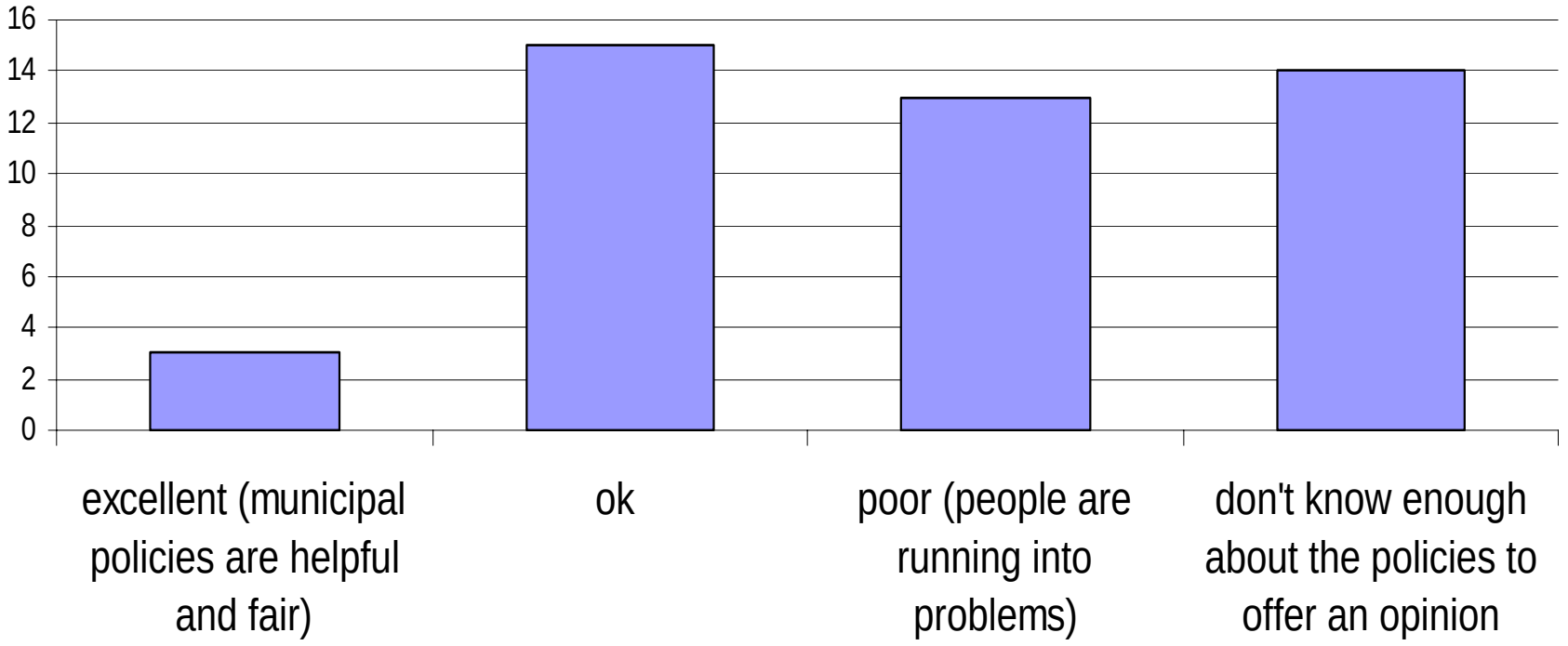
Direct Farm Marketing in Ontario – a Case Study

Jurisdictional Analysis and Best Practices for Land Use Planning Affecting Direct Marketing and Agri-tourism Operations in Ontario (Caldwell, 2006)

