

Halton Region

# Rural Agricultural Strategy

## Background Report



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# Halton Region – Rural Agricultural Strategy – Background Report

## Executive Summary

Halton Region, comprised of the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville, is part of the Golden Horseshoe, a horseshoe shaped sub-region in Southern Ontario extending along the shore of Lake Ontario from Niagara Falls to Clarington. Within the Region, urban lands account for approximately 30 percent of the land base and accommodate the bulk of the population. The remaining 70 percent of the land base is comprised of agricultural areas, hamlets, mineral resource extraction areas and rural areas overlain by a natural heritage system.

The extensive Halton agricultural system is considered to be a key Regional economic driver. It incorporates activities in both the urban and rural areas. Urban centres are home to numerous small to large scale agri-food businesses. As the foundation of the Regional agricultural system, the rural areas have excellent agricultural soils that support an extensive variety of agricultural businesses ranging from primary production to value added activities. Rural settlements including the hamlets of Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo and Norval and the rural clusters of Ballinafad, Bannockburn, Crewson's Corners, Henderson's Corners, Limehouse, Silvercreek and Terra Cotta are home to businesses related to agriculture.

The Region understands that a vibrant agricultural/rural sector is essential for the continued well-being and quality of life for Halton residents. To ensure the health of the sector the Region is establishing and implementing a Rural Agricultural Strategy (RAS). The RAS will identify how the Region can, within its mandate and using available resources, strengthen and ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural and rural sectors in Halton.

The Region is part of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance which is currently implementing the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan (GHFFP). The RAS will complement and build on the GHFFP.

When completed, the RAS will present a long-term vision for the rural areas of the Region that is integrated with the GHFFP and includes actions to support:

- A diversified, prosperous agricultural sector that has on-farm business, value added and retention opportunities and the support services necessary to service and grow this important sector;
- Non-agricultural uses in rural hamlets and clusters that compliment and support a sustainable agricultural sector and the rural economy; and
- Cottage industries, home industries and home occupations that compliment and support a vibrant and growing agricultural sector and rural economy.

As the basis for the RAS, this background report describes the current economic climate and key components or sectors that are likely to thrive in the agricultural and rural areas of the Region. Existing strengths and weaknesses are evaluated and best practises in areas similar in composition to Halton Region are identified as the basis for identifying opportunities to support ongoing Regional rural and agricultural prosperity.

### **Halton's Countryside: The Agricultural Resource**

Halton Region is home to a productive agricultural sector based on outstanding soils, a benevolent climate and a community of farmers actively engaged in farming. The findings from a 'Land Evaluation Area Review' study conducted by the Region in 2008, confirmed the presence of a significant amount of prime agricultural land in Halton interspersed with small pockets of land with lower scores specifically in the Greenbelt above the Escarpment. With the exception of a few isolated pockets, the land comprising the rural area south of the Greenbelt and north of the urban strip along Lake Ontario is all prime agricultural land.

Trends in agriculture in Halton are consistent with the trends generally experienced in regions where urban growth is prevalent. The number of operations continues to drop and the amount of land under production that is rented rather than owned by farmers, continue to rise. There is an increase in the number of cash crop operations versus production that requires long term capital investment. Although average farm size is increasing, there is a concurrent increase in the number of smaller operations and growth in the types of farms that can prosper on or are suited to smaller properties in proximity to urban areas (greenhouse, nursery, equine and in the case of Halton, mushroom).

Based on 2011 gross farm receipts (with certain qualifiers described in this report), the top commodities produced in Halton were mushroom, cash crops, greenhouse product, nursery product, horse and pony, poultry and egg.

Overall the agricultural base in Halton is shrinking. Total acreage under production dropped 10 percent between 2006 and 2011. Land tenure has shifted to a higher amount of farm land being leased (58 percent) compared to owned (42 percent) by farmers. There is a noticeable shift of livestock operations away from rapidly urbanizing municipalities to areas with a larger rural land base. There is a decline in the value of Regional GFR's, coupled with an increase in operating costs.

Average age of farm operators is higher in Halton Region (58.8 years) than the provincial average (54.5 years). The number of operations in the lower income categories are declining while there is some growth in the highest category generating GFR in excess of \$500,000 and in the category between \$100,000 and \$249,000. Approximately 29 percent of farms in Halton Region have reported gross farm receipts of \$100,000 or more. This represents an increase of 3 percent from the previous reporting period. It is encouraging that where growth is occurring, it is taking place in operations generating significant annual GFR's.

Despite the negative trends, there continues to be a significant agricultural sector in Halton comprising an essential element of the Regional rural economy. Farmers interviewed expressed a commitment to farming in the Region. Consistently in consultations with Regional residents, there is strong support for a strong and viable agricultural sector. As issues of sustainability, local food supply and climate change become more pressing, the importance of maintaining a strong viable and adaptable agricultural sector grows. To achieve this, the Region needs to continue to monitor the trends, characteristics of and overall pulse of the agricultural and rural sectors, the stresses they are encountering, and the steps other jurisdictions have taken to counteract similar stresses. “Made in Halton solutions” to support farmers and rural residents must be developed to address the unique near-urban environment that exists in Halton and to address the high costs of farming in this area.

### **Halton’s Countryside: The Rural Area**

There are two types of communities in the Halton rural area; Hamlets and Rural Clusters. The Hamlets include Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo and Norval; the Rural Clusters include Ballinafad, Bannockburn, Crewson’s Corners, Henderson’s Corners, Limehouse, Silvercreek and Terra Cotta. Because of their size and nature, collecting data specifically related to each settlement was challenging. A variety of sources and approaches were used to overcome this and provide the input needed to develop a profile for each community.

Using information from the 2013 Employment Survey conducted by the Region and a rural survey conducted as part of this project, it was concluded that there are approximately 117 businesses and organizations focused on providing services in the hamlets and surrounding rural area, and an additional 48 businesses whose clientele are from a greater distance. Full time employment was estimated to be at least 407 individuals. Only 9 of the operations (5.5 percent) identified were related to agriculture and only 8 of the businesses were identified as home based.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the businesses and organization there are also a variety of businesses in the countryside, some of which are agriculturally related.

The research conducted indicated that there are very few exclusive agricultural support businesses identified in the rural area. The limited number of these businesses is not surprising given that the number of farms is declining, resulting in a related decline in the amount of available business.

Although there may be a small number of businesses exclusively related to agriculture, what is remarkable is the diversity of the local economy in the hamlets and rural areas. Many business, such as garden centres, horse racing, retail outlets and veterinarians, while not exclusively focused on agriculture, retain strong linkages with the sector. The rural areas are also home to a number of businesses that could be located in urban centres, for example, professional services, (dentists, accountants, lawyers), massage therapists and real estate offices.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers are conservative as it was not always possible to obtain detailed information for each of the businesses identified, particularly home based businesses.

In summary, the research conducted in the rural area generated three major conclusions:

- Only 5.5 percent of businesses in the hamlets were agriculture related businesses;
- There are various levels of vibrancy in the hamlets;
- Rural businesses struggle to get access to state of the art technology and high speed internet which is a deterrent to business development in the rural area.

### **The Consultation Process**

Development of this report was based on input from partners in the rural economy, consultation with farmers, entrepreneurs and members of the public, extensive research of best practices, an examination of current approaches, an assessment of land use policy, and consideration of other studies related to agriculture. The input received was wide ranging and comprehensive and provided input regarding potential opportunities tailored to the specific needs of the Region. These opportunities were related to:

- Protection of farmland;
- Management of conflicts between agricultural, rural and non-agricultural activities;
- Education about the importance of agriculture to community well-being;
- Education about the benefits of healthy rural communities;
- Supporting financial stability for rural and agricultural businesses;
- Managing regulation so it protects resources while allowing rural business operators and farmers flexibility;
- Provision of supportive rural infrastructure;
- Understanding and addressing the labour needs of the rural and agricultural businesses;
- Addressing succession to provide opportunities for new and young, rural and agricultural business operators; and
- Marketing and promoting products and activities related to agriculture.

### **Policies Programs and Plans**

The framework of planning policies in place in Ontario places limits on the tools available to the Region in developing and implementing a RAS. However, it also creates opportunities to support and foster rural and agricultural areas. Innovative approaches to implementing policy must be an integral part of the RAS to take advantage of the opportunities specific to Halton.

Other Regional agencies and local governments have programs to address rural and agricultural issues. Building on and coordinating with these programs will strengthen the Regional RAS. Existing programs were researched and inventoried in the background report to ensure this would occur.

