



# Farmland Loss – Trends, Predictions and Potential Action

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Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance – September 26, 2017

# Presentation Outline

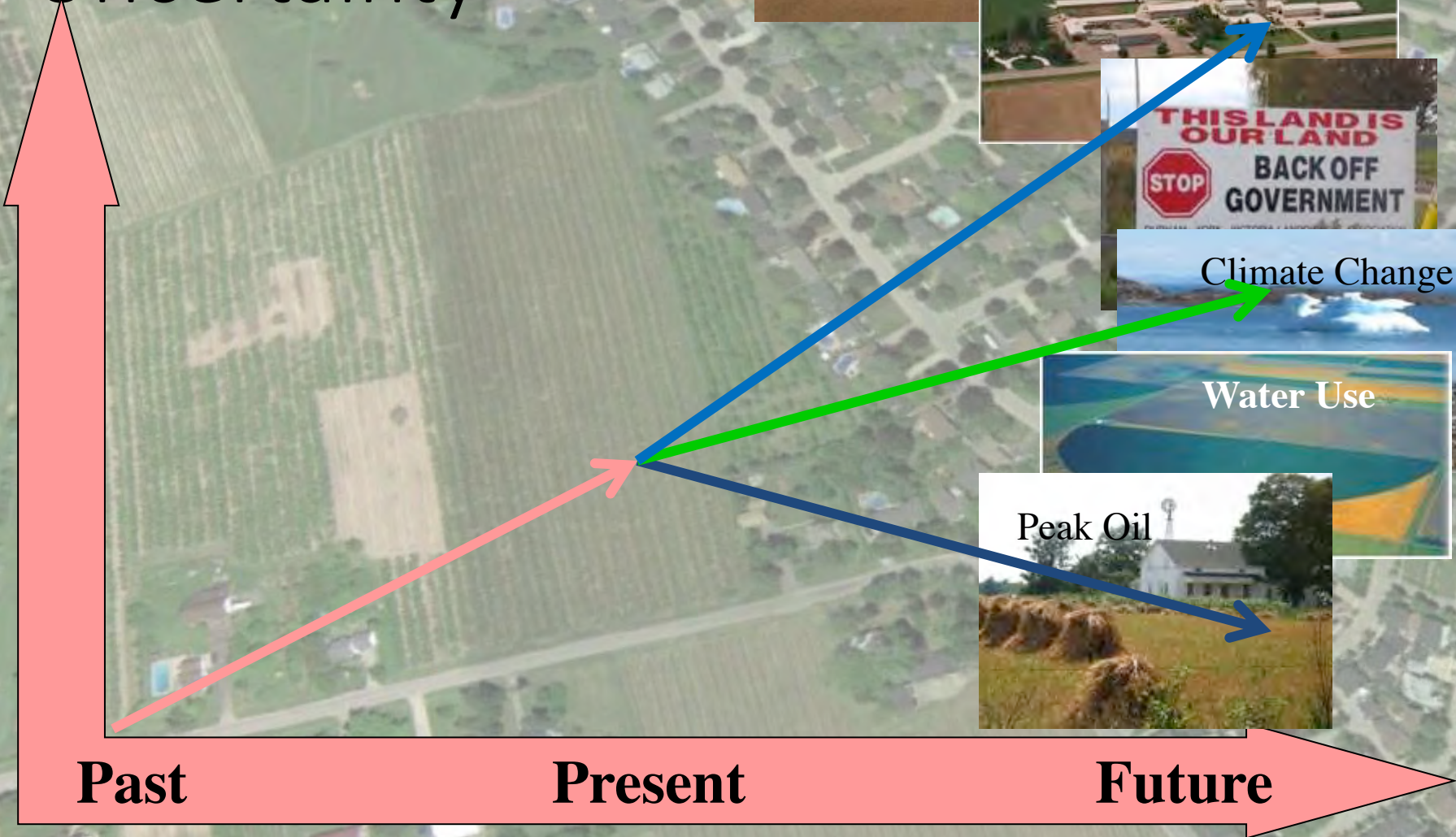
- Farmland in Ontario
- Why protect farmland?
- Starting premise
  - Challenges with existing measurement tools
- Research method
- Initial findings
- Challenges
- Next steps
- Discussion

An aerial photograph showing a mix of agricultural fields and a residential neighborhood. The farmland consists of large, rectangular plots in various shades of green and brown, some with visible crop rows. The residential area is characterized by a grid of streets, numerous houses with dark roofs, and clusters of trees. The overall scene illustrates the proximity of urban development to prime agricultural land.

# Farmland in Ontario

- Only 0.5% of Canada's land area is Class 1 farmland
- Over half of the class 1 farmland is in Southern Ontario
- All of Canada's 2 best agri-climatic zones
- 70-85% of land being urbanized is class 1

# Agricultural Uncertainty



***Diary Entry:  
June 1, 1877***



R. K. Sallows Photo



***Diary Entry:  
5 generations later,  
June 1, 2017***

# So... why Protect Farmland?

- Food production
- Food security
- Economic contributions of agriculture
- Stewardship & amenity of the countryside
- A resource for future generations



**FARMERS  
FEED  
CITIES!**

An aerial photograph showing a mix of agricultural fields and residential developments. The farmland is characterized by large, rectangular plots with distinct rows of crops. Residential areas consist of clusters of houses with roofs, surrounded by trees and smaller green spaces. The overall scene illustrates the interface between rural production and suburban living.

# Evolving Rationale for Protecting Farmland

- Traditional reasons
  - The amenity of food
  - Global responsibility
  - Energy
  - Future Options
- Local Food
  - Connections to health
  - Local economies
  - Amenity value
  - Necessity
  - Other...