Focus of OFFMA Members

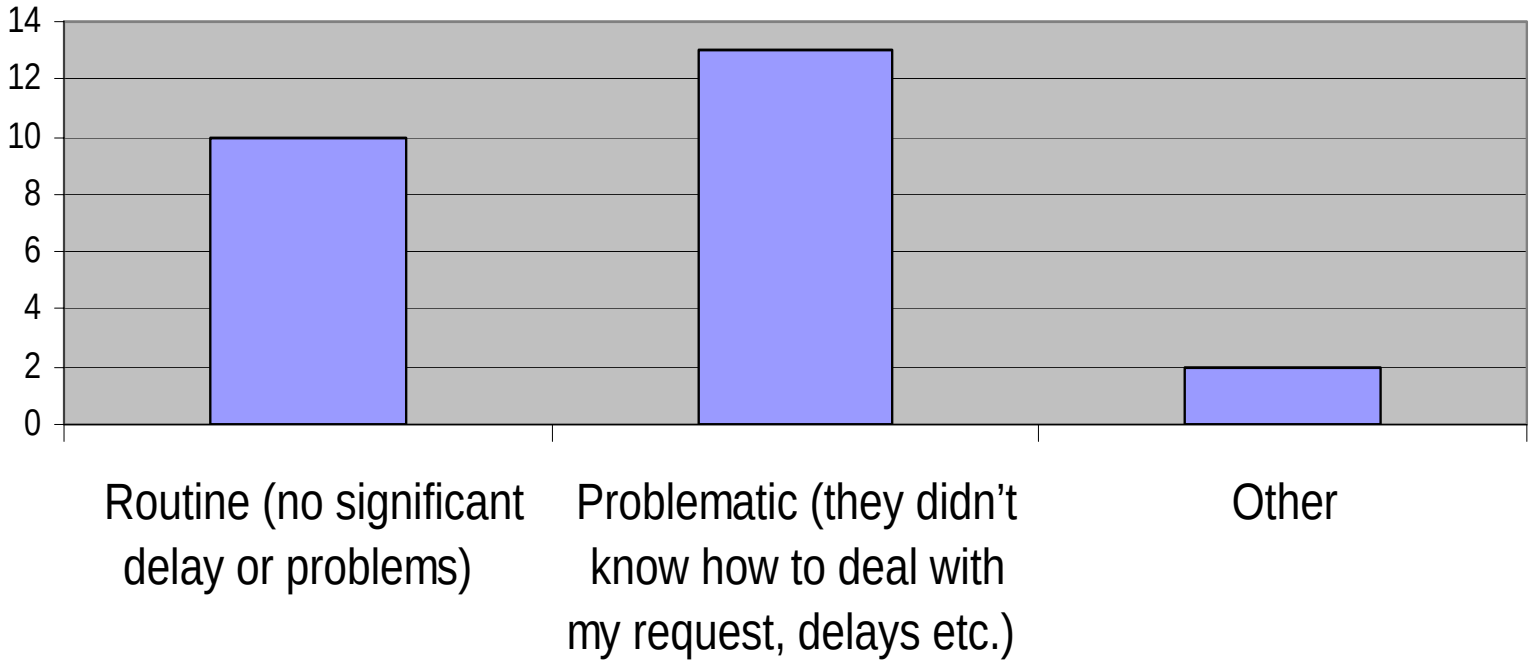


Rating your Municipality's Policy on Direct Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism



Outcomes of the study (2006): Key Principles and Best Practices for Land Use Planning Affecting Direct Marketing & Agri-tourism

For those requiring municipal approvals how would you categorize your dealings with the municipality?



Outcomes of the study (2006): Key Principles and Best Practices for Land Use Planning Affecting Direct Marketing & Agri-tourism

Objectives

- analysis of key municipalities regarding local planning policies
- best practice models from across the province to assist OFFMA members as well as municipal stakeholders (direct farm marketing and agri-tourism operations in Ontario).

Key Principles (OFFMA, 2006)

- **On-farm diversification is critical.**
- **Local agriculture and locally available produce is good for the health of the community and good for the local economy.**
- **Sound land use planning.**
- **Protection of agricultural land.**
- **An evolving definition of agriculture.**

Key Principles (continued)

- A connection to agriculture.
- Flexibility.
- Clarity.
- Compatibility between different land uses.
- Fairness in the property tax system.
- Recognizing different geographies.