The research conducted confirmed that the context within which the RAS must be developed is broad and supportive. Developing a strategy that builds on and expands existing initiatives and encourages



strong partnerships with local municipalities and related agencies including the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, will expand and enhance the effectiveness of the RAS.

## **Best Practises**

There are many lessons to be learned from practices being implemented by others around the world.

The most successful strategies are ones that focus on clearly defined actions specifically tailored to the needs of region in which they apply. Successful programs are broadly defined to address all aspects of food and farming. Partnerships between urban based local food groups and rural producers are critical to success. Urban residents and rural residents must understand their differences, their common interests and the benefits that will accrue from working as a team to support food and farming and the rural community.

Policies for supporting rural development and agricultural production on lands surrounding metropolitan areas in Canada and around the world are focused at several levels but share certain strategic objectives. Most commonly, goals focus on linkages to local agricultural products, availability of healthy food for everyone, and agricultural sustainability based on the criteria of being environmentally sound and profitable. The importance of supporting agricultural production and associated rural businesses is understood and the mechanisms to do so are in place.

Without exception, agricultural policies that support achieving these goals include keeping farmland in farming (firm urban-rural borders, farm trusts, designated agricultural areas/nodes, etc.), and supporting farm profitability where land values may surpass production value. Less apparent, but of great importance, is the need for flexibility in regulation to allow innovative and emerging agricultural practices the opportunity to become established and to grow. Strong, established rural communities that incorporate an agriculture service sector provide stability for primary production.

Regardless of the approach, to be effective, programs or practices need to have strong and sustained support from all levels of government. Agencies must work as partners to sustain all of the elements required for a viable and productive agricultural sector to thrive.

In scanning practices around the world, it became clear the Halton is a leader in implementing innovative and progressive actions to support its rural community. However, despite this, the sector continues to decline. Now is the time to learn from best practices and develop a strong, co-ordinated strategy to reverse this decline.

## **Findings**

Halton has been progressive in the steps it has taken, and continues to take, in supporting and sustaining the Regional agricultural operations and rural communities. Despite this, research confirms that the area of farmland has been steadily declining, and over the past two census periods (2001-2006, 2006-2011), gross farm receipts generated in the Region declined. The connections between primary

producers and other parts of the value chain, while present, are not well developed. The diverse Regional rural business sector is not well understood or serviced by technology.

Indications are that the broader agri-food sector is thriving in the Region and the demand for local agricultural products is growing. With increasing awareness of the importance of food security, there is interest in finding new and innovative approaches to managing the agricultural and rural communities and ensuring that all components of it are supported. The questions are, what are these innovative approaches and which would be most effective in Halton?

The research conducted for this report identified a number of actions that could be implemented as part of the RAS to support the Regional agricultural and rural economy.

- Build on the Regional initiative to establish a permanent Regional agricultural system comprised of the essential components to support ongoing rural prosperity;
- Provide the necessary infrastructure to support agricultural and rural businesses;
- Continue to encourage appropriate value-added businesses that respect the balance between primary production and accessory or secondary activities;
- Strengthen the links between primary production and access to market by establishing an efficient local food distribution system;
- Investigate the possibility of establishing the Region as a food hub;
- Support farm succession that addresses intergenerational transfer and provides opportunities for new operators;
- Deliver integrated public health and education programs focused on agri-food and targeted to the client;
- Integrate the recommendation of the 2013 Regional agri-tourism strategy in the RAS;
- Encourage urban agriculture by making public land available for agri-food production;
- Develop hamlets and rural clusters as agri-food service hubs; and
- Create partnerships to establish business incubators focused on agri-food businesses.

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## Chapter 1

# Rural Agricultural Strategy Background Report

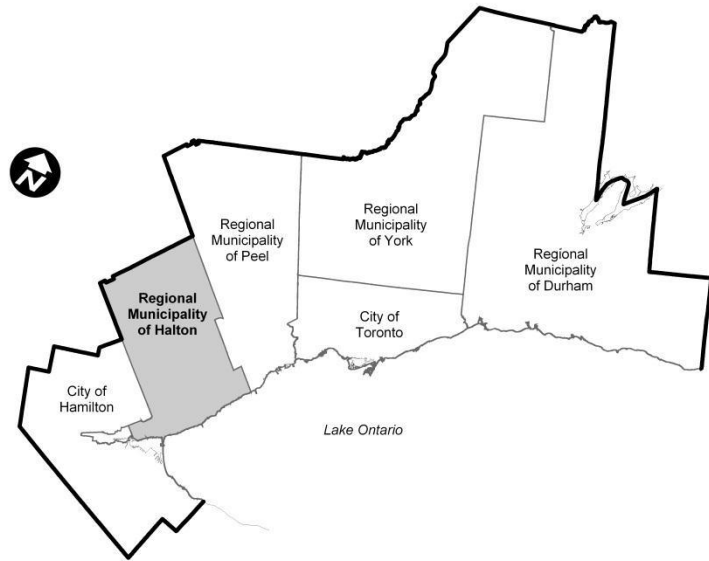




## 1. Introduction

Halton Region, a vibrant, scenic and diverse geographic area covering over 964 square kilometres, comprised of the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville, is part of the Golden Horseshoe, a horseshoe shaped sub-region in Southern Ontario extending along the shore of Lake Ontario from Niagara Falls to Clarington. The Golden Horseshoe makes up approximately 0.1 percent of Canada's land mass but is home to 8.76 million people or 68 percent of the Ontario population. It is one of the most densely populated and industrialized areas in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

This scenic region boasts landscapes of exposed dolostone cliffs, caves and waterfalls resulting from the formation and ongoing physical changes associated with the Niagara Escarpment. The Niagara Escarpment is a unique and prominent topographical feature in south western Ontario formed over 450 million years ago, that runs diagonally from the south west to the north east and cuts through Halton Region.



In addition to the Niagara Escarpment and the natural shoreline of Lake Ontario, Halton Region has lush forests, wetlands, extensive water courses, fertile farmland and many other natural features. From the nomadic Iroquoian tribes of 700 to 1650 AD to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Europeans that settled in Halton Region, all residents had a fundamental connection with the land from which they drew the sustenance to survive.

In 2011, according to Statistics Canada, Halton Region was home to over 501,669 residents and was experiencing some of the highest growth rates in the country. In fact, during the census period from 2006 - 2011, Milton was Canada's fastest growing city experiencing 56.5 percent growth over the 5 year period.

Urban lands account for approximately 30 percent of the land base in Halton Region and accommodate the bulk of the population. The remaining 70 percent of the Regional land base is rural lands, comprised

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Population 2011: Population Counts and Growth, prepared by Laurent Martel and Jonathan Chagnon, of Statistics Canada's Demography Division, with the assistance of staff members of Statistics Canada's Census Subject Matter Secretariat, Geography Division, Census Operations Division, Dissemination Division and Communications Division. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-310-x/98-310-x2011001-eng.cfm>

of agricultural areas, hamlets, mineral resource extraction areas and rural areas overlain by a natural heritage system.

Globally, agriculture plays an ongoing critical role in every national economy. It has evolved into a very sophisticated “system” that includes not only primary agriculture but the marketing, production, processing, distribution and sale of crops and livestock products. In Canada, agriculture plays an important role in federal and provincial economies. Nationally agriculture directly provides one in eight jobs, employing 2.1 million people and accounting for 8 percent of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>2</sup>

In Halton Region, the agricultural system is extensive and is considered to be a key Regional economic driver. It incorporates activities in both the urban and rural areas. Urban centres are home to numerous small to large scale agri-food processors and agri-business producing a diverse range of consumer goods and to many businesses that provide goods and services to agri-food and agri-business such as technological support and services, design and fabrication, research, logistics, etc. As the foundation of the Regional agricultural system, the rural areas have some of the best agricultural soils in the country that support an extensive variety of agricultural businesses. Rural settlement areas that include the hamlets of Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo and Norval and the rural clusters of Ballinafad, Bannockburn, Crewson’s Corners, Henderson’s Corners, Limehouse, Silvercreek and Terra Cotta play a fundamental role serving and driving a diverse rural economy. These hamlets accommodate small scale businesses that support primary agriculture such as feed stores, veterinary clinics, mechanical repair shops, equipment dealers, etc.