# Farmland Preservation: What are the Positives in Ontario?

- Relatively high urban densities
- **Some municipalities - very sound policies**
- A relatively high acceptance of planning (and state based restrictions)
- **High capability farmland and the economics of preservation**
- Urban intensification, downtown renewal, etc.
- **Active provincial involvement**

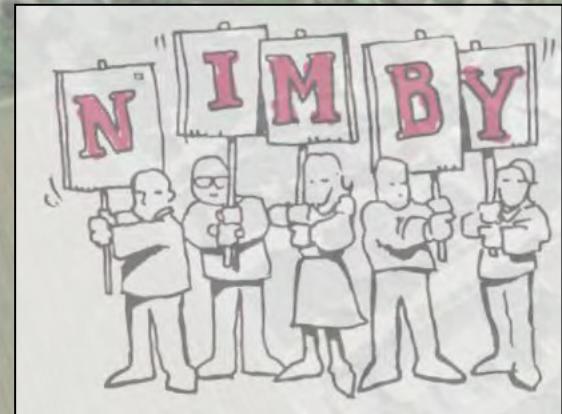


# Farmland Preservation: Areas of Concern

- Expansion of urban areas & loss of farmland (4 million more people anticipated in 30 years)
- **Until recently, farmland preservation has had a low profile**
- Farmland loss is often seen as inevitable
- **Loss of farmers...but protection of farmland**
- Some municipalities - poor track record (rural severances)

# What are the Impacts of Non-farm Land uses on Agricultural Land?

- Introduces restrictions on farmland
- Fragment land base & consume farmland
- Potential conflict with agriculture
- Can lead to changes in the rural community
- Detract from rural aesthetic
- Environmental and servicing impacts



# Measuring Farmland Conversion: Starting Premise

We are challenged by the absence of data to accurately document changes to farmland availability over time



Source:  
GeoOttawa

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The image shows a mix of green agricultural fields, some with distinct rows of crops, and a network of roads and roadsides. There are several buildings, including houses and what appears to be a larger farm structure, scattered throughout the scene. The overall tone is somewhat muted, with a greenish-grey overlay.

# Existing Methods Come With Challenges

- **Census** – Only documents land in production (e.g. commodity prices). It may be decades before land comes out of production following a land use decision.
- **Aerial imagery** – Varies across the province and may or may not document the impact of land use decisions.

# Land Approvals and Development

- Delay between approvals and land development
  - Land often comes out of production years after approvals have been granted
  - When new houses are built a former agricultural use is visibly lost
- *Assumed policy failure of Greenbelt or County or Regional Planning*
  - People see houses built on prime land or “sprawl” and assume that the planning instrument isn’t working



Under construction - 2017

Construction completed - 2014



# Official Plan Amendments

Under construction - 2017



# 1973 to 1981

An aerial photograph showing a rural landscape. On the left, there are large, rectangular agricultural fields, some green and some brown. A road runs horizontally across the middle. To the right of the road, there is a residential area with many houses and trees. The text 'Research Methods' is overlaid in the upper center, and a paragraph of text is overlaid in the center.

# Research Methods

*This research specifically looked at approved official plan amendments by region/county to identify the amount of land lost to urban expansion and other non-agricultural land uses.*

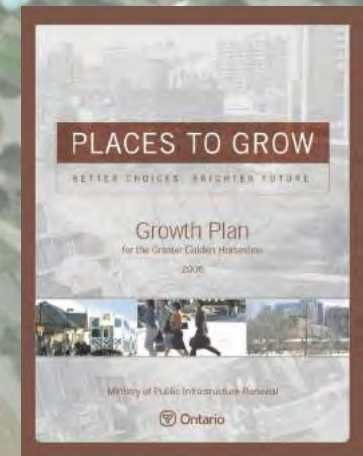
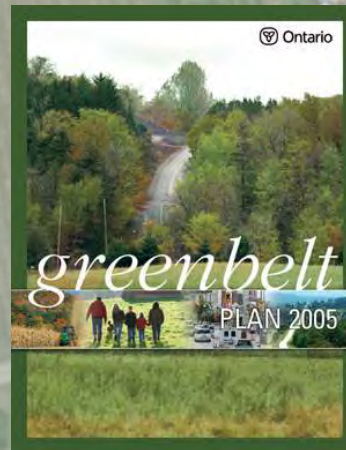
An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The image shows a mix of residential areas with houses and trees, and large agricultural fields. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# Research Methods

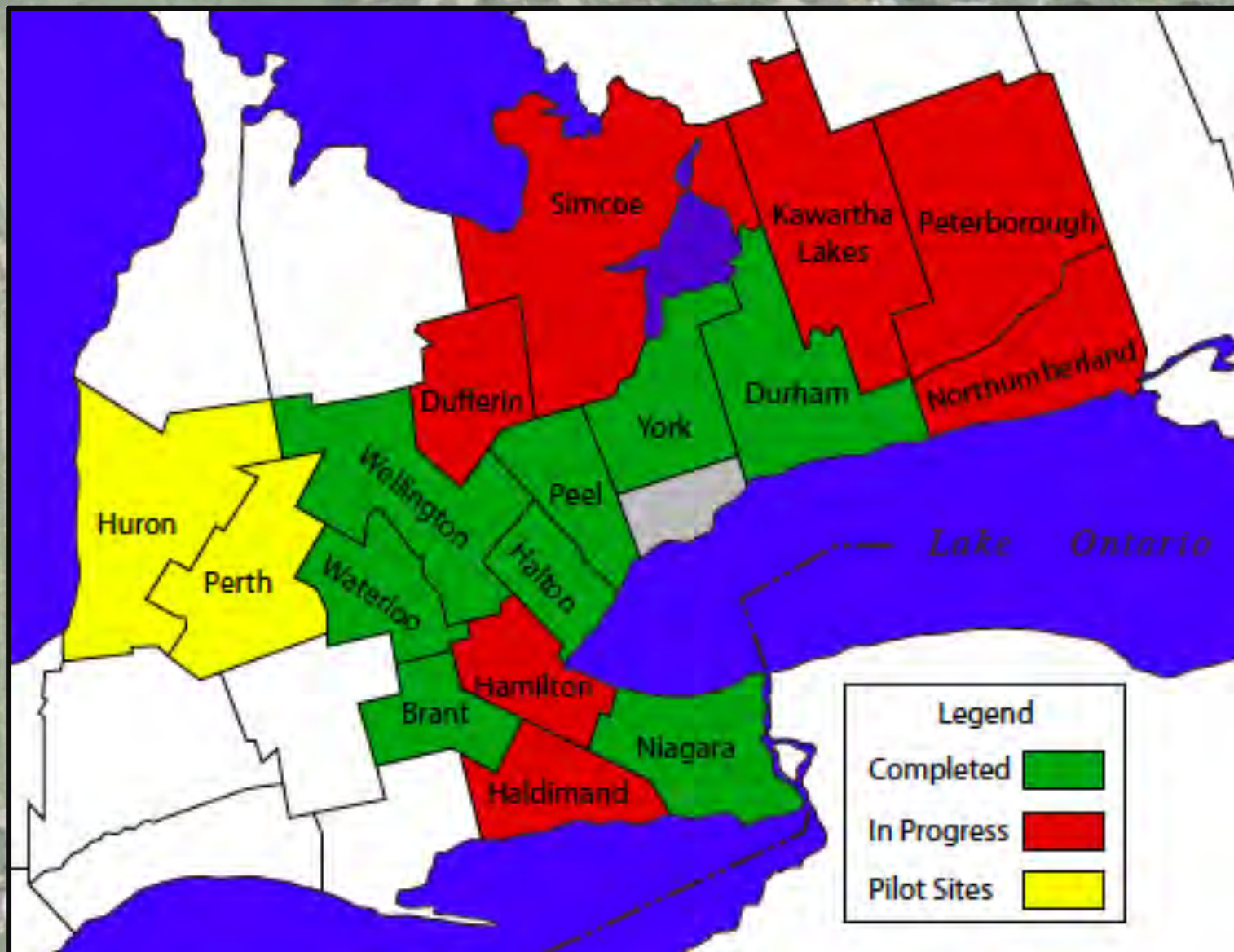
- Included reviewing planners' reports, official plan policies and provincial legislation
- 100s of files were reviewed on-site or when available, electronically
- Region/county staff have been consulted for aid in interpreting individual files when necessary.