Best Practices (OFFMA, 2006)

- *Clarity in the Official Plan*
- *Use as-of-right zoning to the extent possible.*
- *Provide a clear definition and policy related to agri-tourism.*
- *Uses with a lesser connection to agriculture*

Best Practices (continued)

- ***Minimum Distance Separation may apply***
- ***Clarity for producers that direct farm marketing/agri-tourism uses are not likely to be severed***
- ***Establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee***
- ***Have dedicated and informed staff***
- ***A Role for Provincial Leadership***

Innovation in Land Use Planning

Considering Three Policy Directions for Ontario…(a 2004 perspective)

- **Build on the Existing System**
- **Moderate Changes to Ontario's existing system**
- **A Radical Departure for Ontario**

… an informal e-mail survey of a few people to broaden the perspective on the issue…

1) Has the bar been raised over the last few years?

2) If the bar has been raised - how so? _____

3) What are 3 innovative actions/ policy currently in practice?

4) What are 3 innovative ideas/actions/policy that you can identify that could be done?

Hierarchy of Planning in Ontario

Planning Act

↓

Provincial Policy Statement

↓

Regional / County Official Plans

↓

Local Official Plans

1) has the bar been raised over the last few years? yes___ no___

- ***Yes, yes, yes…***
- ***"The bar clearly has been raised. Most municipalities are preserving good farmland and only farm related activities are allowed. We don't need a lot of innovation if the policy says no to development in prime farm areas."***
- ***"the bar has definitely been raised, but mainly at the Provincial level.***

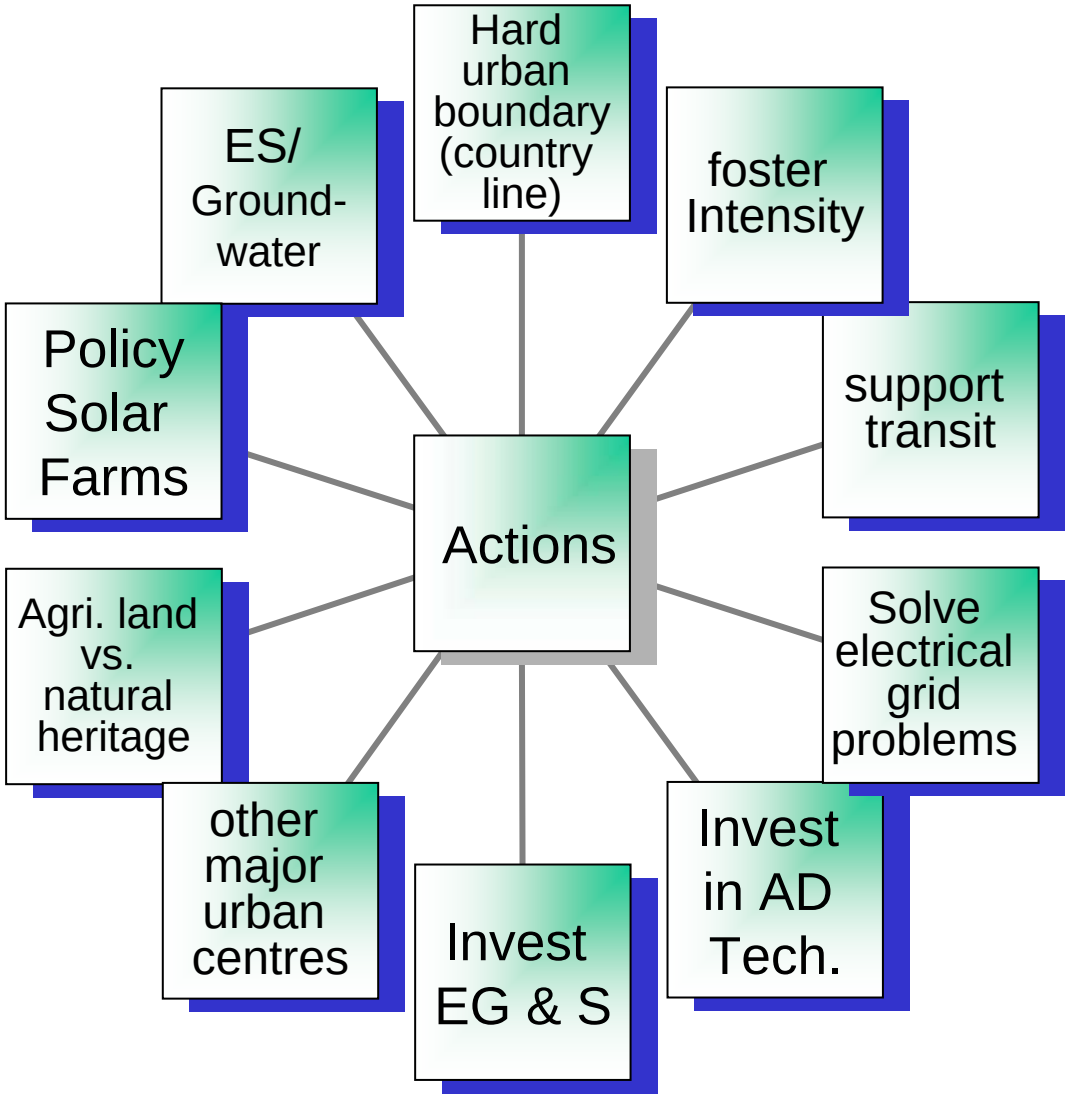
2) If the bar has been raised – how so?