Food production has been consistently positioned as a cornerstone of Canada’s agricultural system and economy. This is understandable considering that one of the most basic global problems today relates to “food insecurity” or the state of not having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. Food security is a function of “self-sufficiency”. Some countries rely heavily on imports to meet their food needs. However, in the long-term relying on imports could result in exposure to a high degree of risk or vulnerability as there is no degree of certainty that food supplies will exist in abundance elsewhere. Relying on external sources for food could come at a high cost in the future given possible pressures on world food supply and the uncertain effect of climate change. Drought, desertification and extreme temperature fluctuations are likely to limit the production capacity of farmland throughout the world. Considering that the world’s population is slated to grow by about 2 billion people by 2050 and that most of the world’s arable land is currently under cultivation, concerns regarding sustainable agricultural production pose very serious challenges globally.

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<sup>2</sup> Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, “An Overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food System”, 2013

Today, agriculture encompasses more than just food production. Energy crops are being used to gradually replace fossil fuels and non-food crops are being used in the production of plastics and pharmaceuticals. The horticultural industry produces flowers, trees, shrubs and sod used to beautify spaces, improve quality of life, provide carbon sequestration, and to address environmental concerns such as drainage, pollution and erosion. Livestock production has expanded to include the production of fur, fibre as well as the derivation of nutraceutical and pharmaceutical compounds. The equine industry has evolved into a diverse agricultural business that involves sport, gaming, entertainment and recreation. The agricultural sector is rapidly evolving and continues to broaden with new categories and applications.



Aside from food production and food security, there are many other benefits realized by the general public from a thriving agricultural and rural economy. Some of these include the aesthetic preservation of green spaces and scenic rural landscapes, the environmental contributions of agriculture to natural heritage systems and climate sustainability, the economic contributions of agriculture to prosperity, the stewardship of the agricultural resource for future generations, and the ongoing amenity value of agricultural land. As a result, decisions that ultimately affect the agricultural sector have far-reaching implications that extend beyond rural areas within municipalities. A strong agricultural and rural economy is essential to the overall well-being of regional, provincial and federal economies. Analysis of the multiplier effect of primary production estimates that every agricultural job supports an estimated four additional jobs.<sup>3</sup> Agricultural activity will continue to have a direct impact on the health, sustenance and quality of life of citizens, today and for future generations. It is critical to sustain it in a healthy state.

## 1.1 Purpose

The Region of Halton (the Region) delivers a wide range of services that enhance the quality of life of its citizens. Provision of these services involves a substantial investment of public funds. To ensure this investment represents the most productive use of public funds and achieves the goals that are most important to Regional residents, **The Citizens' Priorities, Halton Region's 2011 – 2014 Action Plan (Action Plan)** was developed for implementation during the 2011-2014 term of Council. The actions contained in the plan were prioritized during extensive public consultation with Regional residents. The 2015-2018 Council has endorsed ongoing implementation of an updated action plan to support the quality of life of their citizens.

A key action in the Action Plan is the development of a comprehensive Rural Agricultural Strategy (RAS) to implement the goals, objectives and policies in the Halton Official Plan designed to support and promote agriculture. The Region's vision for the future has consistently been *"to preserve for current*

<sup>3</sup> Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network, "Best Practices in Local Food; A Guide for Municipalities", 2013

*and future generations a landscape that is rich, diverse, balanced, productive and sustainable and a society that is economically strong, equitable and caring”.*<sup>4</sup> To realize this vision the Region recognizes it must “*plan for communities where urban sprawl is minimized, where infrastructure is maximized, where natural heritage is protected and natural spaces and farmland are preserved*”.<sup>5</sup>

As emphasized in these statements, the Region understands that a vibrant agricultural/rural sector is essential for the continued well-being and quality of life for Halton residents. In implementing the actions of the Strategic Plan, the first step in providing additional support for the sector was adoption of an updated Regional Official Plan in 2008 with strong policies for managing rural lands. With these rural policies in place, the next step is to establish and implement a RAS to further support and foster a strong rural economy.

The purpose of the RAS is to create a targeted plan to strengthen and ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural and rural sectors in Halton Region going forward. Implementation of a RAS to support the long-term sustainability of agriculture and the rural economy will help fulfill this vision. It will also inform decisions as the Region moves forward with future capital and program planning and the comprehensive five-year review of the Official Plan. Protection of agriculture as a resource has been a consistent position of the Region since its inception, a position that has included the preservation of farmland and enhanced viability of the agricultural sector. The next comprehensive five-year review of the Official Plan will continue to examine the complementary relationship between the agricultural, rural and settlement areas in unison with the evolution of the urban areas as each plays a critical role in a healthy, prosperous sustainable Regional economy.

In February of 2012, Regional Council agreed to be a part of the *Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance* and endorsed the **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan 2012 (GHFFAP)**<sup>6</sup> which laid out of a program of actions to implement the following vision:

***The Golden Horseshoe is globally renowned as a vibrant food and farming cluster, characterized by profitable farming operations, a thriving hub of food processing, food retail and food service businesses, extensive research capacity, innovative technology, and a wide range of healthy and safe products.***<sup>7</sup>

The RAS will build on the GHFFP program by strengthening Halton’s contribution to securing the future of and growing the Regional food and farming system that is a key component of the economy of the Golden Horseshoe.

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<sup>4</sup> Halton Region, The Citizen’s Priorities 2011 – 2014 Action Plan, pg. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 6

<sup>6</sup> The GHFFAP lays out a strategic plan for building and expanding the food and farming system across the GH. It is based on 5 areas of focus designed to strengthen the current status of the GH as one of the leading food clusters in North America.

<sup>7</sup> Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2012, January 2012, pg. 7.

The RAS is intended to directly identify how the Region can, within its mandate and resources, positively influence the agricultural, rural and rural settlement areas on a continuing basis. In order to deliver on this key priority, the RAS will be developed in two strategic undertakings:

1. A Background Report; and
2. A Rural Agricultural Strategy.

This document is the background report component of the RAS.

## 1.2 Background

Agricultural production in Canada is amongst the most sophisticated and technologically advanced in the world. Globally, Canada is considered to be one of the largest agricultural producers and exporters. In 2013, Canadian agri-food exports totaled \$46,029 million, an increase of 5.6 percent over the previous year. During the same period, agri-food imports totaled \$35,258 million. Overall, Canada is a net exporter of agri-food products<sup>8</sup> with a positive trade balance of \$10,770 million in 2013, an increase of close to 3 percent from 2012. This positive trade balance illustrates some of the important economic opportunities that exist for Canada in agricultural trade.

Ontario, on the other hand is a net importer of food with \$11.86 billion in exports and \$21.12 billion in imports in 2013. Grain products (\$2,371 million), vegetables (\$1,121 million) and other animal products (\$1,085 million) being the top three commodities for export. Fruit and nut (\$3,243 million), vegetables (\$2,176 million), other edible preparations (\$2,034 million) and beverages (\$2,032 million) being the top four commodities being imported.<sup>9</sup>

The food and beverage processing industry is the largest manufacturing industry in Canada but it is only part of the food network. The complete food system is comprised of primary agriculture in combination with the food and beverage processing, distribution, supportive infrastructure, and retail and culinary tourism. It is estimated that there are 6,200 food and beverage processing establishments in Canada with over 3,000 located in Ontario alone.<sup>10</sup> The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food reports that 25 percent of the province's food manufacturing businesses are based in rural areas.<sup>11</sup> Food processors purchase about two-thirds of the food that is produced on Ontario farms.<sup>12</sup>

From the period of 2002 to 2012, 15 out of 20 industries in the manufacturing sector experienced lower levels of exports with the largest decline occurring in the transportation equipment manufacturing sector. Fortunately, several industries including food processing, primary metal, chemical, and petroleum and coal product, experienced large enough gains to partially offset these declines. Historically, the food and beverage processing industry has been more recession resistant than the

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<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, "Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada-Canada at a Glance", Date modified: 2014-02-25

<sup>9</sup> Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs website: [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/stats/trad/commod.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/stats/trad/commod.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, "Economic Impact Analysis – Ontario Food and Beverage Processing Sector, Sept 2012

<sup>11</sup> Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food website, [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/investment/learn-about-fb-ind.html](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/investment/learn-about-fb-ind.html)

<sup>12</sup> Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, "News Release – Bill to Promote Local Food Passes Final Vote – Ontario Committed to Supporting Farmers, Building Stronger Agri-food Industry, November 2013

comparator manufacturing sectors. In fact, the food manufacturing sector has shown sales increases in 18 of the last 20 years.<sup>13</sup>

Ontario is the nation's most populous province hosting 38.4 percent of Canada's population.<sup>14</sup> As a result of its tremendous capacity for agricultural production, the province is also a major contributor of raw product to Canada's food and beverage processing industry. Ontario farmers produce in excess of 200 commodities including fruits, vegetables, livestock, dairy, poultry, grains and oilseeds, flowers and nursery.