# Timeframe – Research Parameters

- Start with the year 2000 to 2014
- Captured both data before the 2005 PPS and before the Greenbelt



# Study Sites



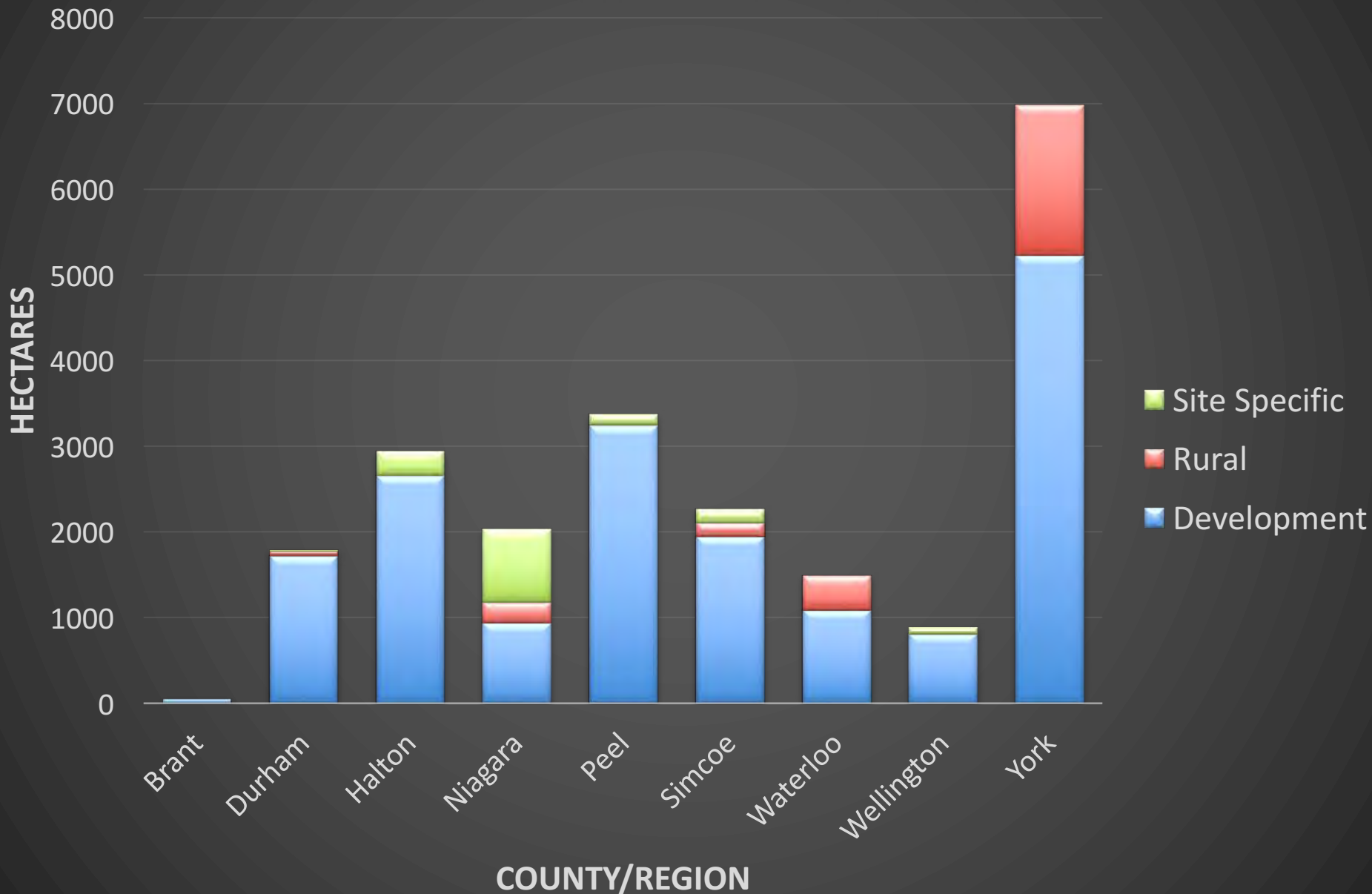
# Redesignations by County/Region

County/ Region	Number of approved OPAs related to the loss of prime agriculture land	Prime agriculture redesignated for:		
		Development designation (Ha)	Rural designation (Ha)	Non-farm uses through site-specific policy amendments (Ha)
Brant	4	47	0	0
Durham	5	1,723	56	18
Halton	12	2,656	0	287
Huron	2	25	0	0
Niagara	42	944	240	851
Peel	4	3,274	0	127
Perth	57	217	0	415
Simcoe	47	2,100	82	162
Waterloo	9	1,088	400	0
Wellington	27	812	0	86
York	16	5,233	1,755	0