- “Of all the changes, I think the most significant one is that developers can't appeal a local Council's decision not to expand a settlement boundary. During my career, most of the converted farm land was approved by the OMB.”
- “Strengthened Provincial Policy Statement … – reduced residential lot creation in agricultural areas, clearer requirements for justification studies for urban expansions, requirement to identify specialty crop areas and prohibition on urban expansions onto specialty crop lands; Greenbelt Plan clearly protects important agricultural lands in the Holland Marsh and Niagara for the long-term; Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.”

3) What are 3 innovative actions/ policy currently in practice?

- *Intensification targets for urban areas in Growth Plan; Oxford County – policy regarding construction of dwellings on under-sized farm parcels; Greenbelt Plan in and of itself is unique in Canada….*
- *Local Food Promotion - Positive gains have been made in land use policy, now more emphasis is needed on making farming more viable, sustainable, and an environmental enhancement.*
- *policies that support the special needs of the Mennonite and Amish communities ... Although these policies do not protect farm land per se, they do support the farming community and help keep farmers on the land.*

3 innovative actions that could be done?



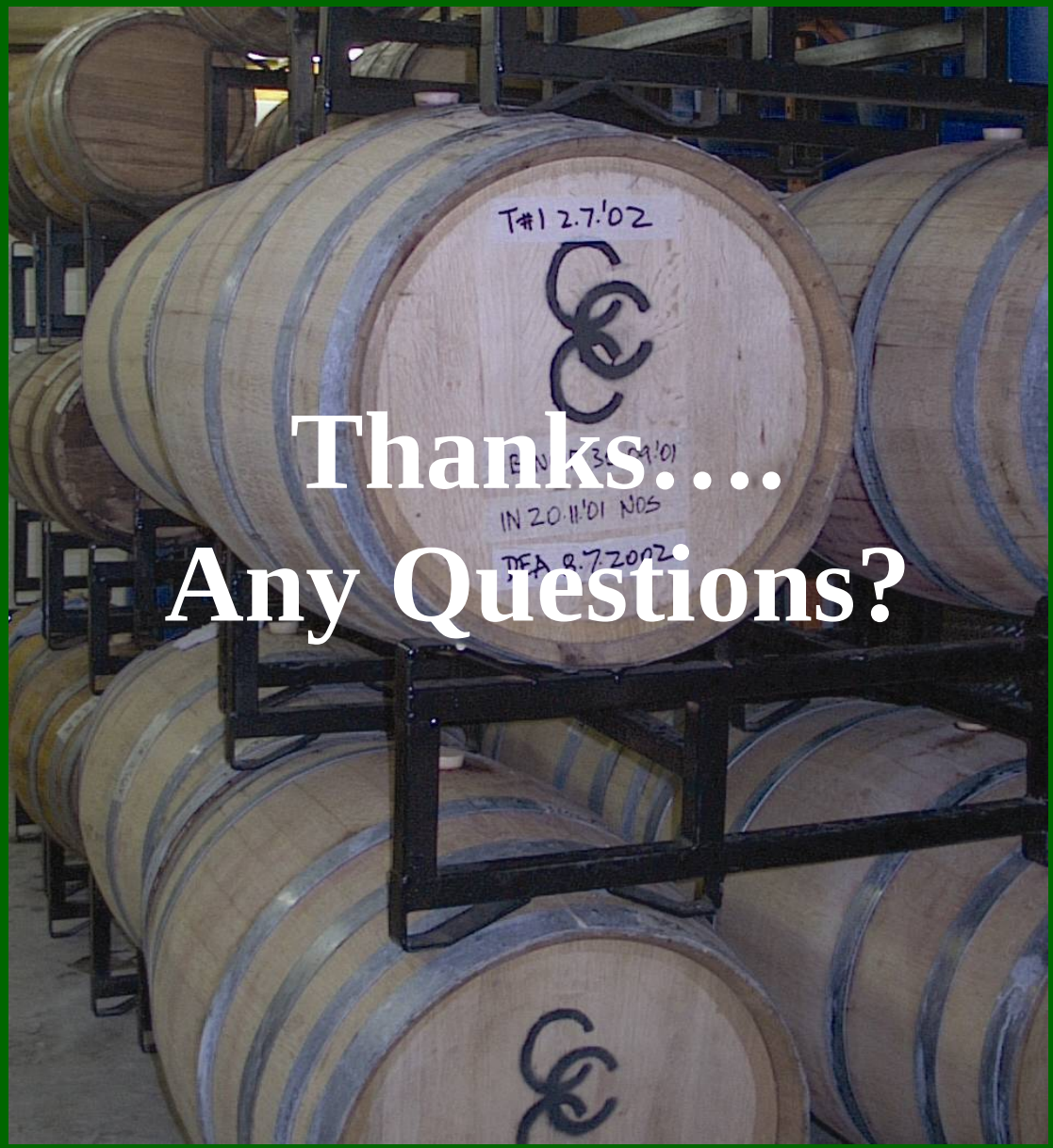
Other
- Direct farm marketing
- Rapid transit
- Redistribute taxation revenue

A quote from one of the respondents:

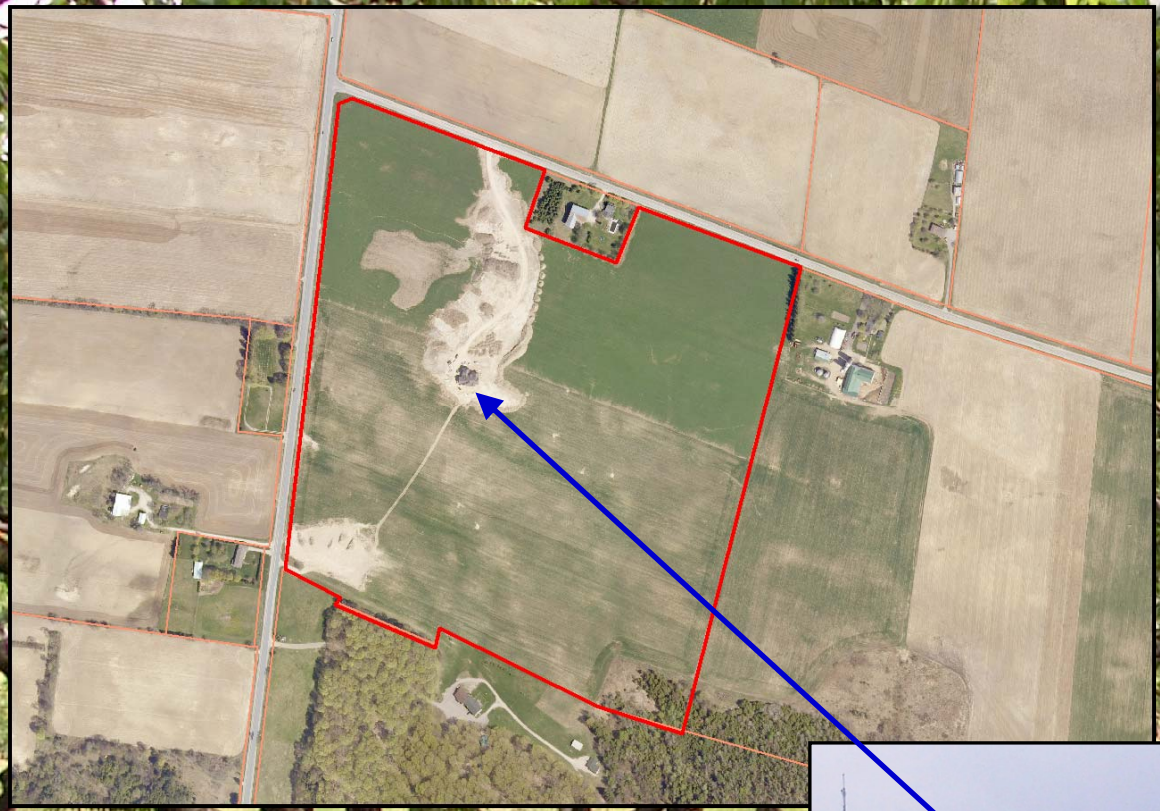
"While it seems to me the Province has done much over the past few years, I'm not seeing any real new innovation at the municipal level in Official Plan or local policies."