Ontario and Quebec combined account for 63 percent of national sales in the food processing industry, the Western Provinces account for 29 percent and the Atlantic Provinces account for the remainder. It is estimated that Ontario's agri-food sector contributes approximately \$34 billion to the economy and is a major employer supporting over 740,000 jobs across Ontario.<sup>15</sup>

Recognizing the importance of the agri-food sector, in 2013 the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed Bill 36, **The Local Food Act**, to help foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems in Ontario by enhancing the production, processing, distribution, sales and marketing of food grown and processed in the province, to increase the awareness of local food, and to encourage the development of new markets. Ontario's Premier has publicly challenged the agri-food industry to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs in Ontario by 2020. Ontario's Premier also challenged the agri-food sector to help the province become one of the top five places in North America in revenues for food and beverage manufacturing and to double its agri-food exports. There have been considerable investments made by government through the establishment of the Local Food Fund to help foster innovation and growth in the demand for local food.

In addition to food production, production of commodities such as horticultural crops is an integral part of Canada's agricultural sector. In 2012, Canada reported that there were 2,660 greenhouses with ornamental plant and greenhouse vegetable sales totaling \$2.4 billion dollars. Ontario accounted for 900 greenhouses and for 58 percent of Canadian greenhouse sales. Ontario is considered to be the third largest producer of greenhouse floricultural products in North America. The Ontario greenhouse sector is a significant employer accounting for 16,175 jobs in 2012.<sup>16</sup> The Niagara peninsula is one of the largest contributors to the Ontario ornamental market.

In 2012, Canada reported 52,260 acres of land dedicated to growing nursery stock representing total sales of \$694 million. When it comes to nursery and sod operations, Ontario continues to be a hotbed of activity and accounts for 45 percent of all acres dedicated to nursery and \$284 million or 41 percent

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<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, "Manufacturing: The Year 2013 in Review", 2013

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada, "Population data 2011 Census", Retrieved 2012-05-16

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada, "Significance of the Food and Beverage Processing Industry in Canada

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada Table 001-0054 – Total Greenhouse, Sod and Nursery Employees – Annual (number) CANSIM, 2008-2012.



of total Canadian sales. In 2012, the nursery sector reported total employees of 5,195.<sup>17</sup> Forecasts for growth in the horticultural sector remain strong.

A study conducted by the Canadian Ornamental Horticultural Alliance indicated that operations in close proximity to metropolitan areas generate more than three times the value of gross farm receipts as compared to the national average. There are a number of strategic opportunities that the industry has identified that are expected to drive growth in the horticultural sector into the future. Aging baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) tend to spend more on products and services that improve quality of life. In fact, the report suggests that the baby boomer generation is expected to spend between \$7.8 billion and \$14.4 billion annually on garden and garden-related activities over the next 20 years. In addition to the fact that gardening ranks as the fourth most desired retirement activity, there is a rising interest in home renovations and to “greening” spaces and using plant material to naturally address some of the environmental challenges such as soil erosion, drainage, etc., faced on properties.<sup>18</sup>

The equestrian sector is also a vital part of Canada’s agricultural industry. A 2010 study commissioned by Equine Canada estimated that the Canadian horse population had reached 863,500 in the summer of 2010. This estimated number was initially based on 2006 Census reports which confirmed 453,965 horses reside on 54,169 Census farms. Additional work with various pedigree associations and an extensive interview process, led to the conclusion that a more realistic representation of the current horse population was 863,500.<sup>19</sup>

A Census farm is defined as an agricultural facility that produces agricultural products for sale. The classification for a farm is based on the commodity from which it attains 50 percent or more of the annual gross farm receipts generated on the property. However, it is well recognized that many horse farms do not in fact sell their livestock and as a result, census reports tend to underestimate the true equine population. This was noted in the Ontario Horse Industry Study completed in 1996, where it was estimated that horse population was underestimated by a factor of 3.9.<sup>20</sup> Another study in 2009 using an on-line survey methodology had 86 percent of survey respondents confirming that horses living on their properties would not have been counted in the last Census of Agriculture.<sup>21</sup>

An Equine Canada study reports that Ontario is home to the second highest provincial horse population, second only to Alberta. Of the 212,500 horses in Ontario, primary use has been ranked from highest percentage use to lowest as follows; young horses not yet in use, sports competition, pleasure riding, breeding stock, racing, companionship, riding lessons, other uses, work and commercial activities.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, “Nursery Trades Industry Statistics, Ontario and Canada, 2008 to 2012”, Catalogue No. 22-202-X, April 2013

<sup>18</sup> Deloitte and Touche, “The Impact of Ornamental Horticulture on Canada’s Economy”, January 2009

<sup>19</sup> Strategic Equine, “Horses in Canada in 2010”, 2010

<sup>20</sup> Wright R, Cation, J, “Ontario Horse Industry Report”, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 1996, 36 pp.

<sup>21</sup> Wilton, B, Caldwell, W, “Rural Ontario’s “Hidden” Sector: The Economic Importance of the Horse Industry Final Report”, 2009

<sup>22</sup> Evans V, Strategic Equine, “2010 Canadian Horse Industry Profile Study”,

[www.equinecanada.ca/industry/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&id=103&Itemid=559&lang=en](http://www.equinecanada.ca/industry/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=103&Itemid=559&lang=en)

As illustrated above, there are many different sectors that make up the agricultural industry in Halton. To gain an understanding of how various aspects of this sector are structured, for the first time, an agricultural related question was asked on Halton Region's 2013 employment survey. In 2014, the question was repeated with 1,858 of 11,023 active businesses or 16.9 percent indicating that they were in the agri-food or agri-business industry. While much of this data still needs to be qualified, it provides a basis upon which to assess the sector. The 2014 Employment Survey results will provide additional data as a result of an expansion of the additional research on what types of businesses should be captured. The 2013 and 2014 data does establish that agriculture and related businesses in Halton Region are significant employers.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe area is considered to be the third largest food and beverage cluster in North America.<sup>23</sup> Halton is an essential part of this cluster. In addition to a strong agri-food sector which includes primary agricultural production and the ability to grow a wide variety of commodities, the Region has a vibrant horticultural sector which includes greenhouse operations and nurseries, many of which have a long standing history in the area. Mushroom production is a growing sector in Halton. There is a well-established equestrian sector that transcends a number of disciplines in Halton. Furthermore, a strong racing sector exists due to the close proximity to premier racetracks; Mohawk Raceway, Woodbine Racetrack and other racetracks in the province that make up the Ontario racing circuit.

Although generally focused in urban areas and therefore not addressed in this report, the food processing cluster in Halton is significant and is part of the larger Golden Horseshoe "food system" or "food network". Oakville, Burlington, Milton and Georgetown are home to numerous large food processing operations. These industries provide a market for and should be connected to rural producers. Many small to mid-sized food processors are developing "local" artisan products that often command a premium price and are sought after by consumers.

All of these facts underscore the fact that the agri-food sector is a vital part of the Regional economy.

### **1.3 Study Objectives**

This background report is intended to provide a greater understanding of the current economic climate and key components or sectors that currently exist and are likely to thrive in the agricultural and rural areas of the Region. In order to complete an effective RAS, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and trends impacting these sectors today. Relevant research can highlight best management approaches that have been successfully used in other jurisdictions and provide possible recommendations and actions that should be brought forward for consideration as part of the RAS.

Consultation with current producers is essential to understand what is happening and how to support, sustain and grow production. The analysis and consultations conducted as part of this study will assist in identifying how the Region can play a strategic role in supporting and strengthening the agricultural

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<sup>23</sup> Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, "Economic Impact Analysis – Ontario Food and Beverage Processing Sector, Sept 2012

and rural sectors in Halton over the long-term. The RAS will identify steps that the Region can take, within its legislated mandate and available resources to support the agricultural industry; add value to those businesses currently operating in the rural areas of the Region and attract new businesses and activities that are compatible with the Region's long-term vision for these areas. All of this will need to be achieved in a manner that will ensure that the rural area continues to thrive over the long-term while at the same time protecting the scenic rural landscape that includes both a vibrant agricultural industry and a sustainable natural area. The strategy will include a detailed implementation plan that will recommend and support land use policies, procedures, existing programs and funding to support the Regional rural sector as well as addressing opportunities for cooperation and coordination with potential partners, timelines for executing the strategy and performance measures to monitor success.

Reference to the background research and final recommendations of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan (GHFFP) will be an important consideration for the development of the RAS. The RAS will complement and build on the GHFFP to strengthen the required agri-food cluster.