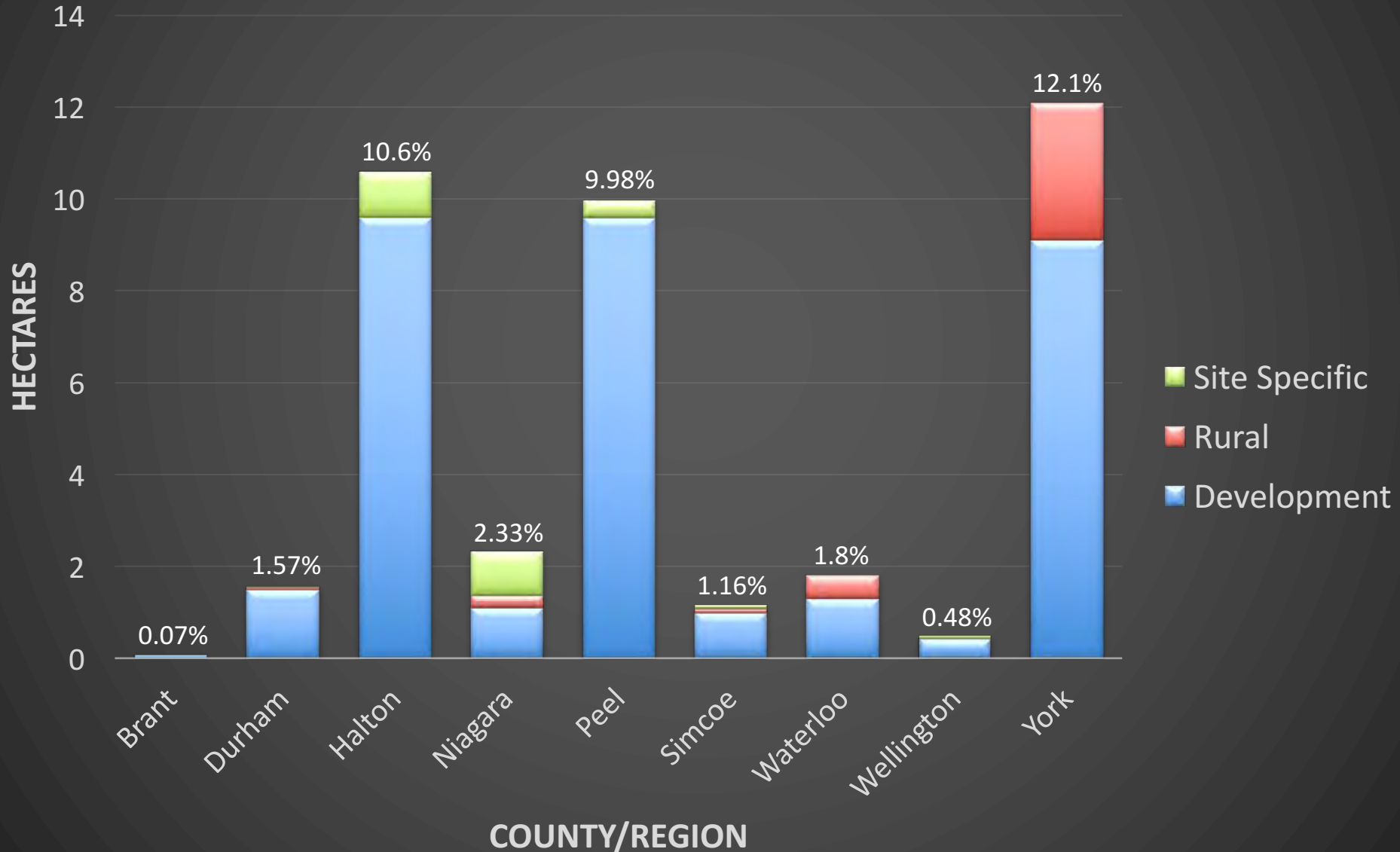
# Greenbelt Area Totals

	Outside the Greenbelt Plan Area		Within the Greenbelt Plan Area		Total
	pre-2005	2005- 2014	pre-2005	2005-2014	
<b>Prime Agriculture Land Lost (Hectares)</b>	8,127	11,709	649	0	<b>20,485 ha</b>
<b>Site Specific Non-Agricultural Uses (Hectares)</b>	342	808	400	0	<b>1,550 ha</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,469 ha</b>	<b>12,517 ha</b>	<b>1,049 ha</b>	<b>0 ha</b>	<b>22,035 ha</b>

