

Halton Region

Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 96,405 ha
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 27,792 ha
Area of Region in the Greenbelt³: 52,558 ha
Percent of Region in the Greenbelt: 54.5%
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$143.8 million
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm:
\$5,174.21
Population (2016)¹: 548,435



Growth Rate 2006-2011¹: 14.2 %
Growth Rate 2011-2016: 9.3%

Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (including urban, residential, and employment)	2,656 ha
Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation	0 ha
Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses	287 ha

Purpose of the Summary

This region summary is part of a wider study on farmland availability in Ontario. The study quantifies the conversion of prime agricultural areas based on Official Plan Amendments in upper and single-tier municipalities across the Province over a 14-year study period from 2000-2014. This summary is meant to provide detail of the findings in Halton Region. In conjunction with similar case studies from other counties/regions in Ontario, these findings will form the basis of the University of Guelph's *Measuring Farmland Conversion* research project.

Methods in Brief

The study involved the examination of Halton's Regional Official Plan (ROP) and Regional Official Plan Amendments (ROPAs). In Halton, the files which document ROPAs adopted and approved by Regional Council and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000 to 2014 were compiled and provided electronically by staff at the Region's planning department. The assistance of staff at Halton Region Planning Services are appreciated in making this research possible. Changes in farmland availability have been captured in three categories:

- 1) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a development designation (including but not limited to urban, residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational designations);
- 2) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a rural designation;
- 3) Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses.

Housekeeping type amendments have not been tallied as contributing to farmland conversion. Housekeeping type amendments arise as OP schedules are updated to align land use designations with more accurate parcel lines, or to reflect existing physical features.

Agricultural uses are also conducted within portions of the Escarpment Rural Areas, however, the intent of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) is not necessarily to preserve agricultural land. Land use amendments within the NEP are subject to consideration by the Niagara Escarpment Commission and are not within the scope of this study.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Halton Region

Prior to ROPA 38, agricultural land in Halton Region was designated *Agricultural Rural Area* and prime agricultural areas were generally defined as lands below the Escarpment Brow⁶. Through the ROPA 38 process, the agricultural designation was renamed to *Agricultural Area* and a new Agricultural System policy framework, including mapping and associated policies for *Prime Agricultural Areas*, was introduced. These policies were adopted by Regional Council in 2009 and approved, with modifications, by the OMB in 2014.

For this study, applications made to redesignate *Agricultural Rural Area* lands prior to 2009 were scrutinized to determine the parcel's location relative to the ROPA 38 *Prime Agricultural Areas* mapping and their position above or below the brow of the Niagara Escarpment. Every effort was made to exclude lands that were not prime agricultural lands. Upon the introduction of the *Prime Agricultural Areas* mapping through ROPA 38, only applications to redesignate lands within that area were considered. ROPA 38 mapping of the Agricultural System also identifies *Agricultural System outside the Prime Agricultural Area*.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: Over the course of the study period, a total of 11 ROPAs pertained to the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas*. Only one of these amendments redesignated prime agricultural land to an urban use. ROPA 38 redesignated 2,780 hectares of *Agricultural Rural Area* below the brow of the Niagara Escarpment to *Urban Area* as part of the Region's exercise to conform with the Provincial *Growth Plan (adopted by Regional Council in 2009 and approved by the OMB in 2013)*. Of the 2,780 hectares, 124 hectares were subject to site-specific policies permitting additional uses, adopted prior to ROPA 38 and were documented under category 3 of this study, discussed below. The remaining 2,656 hectares redesignated to a development designation are captured in category 1 of **Table 1**.

Rural Agriculture: Since the introduction of the *Prime Agricultural Area* "constraint to development", through ROPA 38, there have been no subsequent amendments to remove the constraint which would leave the lands as *Agricultural System Outside the Prime Agricultural Area*. No amendments of this nature have been captured in Halton Region under category 2 of **Table 1**.

Site-Specific Amendments: Site-specific policy amendments were used in Halton Region on 10 occasions during the course of the study to allow additional uses within the *Prime Agricultural Area*. These uses totaled 287 hectares and included churches, institutional and recreational uses. These amendments are captured in category 3 of **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH ROPAS IN HALTON REGION BY ADOPTION DATE (2000-2014)

Year of Regional OPA adoption or approval by the OMB	Number of OPAs related to the conversion of prime agricultural area	CATEGORY 1) Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (ha)	CATEGORY 2) Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation (ha)	CATEGORY 3 Land designated as a prime agricultural area with additional site-specific permitted uses (ha)
2000	2	0	0	11
2001	1	0	0	33
2002	1	0	0	40
2003	1	0	0	40
2004	0	0	0	0
2005	1	0	0	80
2006	0	0	0	0
2007	2	0	0	21
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	0	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0	0
2012	1	0	0	9
2013	2	2656*	0	53
2014	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	11	2,656*	0	287

*In 2013, 2,780 hectares of land was redesignated as urban and employment areas as part of ROPA 38 – 2,656 hectares reflects the area redesignated through ROPA 38 minus 124 hectares of land within the ROPA 38 expansion area that was already under site-specific policies permitting additional uses prior to ROPA 38. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Provincial Land Use Plans: Within Halton Region, the Greenbelt Plan covers 52,558 hectares or 54.5% of the Region's land area³. After the Greenbelt Plan took effect on December 16, 2004, three amendments in Halton Region were approved pertaining to the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas* within the Greenbelt Plan. All three of these applications were initiated prior to the adoption of the Greenbelt Plan and as such, these amendments were subject to previous policies. The remainder of the ROPAs approved after 2005 pertain to lands outside of the Greenbelt Plan. The conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas*, organized by OPA application date and location relative to the borders of the Greenbelt is captured in **Table 2**.

TABLE 2 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH OPAS IN HALTON REGION BY APPLICATION DATE AND LOCATION RELATIVE TO THE GREENBELT PLAN

	Outside the Greenbelt		Within the Greenbelt		Total
	Application date		Application Date		
	Pre 2005	2005-2014	Pre 2005	2005- 2014	
Prime agriculture area redesignated to a development or rural designation (ha)	0	2,656	0	0	2,656
Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)	112	62	113	0	287
Total	112	2718	113	0	2,943

*Table 1 includes files based on their approval date within the 2000-2014 study time frame. Table 2 is organized based on application date so that we can determine what policy regime the approved amendments was evaluated under, and may include files that were initiated prior to the 2000-2014 study time frame.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2012. Halton, Ontario (Code 3524). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

² OMAFRA (adopted). 2012. Area of Census Farms (Acres) by County, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011. With data from Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture.

³ MMAH. 2005. “Greenbelt Outer Boundary” and MMAH, 2012. “Municipal Boundary - Upper Tier and District” data projected in UTM 17N.

⁴ Statistics Canada. 2014. Table 004-0233 - Census of Agriculture, farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census, CANSIM.

⁶ Halton Regional Plan. 1995. Part III, Section C1a.