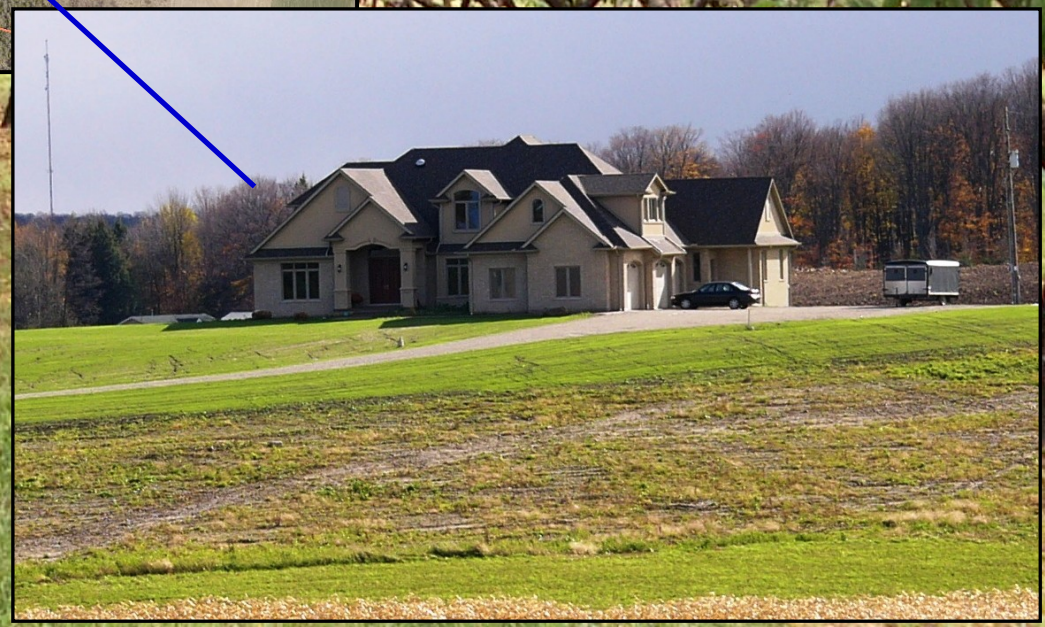
Opportunities for Innovation

- Recognize PPS and local policies that in some instances still exceed PPS
- Tackling the untackled and new issues (50 acre split, 83 acre solar farm, specialty