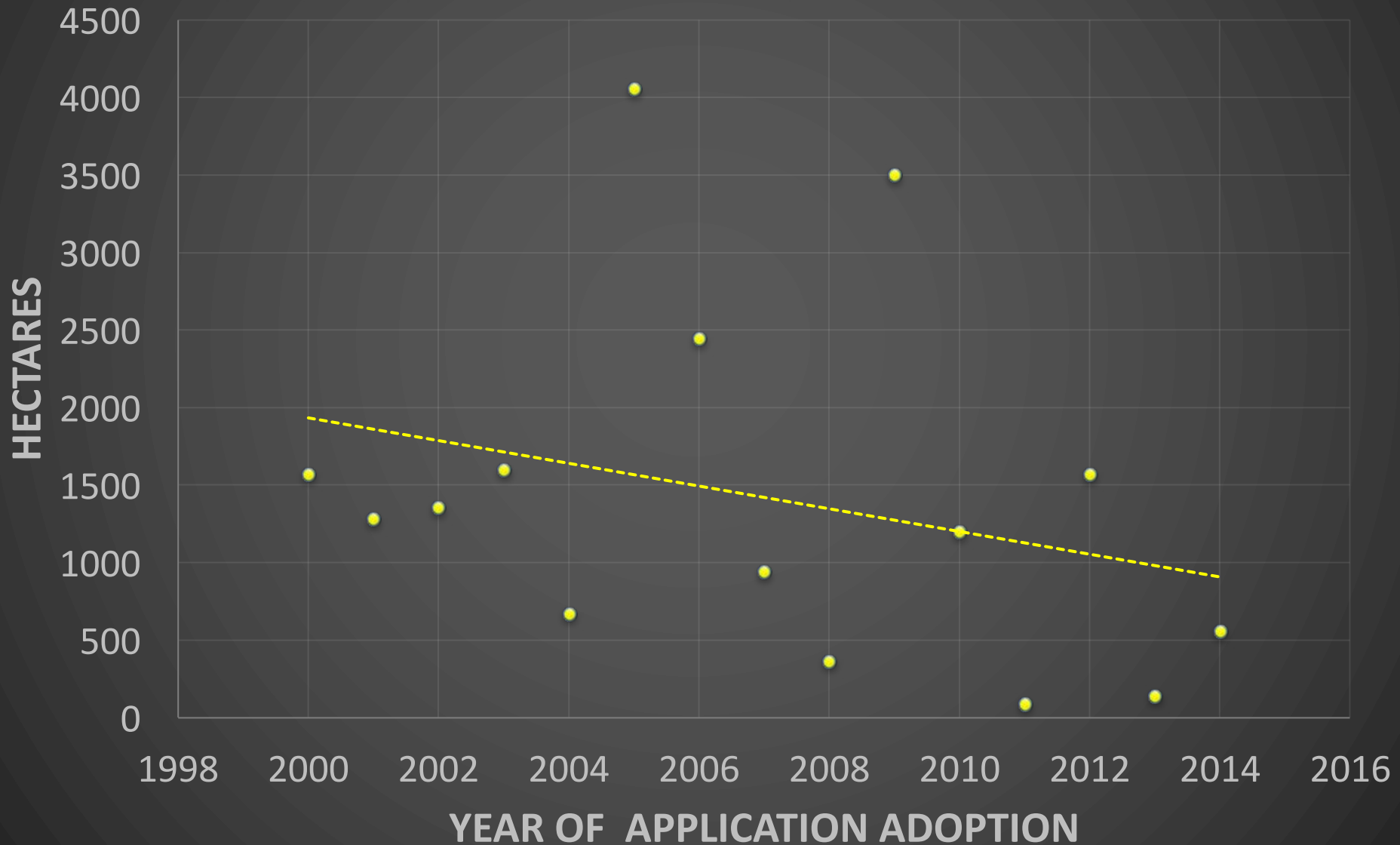
# Prime Agricultural Land Redesignated (2000-2014) by County/Region within the Greater Golden Horseshoe



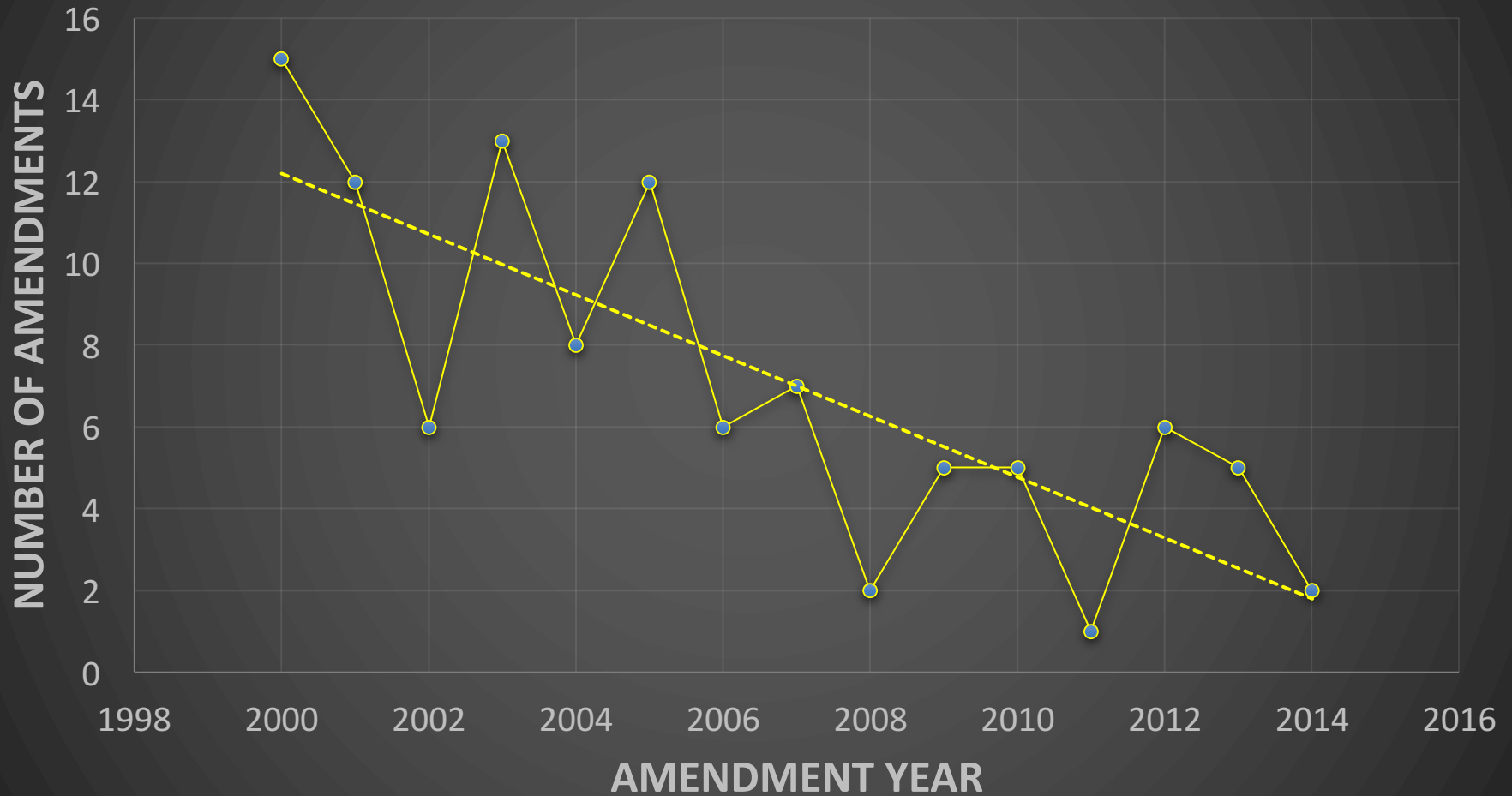
# Prime Agricultural Land Redesignated (2000-2014) by County/Region within the Greater Golden Horseshoe as a Proportion of the 2016 Census Farm Area



