

Wellington County

Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 266,057 ha
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 188,745 ha
Area of County in the Greenbelt³: 18,785 ha
Percent of County in the Greenbelt: 7.1%
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$943.2 million
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$4,997
Population (2016)¹: 222,726



Growth Rate 2006-2011¹: 4.0 %
Growth Rate 2011-2016: 6.9%

Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (including urban, residential, and employment)	817 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	86 ha

*Consistent with provincial policy, Wellington redesignated certain lands from prime agriculture to secondary agriculture. These lands were not considered prime agriculture due to their lower capability soils. For further details, see the section on secondary agriculture below.

Purpose of the Summary

This county 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 Wellington County. 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 Wellington County's Official Plan (OP) and Official Plan Amendments (OPAs). In Wellington County, the original files which document OPAs adopted and approved by the County and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000 to 2014 were accessed at the Wellington County Planning and Development offices in Guelph, Ontario. The assistance of staff at the County of Wellington's Planning and Development is appreciated in the retrieval of pertinent files. Farmland conversion has 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 that have been excluded from previous OP schedules.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Wellington County

Wellington County's Official Plan includes a Rural System with land use designations for *Prime Agricultural Areas*, *Secondary Agriculture Areas*, *Recreational Areas*, *Rural Employment* and *Country Residential Areas*. *Prime Agricultural Areas* are defined as "Class 1, 2 and 3 agricultural soils, associated 4 to 7 soils and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit the characteristics of ongoing agriculture"⁶. *Secondary Agriculture Areas* are "non-prime farmland but which can sustain certain agricultural activities"⁶. Agriculture remains a promoted use in the *Secondary Agriculture Area*, however additional uses are permitted. This study considers the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas* to either built-up land use designations or the *Secondary Agricultural Area*.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development designations: Over the course of the study period, twenty-three amendments pertained to the redesignation of *Prime Agricultural Areas* to a built-up designation, totaling 812 hectares. "Urban area expansions" comprised 11 of these OPAs, while the remainder were redesignations for hamlets, industrial, institutional or recreational uses in the countryside. This type of farmland conversion, organized by OPA adoption date, is captured in category 1 of **Table 1**.

Rural designations: Wellington County is unique in that it did not use a rural designation for the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas*. As such, no OPAs have been captured under a rural designation. The study did, however, capture the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Area* to *Secondary Agriculture Area* and the details of these OPAs can be found below.

Secondary Agriculture: Over the course of the study period, three OPAs redesignated *Prime Agricultural Area* to *Secondary Agricultural Area*. Two of these OPAs are the result of a land evaluation and area review study conducted for the Town of Erin which identified the areas unsuitable for the *Prime Agricultural Area* designation. While these two OPAs totalled 16,263 hectares of land, according to the Canada Land Inventory, this land was not considered prime agricultural land. As such, these two amendments have been qualified as housekeeping amendments and have not been included in this study. The third OPA redesignated 32 hectares of *Prime Agricultural Area* to the *Secondary Agricultural Area* for the purpose of severing the

property. This OPA is also considered a housekeeping amendment as a secondary designation is more appropriate, given the lower capability soils.

Site-specific Amendments: Over the course of the study period, Wellington County used site-specific policy amendments four times to allow additional uses within the *Prime Agricultural Area*. These uses totaled 86 hectares and included a landscape materials sales yard, private residences, a golf course, and a flour mill/grain elevator combination. These amendments are captured in category 3 of **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH OPAs IN WELLINGTON COUNTY BY ADOPTION DATE (2000-2014)

Year of County 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	1	98	0	0
2001	3	47	0	0
2002	2	42	0	0
2003	4	15	0	20
2004	4	68	0	19
2005	2	401	0	0
2006	1	1	0	0
2007	1	0	0	37
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	2	3	0	10
2010	2	68	0	0
2011	1	47	0	0
2012	2	16	0	0
2013	1	2	0	0
2014	1	4	0	0
Grand Total*	27	812	0	86

*Totals may not add up due to rounding

Provincial Land Use Plans: In Wellington County, 18,842 hectares are included in the *Protected Countryside* of the Greenbelt Plan, representing a relatively small portion of the County's land area at 6%³. 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 LAND CONVERSION THROUGH OPAS IN WELLINGTON COUNTY 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)	666	146	0	0	812
Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)	39	47	0	0	86
Total	705	193	0	0	898

*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. Wellington, Ontario (Code 3523) (table). 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 Wellington County. 1999. Official Plan: Latest Revision March 2015.