crop areas, other major urban centres, dealing with smaller agr. Parcels, etc.
- Work towards public and farm concensus
- Viability - recognizing key principles



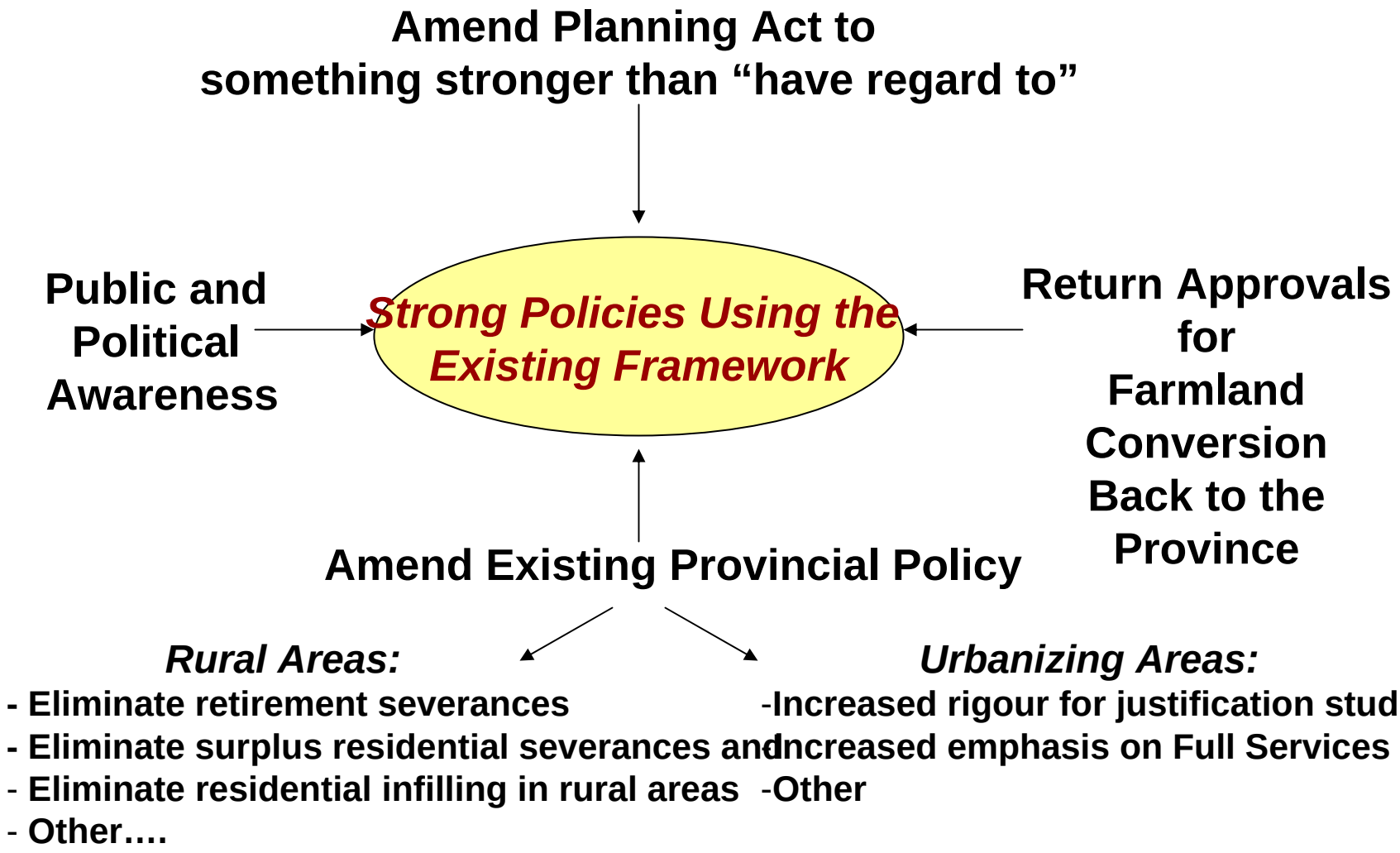
Thanks….
Any Questions?