# Sum of Farmland Converted per Year within the Greater Golden Horseshoe

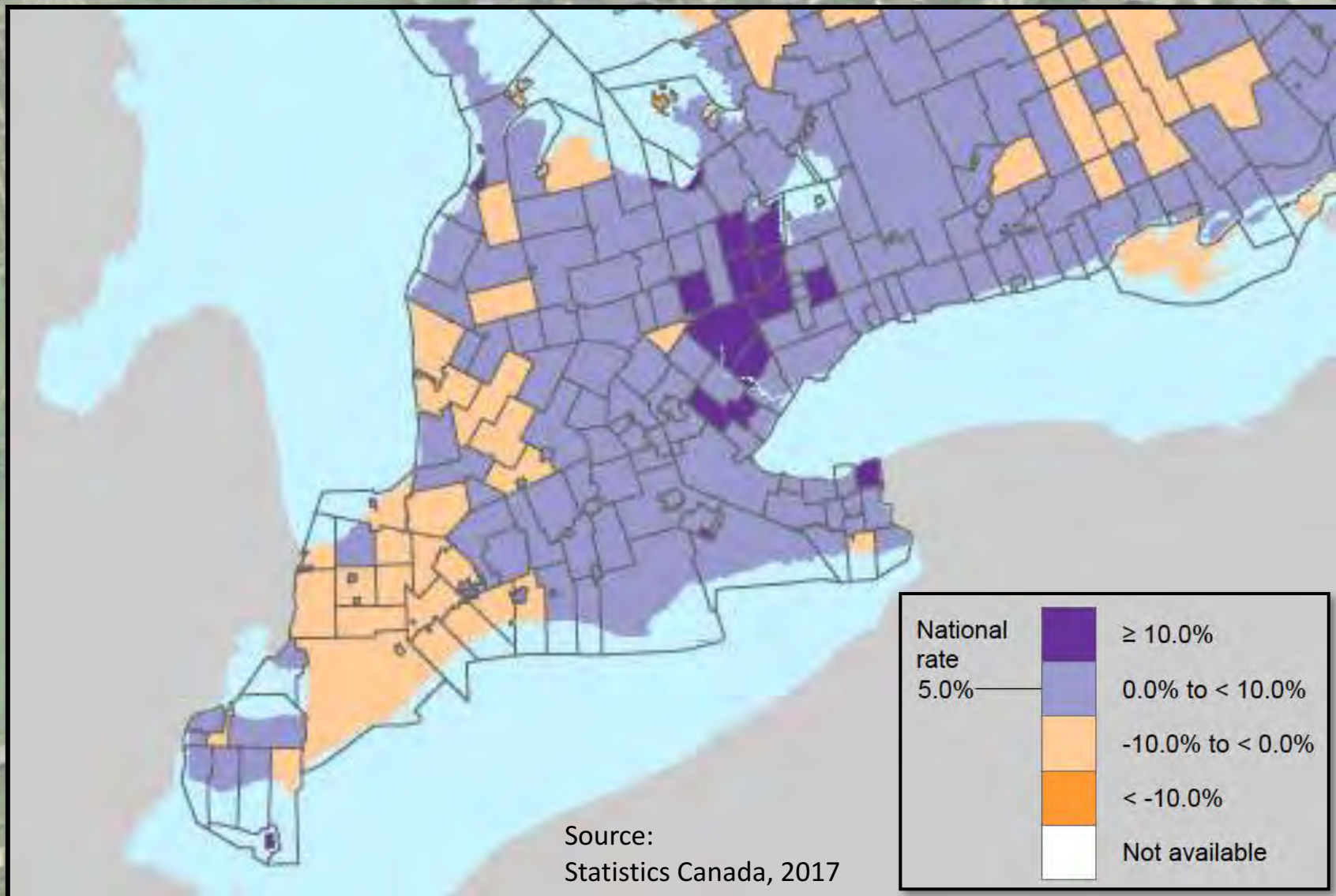


# Number of Official Plan Amendments by Year

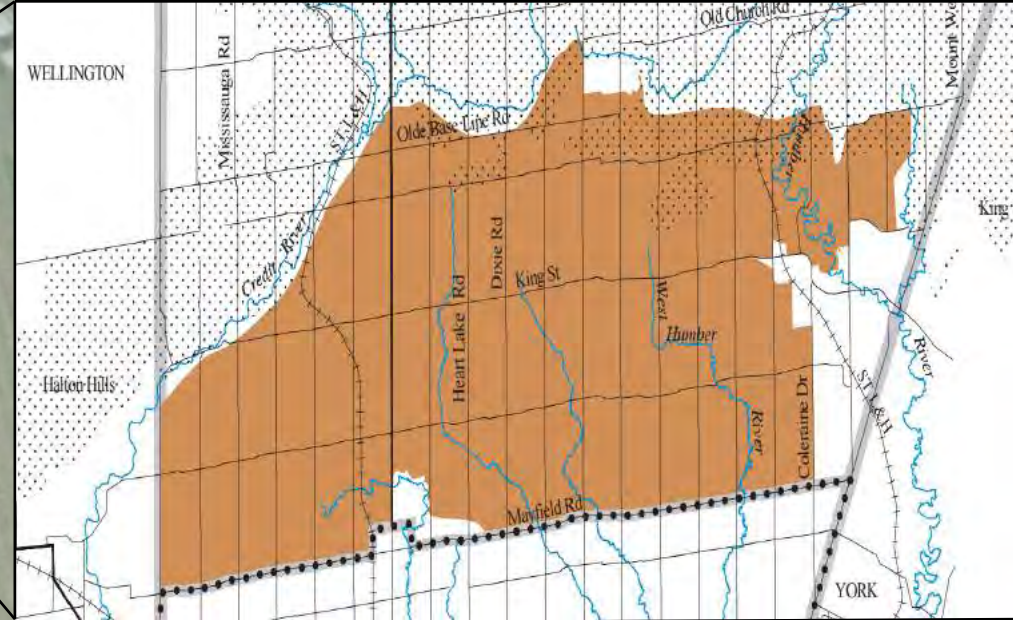
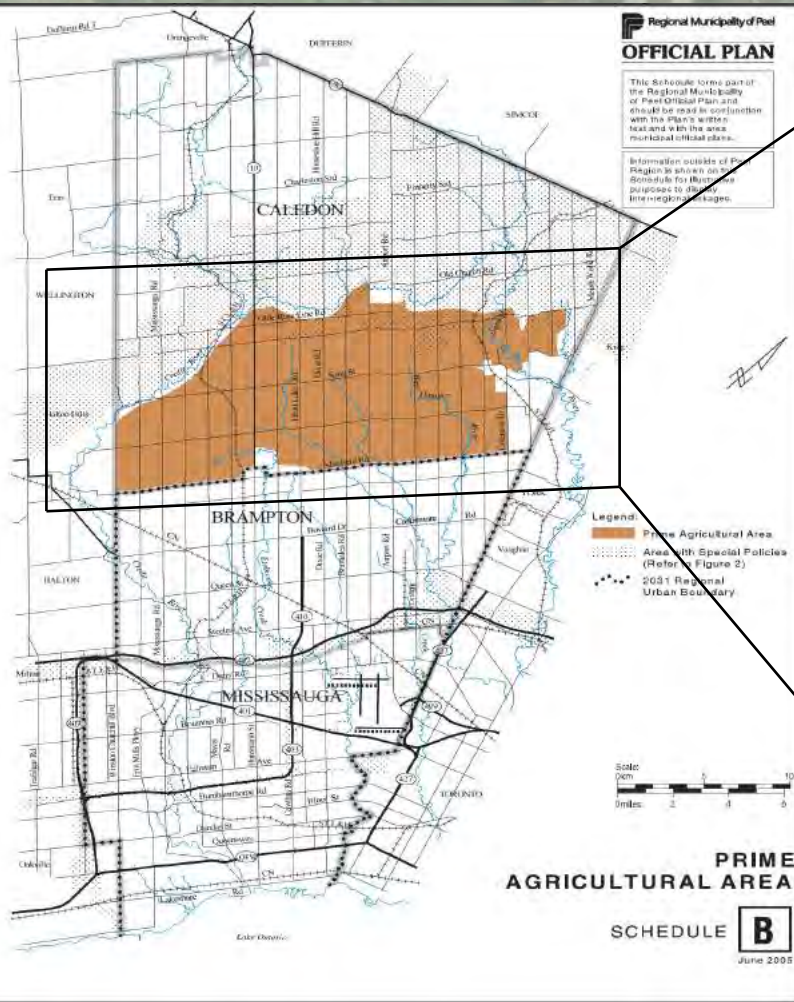


\*Excludes Simcoe and Waterloo

# Population Change from 2011 - 2016



# Agricultural Designations Over the Years: 2005



Approved by Region June 2005  
 Appealed to the OMB  
 Approved by OMB December 2006

# Agricultural Designations Over the Years: 2006

Regional Municipality of Peel  