When completed, the RAS will present a long-term vision for the rural areas of the Region that includes actions to support:

- A diversified, prosperous agricultural sector that has on-farm business, value added and retention opportunities and the support services necessary to service and grow this important sector;
- Non-agricultural uses in rural hamlets and clusters that compliment and support a sustainable agricultural sector and the rural economy; and
- Cottage industries, home industries and home occupations that compliment and support a vibrant and growing agricultural sector and rural economy.

## **1.4 Study Team**

The study team assembled to research and prepare the RAS was comprised of consultants and Regional staff. The highly skilled team included professional planners specializing in agricultural issues, economic development experts experienced in dealing with rural economies and public engagement specialists. The consulting team was led by Margaret Walton of PLANSCAPE Inc., and included TCI Management Consultants, the Queen's Executive Decision Centre along with planners and the Agricultural Liaison Officer from the Regional Planning Department.

PLANSCAPE Inc. has had extensive involvement in dealing with complex issues related to food and farming in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Ms. Walton was the study coordinator for the "Golden Horseshoe Agricultural and Agri-Food Strategy, "Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2021", as well, she authored the Sustainable Halton background reports for the Regional Official Plan review. She has worked with various municipalities in developing agricultural and rural Official Plan policies, agricultural task forces to create plans for the long-term support for agriculture and for various grower organizations tracking issues impacting rural communities both in and outside of the Greenbelt. All of this extensive work has formed the basis for her development of extensive experience in assessing the issues and trends facing the agricultural economy in Ontario today.

TCI Management Consultants offers services in economic and community development, strategic planning, and marketing to a wide range of public and private sector clients. TCI Management Consultants have been involved in the development of economic and tourism strategies, master plan development projects as well as planning downtown revitalization and economic development studies for a number of municipalities and Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) all of which have a substantial rural component to their agricultural base. In addition, TCI Management Consultants helped develop rural economic development tools specifically for small rural downtown areas for OMAFRA.

The Queen's Executive Decision Centre was established in 1987 to facilitate executive meetings using Group Decision Support Software (GDSS). Associate Director Erik Lockhart designs and facilitates meetings using the software and has led over 650 sessions for groups undertaking strategic plans, marketing plan budgets, competitive analysis, stakeholder analysis, organizational redesign and focus groups. The process improves on conventional meetings by using technology to provide instant feedback by gathering ideas or concepts and prioritizing these by building consensus.

This consulting team, complimented by Regional staff from Finance, Public Health, Economic Development and Planning, was able to blend skills and knowledge about soliciting public input, economic analysis, land use planning and the evaluation of trends to develop the insights and conclusions presented in this report. The Regional Agricultural Liaison Officer co-ordinated the Regional input. This work will form the basis for developing an effective RAS for Halton.

## **1.5 Approach and Methodology**

The development of this report builds upon similar approaches that have been used in other agricultural strategic plans. It is a vision based approach that includes input from partners in the rural economy and public engagement and consultation with farmers, entrepreneurs and members of the public, extensive research of best practices, an examination of current approaches, an assessment of land use policy, and consideration of other studies related to agriculture.

### **1.5.1 Research**

Research was used to build an accurate portrayal of the current state of the agricultural and rural economy in Halton. Internal data was combined with Census of Agriculture data which is released every five years. Additional statistical information was compiled from Statistics Canada, industry associations and reports. This provides insight into the trends that are being experienced provincially, across the Golden Horseshoe and within Halton Region over time.

### **1.5.2 Planning Policy**

Existing planning policy including *The Planning Act* provides broad direction on land use planning and development and provides the basis for all land use planning decision in Ontario. It is implemented through the *Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)* which is the basis for the preparation of provincial plans including the *Greenbelt Plan*, the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, and the *Niagara Escarpment Plan* all of which impact land use in Halton.

Therefore a critical assessment of the existing provincial, Regional and local land use policies applicable to the agricultural and rural areas of Halton Region was undertaken. The goals of the assessment were twofold:

1. To develop an understanding of what may be permitted and under what criteria within the agricultural and rural areas of the Region under current policies and regulations; and
2. To develop an understanding of current policy and implementation issues both inside and outside Halton Region.

This knowledge will be used to assess existing land use policies in the Region and to develop innovative and progressive land use policies and programs on a go forward basis.

### **1.5.3 Best Management Practices**

Best management practices from both inside and outside Halton Region were examined to identify opportunities and the best approaches available to make informed decisions on future policies and programming going forward. Efforts were made to highlight examples that would be most applicable and relevant to Halton Region.

### **1.5.4 Studies and Other Literature**

An extensive literature review was completed to identify studies, reports and other relevant sources of information that could inform the development of the RAS. Examples were sought of analyses of issues impacting agricultural, rural and settlement areas to understand how other jurisdictions plan for these important areas and how they have been successful through implementation.

### **1.5.5 Partnerships, Strategic Opportunities and Future Vision.**

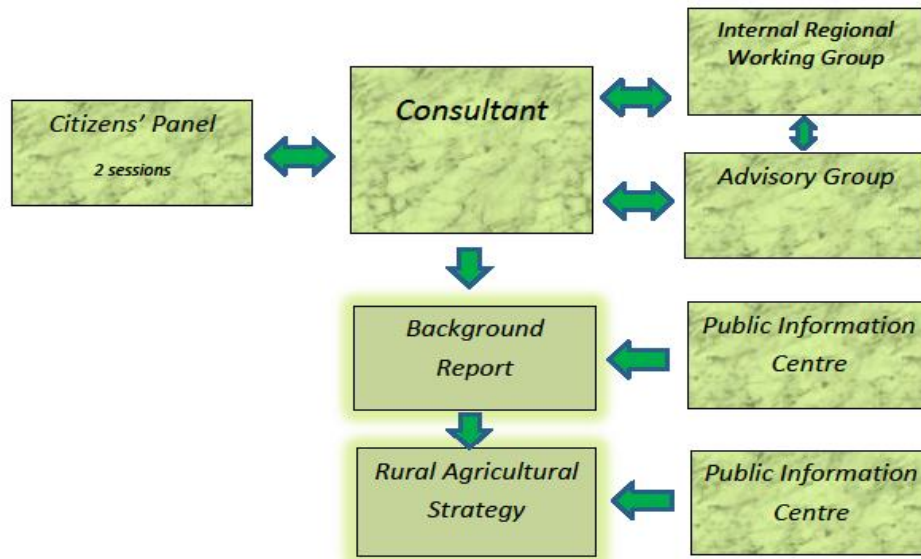
There are a number of associations and key agencies that have mandates which are in alignment with some of the objectives identified in the RAS. The background report identifies potential key partnerships and strategic opportunities that Halton Region should examine further.

### **1.5.6 Public Engagement**

The successful implementation of any strategy requires the support of the many stakeholders. A consultative approach was used for all public consultations to ensure that anyone with an interest in the agricultural and rural community had a forum to participate in the process and provide their thoughts, perspectives and opinion on how the agricultural/rural area could evolve going forward. Active consultation and engagement extended throughout the entire process and through a variety of mediums. An internal Regional working group, advisory group and citizens' panel were struck to provide guidance and advice throughout the process. An agricultural questionnaire and the delivery of a rural survey provided additional information and insights for consideration.

The public consultation process used in the development of the RAS is illustrated in **Figure 1**. The following is a brief overview of the components of the consultation process in the development of the background report.

**Figure 1 - Public Consultation Process**



### **Internal Regional Working Group**

The Internal Regional Working Group was created to assist and provide guidance in the development of the background report and RAS. It was comprised of staff from the planning services, economic development, finance, and public health departments. This group met a number of times to provide strategic advice and direction throughout the study process.

### **Advisory Group**

The Advisory Group was a more broadly based group comprised of local planners and economic development officers, farmers and individuals with specific knowledge or experience regarding rural issues. Specifically, the Advisory Group was comprised of representatives from:

- the Area Municipalities (Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville);
- the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC);
- the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture (HRFA);
- the Rural Community at Large;
- Citizen Representatives;
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA);
- The Halton Food Council; and
- The co-ordinator of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan.

Members of the Internal Regional Working Group also sat on the Advisory Group to provide continuity between the groups.

### **Citizens' Panel**

In 2011, Halton Region piloted a new approach towards public consultation while seeking input into the development of Council's Action Plan. As part of the consultation process, it struck a Citizens Reference Panel. This novel approach solicited members of the community at large who were interested in engaging in a discussion to help identify priorities for Halton Region's Action Plan. A total of 36 citizens were selected through a Civic Lottery process.