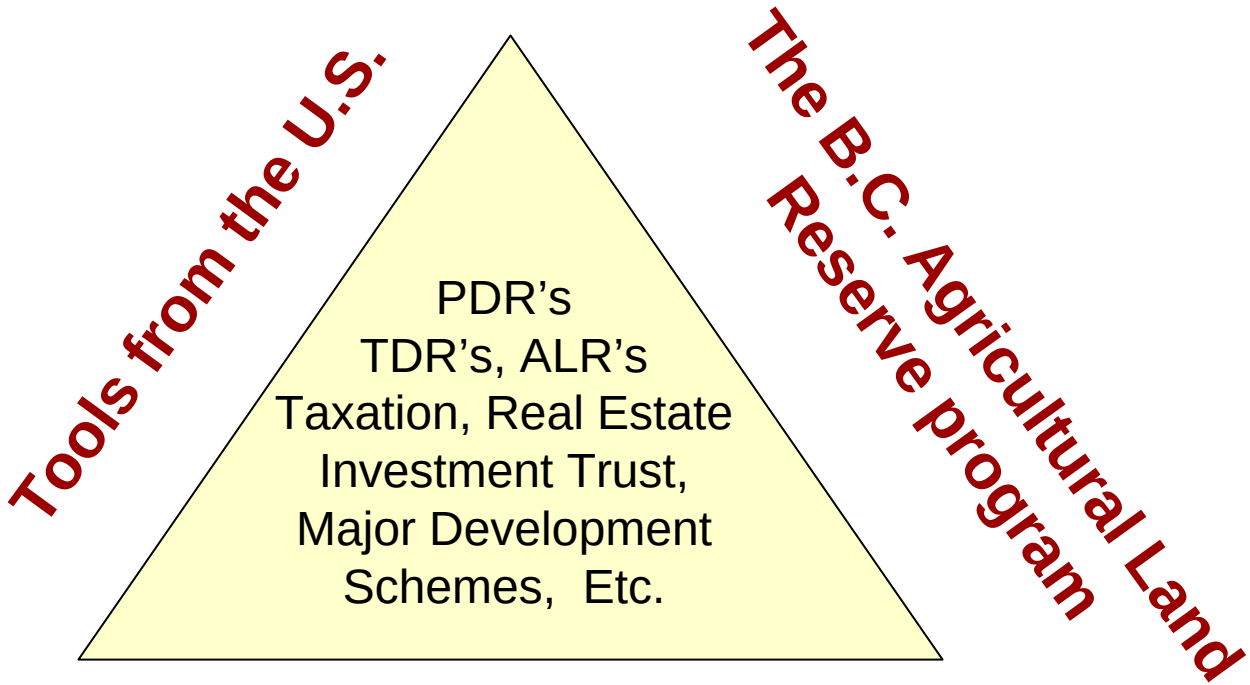
- Non-farm rural residence
- 35 hectare parcel

Building on Ontario's Existing System



Moderate Changes to Ontario's Existing System

- **"Incentivize" *good* municipal practices**
- **Build on the work of "Smart Growth" panels**
- **Special Policies for Special Areas**
- **Land Trusts**
- **Innovative Tools (agricultural easements)**
- **Provincial Development Plan**
- **Public Investment in Infrastructure**

Considering a Radical Departure for Ontario

(likely requiring a new legislative framework)