

“GROWING GREENBELTS GLOBALLY”
LAND USE COUNCIL

“advocating social, economic and environmental balance in government legislation affecting land”

March 10, 2011

Ms. Bette Jean Crews, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Bettyjean.crews@gmail.ca

Dear Ms. Crews: **Re: Global Greenbelts Conference – March 22 to March 24, 2011**

The Land Use Council (LUC) is a coalition of trade and community groups organized in 2009 with a mandate to review and publish consequences of government legislation affecting use, title, mortgage worth and market value of privately owned land in Ontario.

In that context our consortium has frequently expressed reservations, some introduced by or shared with OFA, concerning Ontario’s Greenbelt Act. As Federation executives are said to be attending the above-noted Conference we take this opportunity to urge their balanced response to exaggerated claims of Greenbelt public acceptance likely to surface there.

The event in question is sponsored by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation whose Directorate includes executives from some of the Non-Government Organizations who not only helped initiate the Greenbelt Act but also composed Ontario’s Species at Risk Act. However commendable the intent of these statutes, the process by which their regulations are imposed cries out for in-depth public review.

Despite proponent assurances to the contrary, so far as can be ascertained the Act was rushed to legislation unsupported by proven, impartial science and without prior, unbiased and properly recorded scrutiny of its social and economic costs. We also understand only one Ontario farmer was named to the Greenbelt Task Force and submissions of the agricultural community to Greenbelt public meetings were chronically over-shadowed in both number and content by professional lobbyists some of whose agents now manage and disburse mega-buck public funds in support of Greenbelt objectives and philosophies.

In our view, OFA members, citizen-landowners at large and Conference visitors should be reminded this legislation violates government contractual obligations articulated in existing Crown Land Patents, allows no appeal against government-initiated “partial takings” of private land and denies government compensation to affected landowners/lessees for equity and/or production losses thereby resulting.

We believe these deficiencies, singly and collectively, breach the rule of law, ignore natural justice and disenfranchise hundreds, if not thousands, of Ontario citizens, farmers and non-farmers alike. In that regard, factual studies over the past five years clearly indicate the market value of some “greenbelted” farm land has been substantially reduced, traditional farm practices severely impacted and rural municipal governments overwhelmed by “leap frog” development triggered by Greenbelt prohibitions.

Successive Ontario governments since 1867 have declined to recognize land ownership rights in legislation; a still-valid option Canada's Constitution extends to all provinces and territories. Moreover, thanks to back-room politics, such rights were omitted in Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the resulting vacuum urban bureaucracies of every political stripe, aided and abetted by self-serving Non-Government Organizations, believe themselves at liberty to regulate use and worth of privately owned farmland in the guise of ecological preservation. By this means owner compensation mandated in Ontario's Expropriation Act is, whether by accident or design, neatly short-circuited. Meanwhile, we're told European landowners impacted by so-called environmental priorities receive either a lump sum government settlement or an annual royalty for that part of their land compromised by government planning. In contrast, similarly affected Ontario landowners are denied even a charitable income tax receipt for their substantial contribution to what Queen's Park defines as "public good".

Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and their off-shore guests are unlikely to encourage debate of these inconvenient truths at the upcoming Conference. Accordingly, on that occasion we urge the OFA delegation to suggest visiting info@landownersagainstbills.com. This Internet site offers a wealth of legal opinion, media comment, farmer/rancher outrage and political evasions now swirling across the Alberta landscape. This after the Alberta government introduced, in January this year, 3 rural land grab statutes in each of which reside clauses ominously reminiscent of Greenbelt proscriptions.

Agricultural advocacy groups in Alberta, aware of common law violations inherent in this predatory legislation and sympathetic to their member's smoldering wrath, are united in their demand for repeal of all 3 enactments. Might we therefore suggest established farm organizations in Ontario, including but not limited to OFA, review the Greenbelt Act with Conference attendees from the perspective of whether "public good" describes lives manipulated and private land devalued without compensation.

We respect OFA history, expertise and dedication as an influential voice of Ontario agriculture and we're confident its delegates to the upcoming global Conference will energetically represent all Federation members, including those negatively affected by Greenbelt legislation in Ontario.

Yours truly

Bruce Pearse, Chair
Land Use Council
16190 Highways 7 & 12
Sunderland, Ontario, L0C 1H0
Phone: 705-357-3054 / Fax: 705-357-3963

E-mail copy to:	Mr. Don McCabe, OFA Vice-President	Mr. Mark Wales, OFA Vice-president
	Mr. Peter Lambrick, OFA Director-at Large	Mr. Neil Currie, OFA General manager
	Mr. Peter Jeffery, OFA Researcher	LUC Board of Directors
	(2)	

The Land Use Council is a public service consortium sponsored by the combined memberships of:
Food Chain / Halton Region Federation of Agriculture / Peterborough County Landowners Association
Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance / Peel Federation of Agriculture
E-Mail: landusecouncil@gmail.com Web Page: www.landusecouncil@gmail.com