Population of the Citizens' Panel for the RAS was modelled in a similar fashion. Postal codes covering rural areas in each of the four local municipalities were selected. Approximately 1,700 rural residents received a letter from the Regional Chair that outlined the key objectives of the project. Those interested in participating were asked to send in a response card that would help sort the potential pool of candidates to meet various attributes. Seventeen representatives were asked to share their thoughts and perspectives related to issues and opportunities to support long-term sustainable agriculture and rural communities in Halton Region. Participants were selected from the respondents to meet the following attributes:

- A diverse age range (from 18 years and up);
- Representatives of both genders;
- Two farmers representatives from the rural areas of each of Burlington, Halton Hills and Milton;
- Farmer representatives from a broad range of commodity groups;
- Three rural representatives from each of Burlington, Halton Hills and Milton; and
- Two rural representatives from Oakville.

The Citizens' Panel was asked to participate in two sessions. A consultation session held on August 22, 2013 at the Halton Region Museum to get original input; and a second session to discuss and provide input on the findings summarized in this report in preparation for moving ahead with the RAS.

The Queen's Executive Decision Centre facilitated the Citizens' Panel sessions using Group Decision Support Software (GDSS). This technology is a means of gathering input, merging ideas into themes and ultimately prioritizing these themes towards building consensus. The approach provides immediate feedback that is shared in real time with the Citizens' Panel. Farmer feedback and rural resident feedback was individually reported for comparison purposes. Members of the Advisory Committee were also invited to participate with the Citizens' Panel in the consultative sessions.

### **Public Information Centres**

Two public information centres provided additional opportunity for input. The first focused on preliminary findings regarding the background report. The second public information session was scheduled to be held following release of the draft Rural Agricultural Strategy.

### **Agricultural Questionnaire**

An agricultural questionnaire was developed in order to obtain a greater understanding of the issues and challenges facing the agricultural sector. A copy of the questionnaire is included in **Appendix 1**. The first section of the questionnaire provided insight into the size and scope of the farming operation. The middle section related to issues surrounding farm succession while the last part dealt with issues involving farm profitability or viability. The questionnaire was administered through a series of face-to-face interviews conducted with various agricultural based organizations and producers. A broad range of commodities including; apples, beef, cash crop, dairy, equine (varied disciplines), farmers markets, greenhouse, lamb, market gardens, nursery, poultry and produce were represented. Farm organizations that participated in providing input included the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture, Halton Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Peel/Halton County Cattlemen's Association, Landscape Ontario and the Ontario Equestrian Federation. A summary of findings from the consultation process are documented in **Section 4**. The consultation summaries from the agricultural sector, rural sector and citizens' panel appear in **Appendices 3, 4 and 5** respectively.

All members of the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee and of the agricultural community at large were also encouraged to complete the questionnaire which was available through a link to Survey Monkey. A number of producers did complete the questionnaire on line and their input was incorporated in the findings of this report.

### **Rural Survey**

A separate rural survey was developed in order to obtain the perspectives of rural residents and businesses operating in hamlets and rural clusters throughout the Region. Hamlets are defined and identified in the Region's Official Plan to include a number of smaller settlement areas such as Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo, and Norval. Regional staff developed a potential list of businesses and made initial contact to measure their interest in participating. Businesses were not limited to those with direct links to the agricultural sector but included a broad cross section of ancillary services. A copy of this questionnaire is included in **Appendix 1**.

Respondents were given the choice of responding via an internet survey or telephone interview. Additionally, two community groups were invited to participate including Destination Campbellville Community Association and the Nassagaweya Community Consultation Group. These organizations also forwarded the survey link to their members, some of whom participated. A total of 22 surveys were completed from a cross section of rural businesses. The surveys also included a response from Mohawk Racetrack, a large and significant employer in the rural area. The rural survey findings are presented in **Section 4.2**.



## 1.6 Report Structure

This report is structured to present the results of the research and consultations conducted to support the development of a RAS. The findings are divided into the following key sections:

- Chapter 2 - Halton's Countryside: The Agricultural Resource;
- Chapter 3 - Halton's Countryside: The Rural Area;
- Chapter 4 - The Consultation Process;
- Chapter 5 - Policies, Programs and Plans;
- Chapter 6 - Best Practices;
- Chapter 7 - Findings;

The research available on sustaining rural and agricultural communities and linking the services they provide to urban residents is considerable. Those identified as being relevant to the Halton context have been identified and referenced in the bibliography.

## 1.7 Summary

To be effective, the RAS must be geared specifically to the unique characteristics of Halton Region. There are many examples and best practices that support rural and agricultural communities and that have been implemented throughout the world. The challenge lies in selecting those that have been shown to have a demonstrable benefit and that would be most relevant in the context of the Region. What is essential is for the Region to focus on actions which are: within the Region's scope of interest, will have the highest return on investment, will provide the greatest level of support for innovation and will support the continued development of a sustainable agricultural sector and broader rural economy.

All actions must advance the delivery of the Regional priorities as identified in the "Citizens' Priorities - Halton Region's 2011 - 2014 Action Plan"<sup>24</sup> and the objectives of the Halton Region Official Plan.

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<sup>24</sup> Approved by Regional Council June 22, 2011, the action plan is developed each new term to reflect Council's priorities and focus on what services are important to Halton residents. This Action Plan is fundamentally different from other plan Halton has developed in the past because of how closely Halton worked with residents at the beginning of the development process. Refer to Action Plan at: [www.halton.ca/ActionPlan](http://www.halton.ca/ActionPlan)



## Chapter 2

# Halton's Countryside: The Agricultural Resource





## 2 Halton's Countryside: The Agricultural Resource

Development of an effective rural agricultural strategy requires an understanding of the components that comprise the Regional rural area which in Halton includes the agricultural area, hamlets and settlements, and the Regional and Greenbelt Natural Heritage Systems. It also requires an understanding of the links to the urban areas which are home to many components of the food system.

This section provides the background describing the agricultural sector and the links to the food system as a whole thereby establishing the context for the strategy. This overview is based on information available through the Regional databases, research, Statistics Canada information and specifically the Census of Agriculture. It is augmented by input from Regional staff and targeted investigations.



### 2.1 The Agricultural Resource

Canada is a vast country with a total land mass of 9,984,670 sq. km.<sup>1</sup> In spite of its sheer size, only 5 percent of Canada's land base is free of severe constraints for agricultural production.<sup>2</sup> Climate and soil quality are examples of common constraints that limit the amount of land that can be dependably relied on for agricultural activities. Dependable agricultural land or prime agricultural land is a non-renewable, finite resource that is essential for the existence of a healthy agriculture and food system.

When discussing prime agricultural land, reference is often made to a common classification system used to assess soil capability of agricultural lands called the Canada Land Inventory (CLI). Soils can be classified into one of seven classes based on the potential or limitations of the land. Dependable agriculture land or prime agricultural land is defined as land that is designated as Class 1, 2 or 3 in the Canada Land Inventory system. The general soil classes are outlined in **Figure 2.1**.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada "Land and freshwater area, by province and territory", 2005-02-01

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada "Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin - The Loss of Dependable Agricultural Land in Canada", Vol 6, No.1, January 2005

**Figure 2.1 – Canada Land Inventory System Soil Classifications<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Class of Land</b>	<b>Description</b>
Class 1	<i>Soils have no significant limitations to crop production</i>
Class 2	<i>Soils have moderate limitations that restrict the range of crops or require moderate conservation practices</i>
Class 3	<i>Soils have moderately severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices</i>
Class 4	<i>Soils have severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices or both</i>
Class 5	<i>Soils have very severe limitations that restrict their capability to producing perennial forage crops, and improvement practices are feasible</i>
Class 6	<i>Soils are capable of only producing perennial forage crops and improvement practices are not feasible</i>
Class 7	<i>Soils have no capability for arable culture or permanent pasture</i>

The majority of prime agricultural land in Canada is located in two key regions: the interior grasslands found in the southern half of the Prairie Provinces and a belt that runs diagonally along the shores of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence waterway. Approximately three-quarters of Class 1, 2 and 3 lands in Canada are located in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario.<sup>4</sup> Ontario is home to 8 percent of Canada’s farmland.<sup>5</sup>