**OFFICIAL PLAN**

This Schedule forms part of the Regional Municipality of Peel Official Plan and should be read in conjunction with the Plan's text and with the area's municipal official plans.

Information outside of Peel Region is shown on this Schedule for illustrative purposes to display inter-regional links.

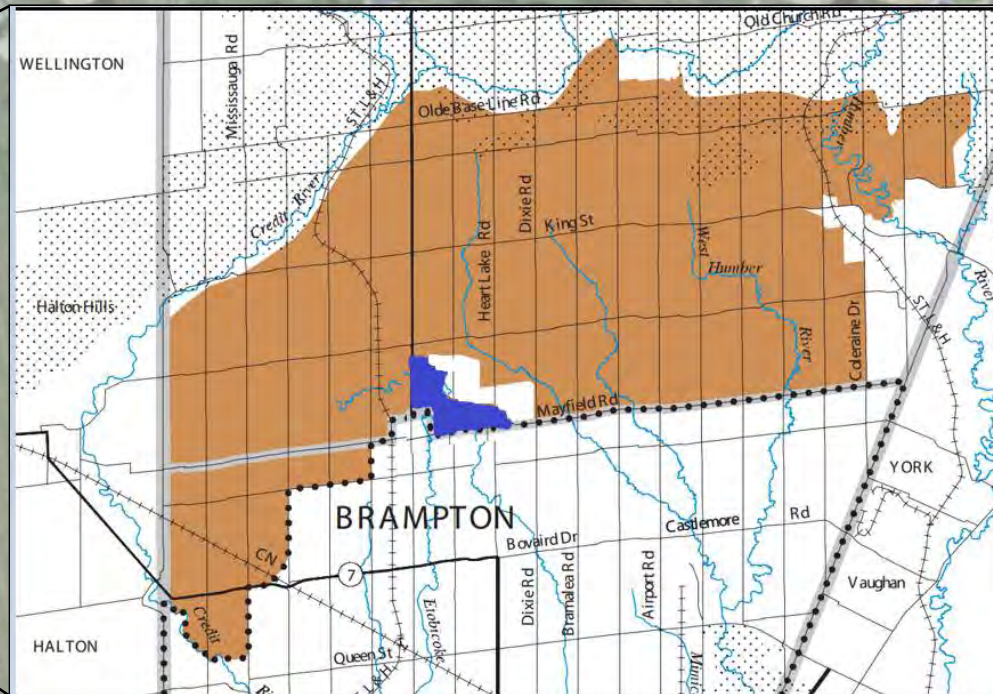


**Legend:**  
■ Prime Agricultural Area  
■ Area with Special Policies (Refer to Figure 2)  
--- 2021 Regional Urban Boundary



**PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA**

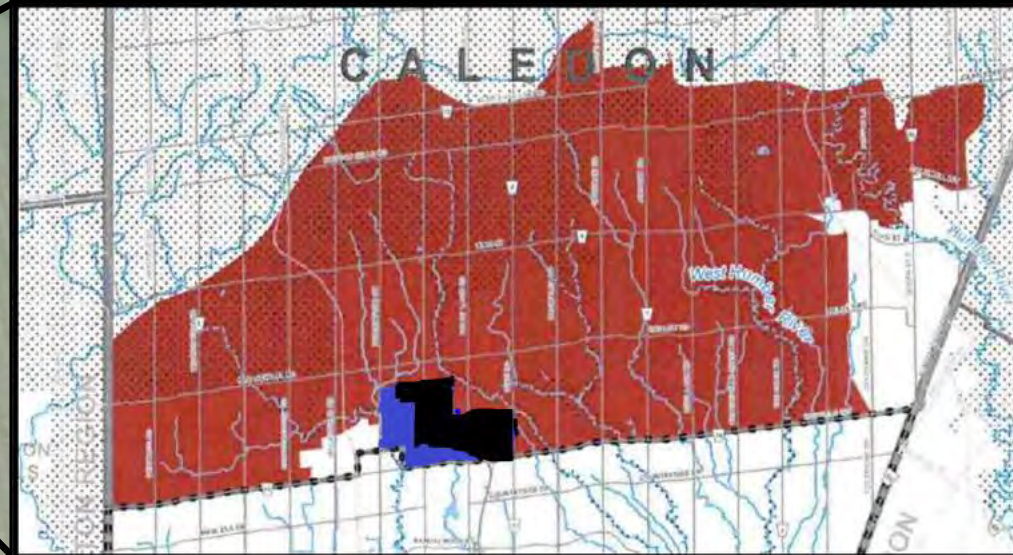
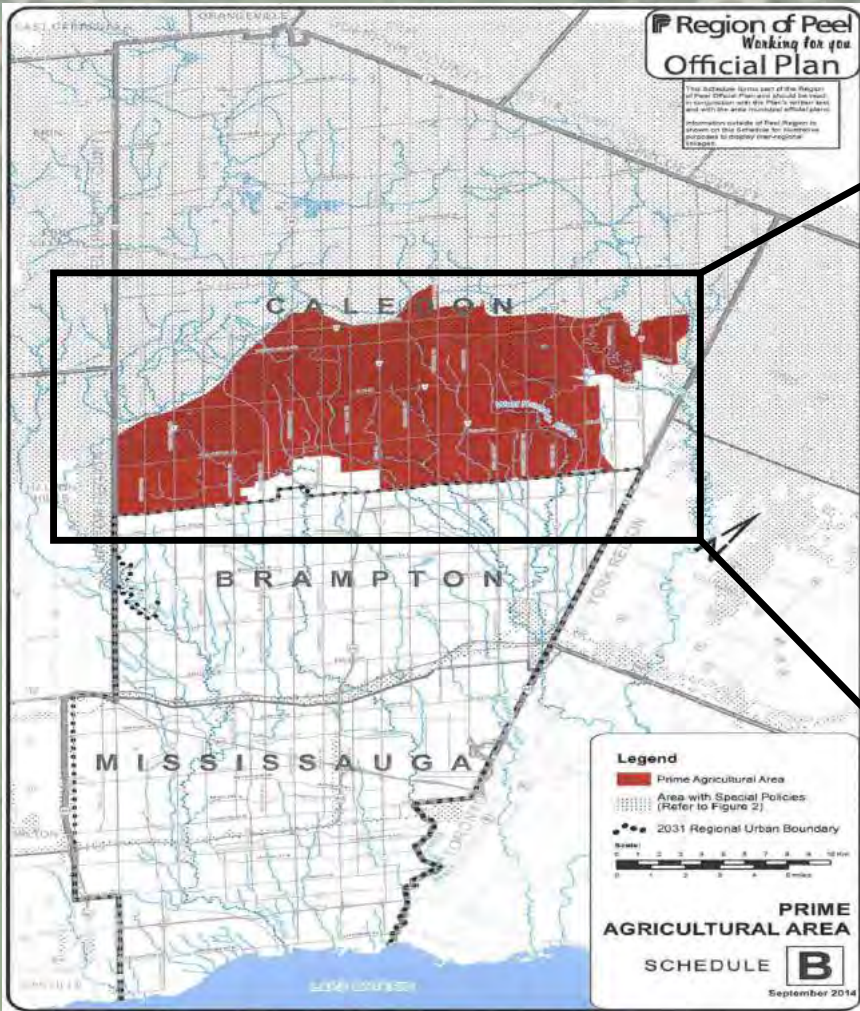
SCHEDULE **B**  
November 2005



Northwest Brampton Urban Development Area  
– 2,428 Hectares (6,000 Acres)

# Agricultural Designations Over the Years: 2014

The loss of farmland has occurred in incremental stages



Mayfield West Phase 2 Secondary Plan Settlement Area Boundary Expansion - 207.5 Hectares (512.5 Acres)



# Challenges

An aerial photograph showing a residential neighborhood with a mix of green spaces and agricultural fields. The houses are clustered together, with some larger lots and swimming pools. The surrounding area includes large green fields, likely used for agriculture, and a road that runs through the neighborhood. The overall scene depicts a rural or semi-rural setting with a mix of residential and agricultural land use.

- Regional variation
  - Site specific policies
    - Permitted uses
- Aggregate results
- Development delays
- Definition of farmland
  - Secondary agriculture and rural designations

# Next Steps

- Complete case studies within the Greater Golden Horseshoe
  - Dufferin, Peterborough, Northumberland, Kawartha Lakes, Hamilton and Haldimand
- Analysis/report
- Toolkit
  - Outline of methodology
  - Encouraging practices
  - Focus group with planners, farmers and other stakeholders
- Access to data
  - Will be available on [www.waynecaldwell.ca](http://www.waynecaldwell.ca)

*An unwritten  
diary entry for  
June 1, 2047:*



An aerial photograph showing a residential neighborhood on the right side, characterized by a grid of streets and numerous houses with green lawns. To the left of the neighborhood are large, rectangular green agricultural fields, likely corn. A road runs horizontally across the middle of the image, separating the fields from the residential area. In the top left corner, there is a small structure that appears to be a water tower or a similar utility building.

# Thank You

- Questions?