Approximately 6.4 percent of Ontario’s land base has the characteristics to qualify as prime agricultural land. Of this 6.4 percent, it is estimated that 30 percent is used for non-agricultural uses which include settlement areas, golf courses, roads, aggregate sites, woodlot, wetlands, etc. This leaves approximately 4.1 million hectares or 4.5 percent of Ontario with Class 1, 2 and 3 lands that are actually “available” for agricultural production. However, the total area used for agriculture is 5.1 million hectares or 5.6 percent of the provincial land area as some lower capability land is also used for agricultural purposes.<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to Canada’s best agricultural lands, it is estimated that only 0.5 percent of Canada’s total land base is comprised exclusively of Class 1 lands with 52 percent of that area located in Ontario.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Adapted - Environment Canada “The Canada Land Inventory Report No. 2, 1972

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada “Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin – The Loss of Dependable Agricultural Land in Canada”, Vol. 6, No.1, January 2005

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada 2006, Agri-Food Facts, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition 2008

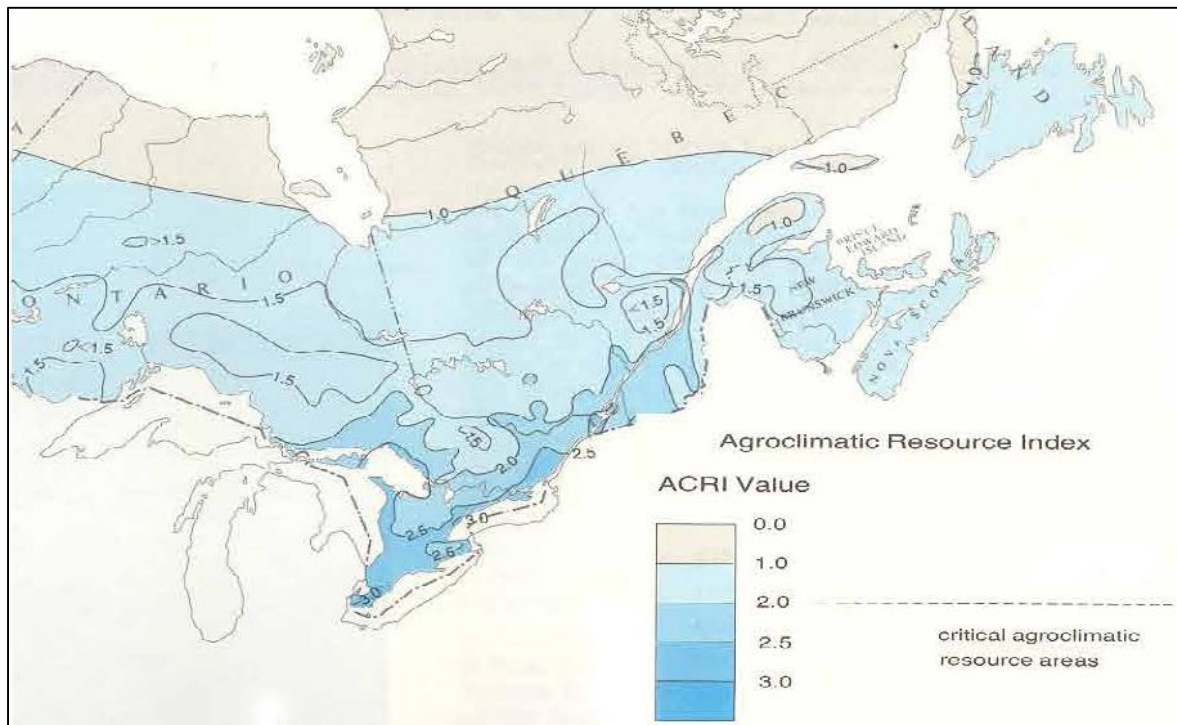
<sup>6</sup> Statistics provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs

<sup>7</sup> Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, A Harvest of Ideas: Healthy Communities and Planning for Food Oct 29, 2010.

Climate also has a huge impact on agricultural productivity. Ontario contains most of Canada’s land with high agroclimatic ratings (which are required to sustain certain types of production) and is the only province with Agroclimatic Resources Index<sup>8</sup> values above 3.0.

Halton Region is home to a productive agricultural sector based on outstanding soils, a benevolent climate and a community of farmers that have an active interest in farming. From a soil capability perspective, Halton Region contains a significant area of land with Class 1 soil capability. Overall, the majority of the rural land in Halton Region is classified as prime agricultural land (Class 1, 2 and 3). Given that only approximately 6.4 percent of Ontario’s land base is classified as prime agricultural land, the fact that the majority of Halton Region’s land base is classified as prime emphasizes the importance of this resource.<sup>9</sup> As shown on **Figure 2.2**, Halton also contains a portion of area where the value of the Agroclimatic Resources Index exceeds 3. Unfortunately the majority of this land has been urbanized.

**Figure 2.2- Agroclimatic Resource Map**



Source: Ontario Farmland Trust, Farmland in Ontario—Are we losing a valuable resource? (Environment Canada. 1982. Canada’s Resource Lands. Map Folio no.4)

From an agricultural perspective, the high quantity and quality of soils provides for some unique opportunities in Halton Region. As noted above, the value of prime agricultural land in Halton Region is enhanced by good climate conditions and availability of water. **Figure 2.3** provides a breakdown of lands within Halton Region based on the CLI.

<sup>8</sup> The Agroclimatic Resource Index (ACRI) provides an approximate method for quantitatively comparing quality of the agroclimate for agriculture in different parts of Canada. It is calculated by considering growing season length, temperature and moisture as they relate to forage yields.

<sup>9</sup> Turvey J, Konyi B, OMAF, “Ontario’s Agricultural Policies, Sustainable Urban Communities and the Greenbelt”, June 2006

**Figure 2.3 – Breakdown of Prime Agricultural Lands in Halton Region<sup>10</sup>**

Description	Hectares	Acres	Meters Squared	Land as a Percentage of the Total Area of Halton
<b>HALTON REGION</b>				
Urban Area of Halton	28,638	70,766	286,380,234	29.5%
All Lands Outside of Urban Area's	68,286	168,738	682,860,338	70.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96,924</b>	<b>239,504</b>	<b>969,240,572</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>ALL LANDS OUTSIDE OF URBAN AREAS AND *NHS KEY FEATURES</b>				
All Lands Outside of Urban Areas and NHS Key Features	36,540	90,293	365,404,631	37.7%
<b>PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS</b>				
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 in Greenbelt Protected Country Side	21,943	54,223	219,434,081	22.6%
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 North of the NEC Plan Area	13,404	33,121	134,035,064	13.8%
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 in NEC Plan Area	15,990	39,511	159,896,523	16.5%
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 South of NEC Plan Area (Whitebelt)	24,194	59,785	241,941,723	25.0%
<b>PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS OUTSIDE *NHS KEY FEATURES AND URBAN</b>				
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 Outside NHS Key Features and Urban (North of NEC Plan Area)	7,704	19,037	77,040,552	7.9%
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 Outside NHS Key Features and Urban (In NEC Plan Area)	9,497	23,467	94,968,068	9.8%
CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 Outside NHS Key Features and Urban (South of NEC Plan Area)	14,698	36,320	146,982,894	15.2%
<b>CLI Soils Class 1 - 3 Outside NHS Key Features and Urban (All of Halton)</b>	<b>31,899</b>	<b>78,824</b>	<b>318,991,514</b>	<b>32.9%</b>

\*NHS - Natural Heritage System

In 2008 as part of the update of its Official Plan, Halton Region undertook a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) to identify remaining areas of prime production potential. The LEAR is an alternative structured methodology of identifying the long-term agricultural potential of the land base. It has been successfully used in a number of municipalities to identify prime agricultural areas for protection. There are essentially two components to the evaluation; the land evaluation (LE) which looks at physical resources such as the CLI soils rating, climate, etc., and the area review (AR) which evaluates other factors that contribute to agricultural suitability such as fragmentation, drainage, surrounding land uses, conflicts, etc. The results of these analyses are combined to arrive at an overall LEAR score with a high score indicating significant agricultural potential and suitability for long-term farming activities.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics provided By Halton Region, GIS



The findings from the LEAR study confirmed the presence of a significant amount of prime agricultural land in Halton interspersed with small pockets of land with lower scores specifically in the Greenbelt above the Escarpment. With the exception of a few isolated pockets, the land comprising the rural area south of the Greenbelt and north of the urban strip along Lake Ontario is all prime agricultural land as illustrated in **Figure 2.4**. These findings were used as the basis for designating the lands in the update of the Regional Official Plan.

Halton’s rural area is made up of two parts; the Protected Countryside covered by the Greenbelt Plan that includes lands within and beyond the Niagara Escarpment Plan area; and an area that is primarily below the Escarpment and designated in the Regional Official Plan as the Agricultural Area. (**Figure 2.4a** the Regional Official Plan Map 1 – Regional Structure) The natural heritage system, including key heritage features, is also part of the rural area.

Provincial legislation including the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act are in place to permanently protect agricultural lands and ecological features in the Protected Countryside from urbanization. Lands within the Agricultural Area, while subject to the policies of the Halton Official Plan, face a less certain future. The provincial “Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe” requires Halton to accommodate a certain level of growth to 2031. Some of the growth can be accomplished through intensification and through Greenfield development within the urban boundaries as established under the Regional Official Plan. However after 2031, the issue of finding additional land to accommodate growth, will likely have to be addressed again.



Figure 2.4 – LEAR Scores in Halton Region

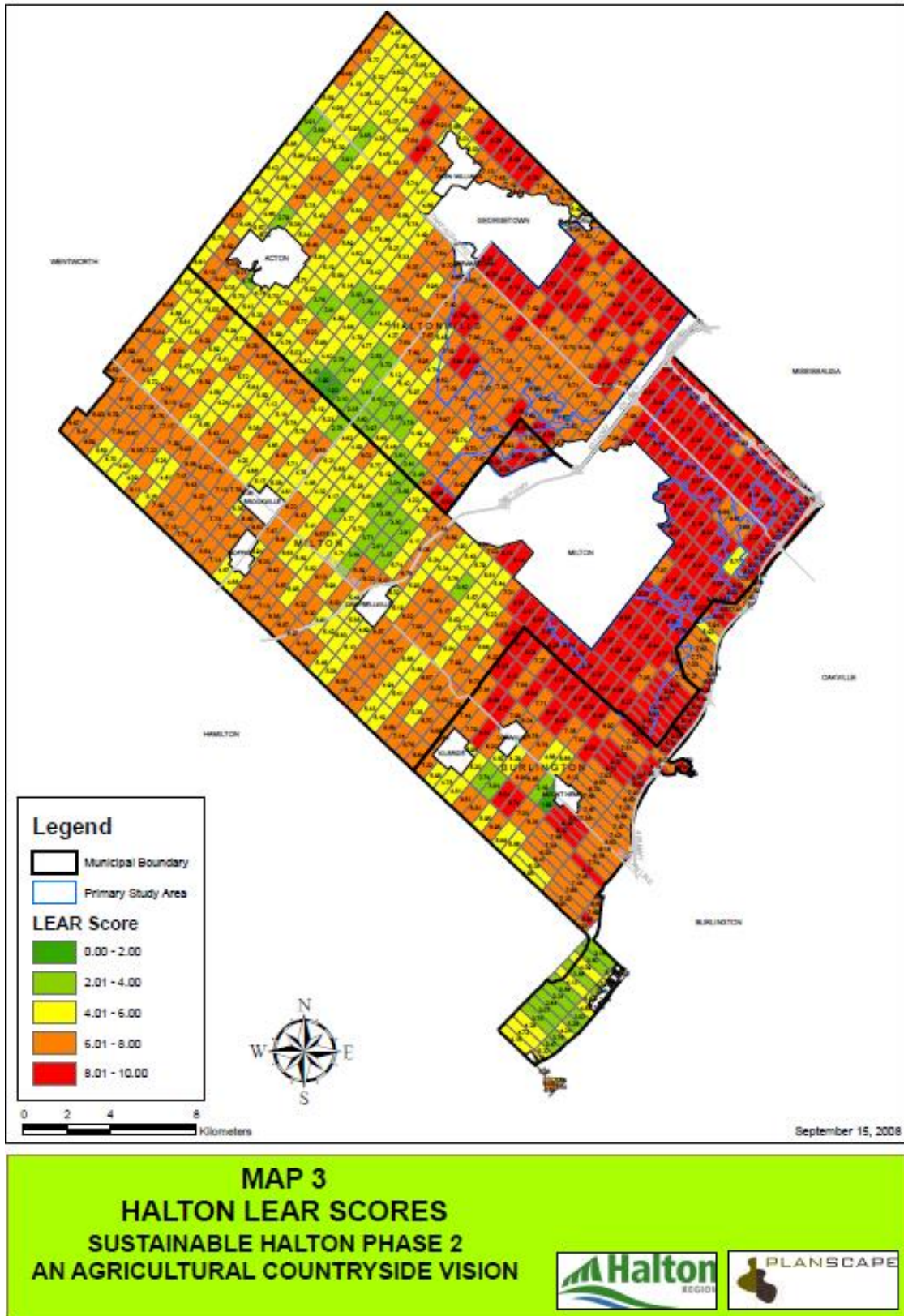
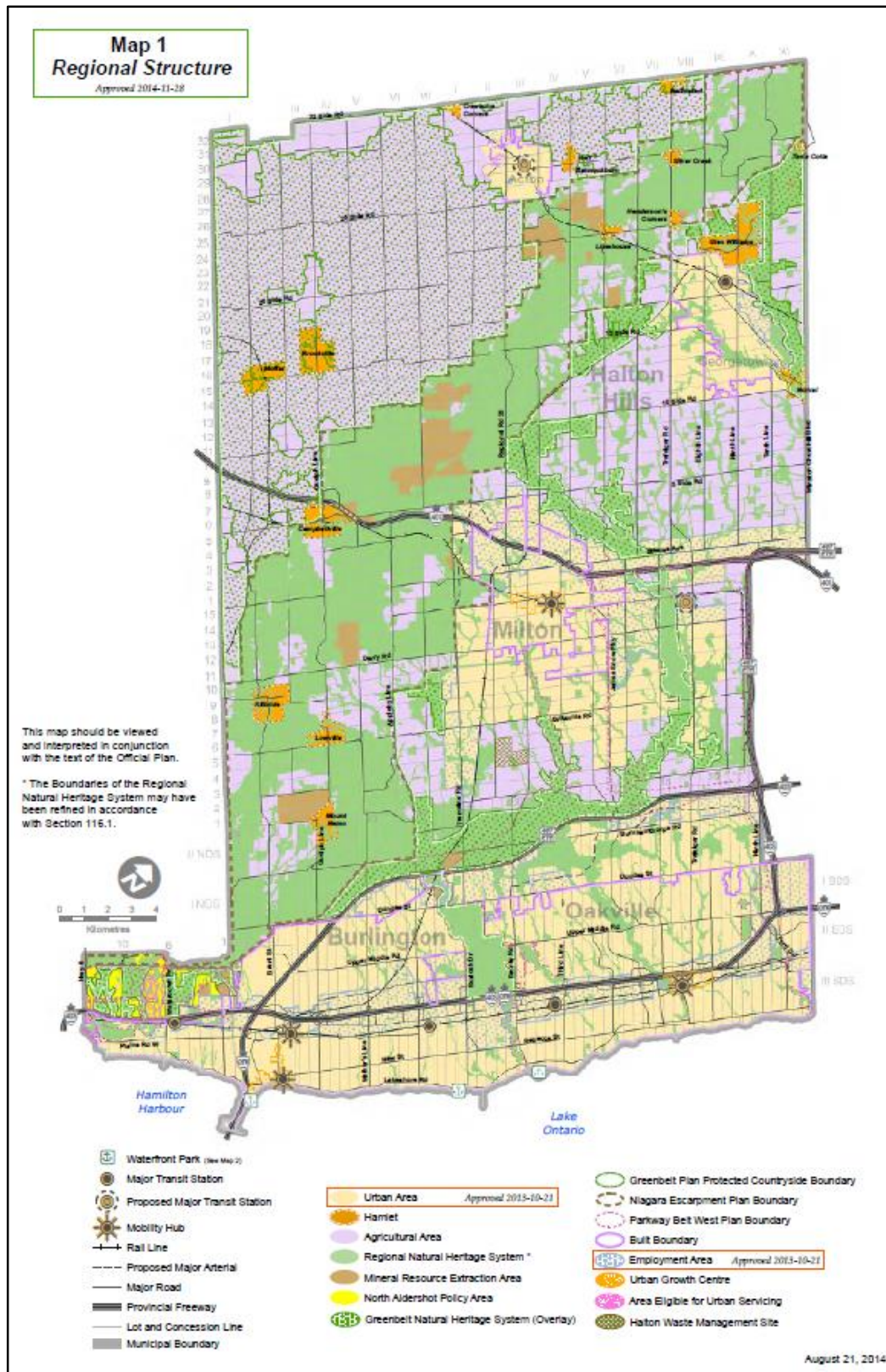


Figure 2.4a (The Regional Official Plan, Map 1 – Regional Structure)



In analyzing the agricultural land base it is interesting to consider from a food self-sufficiency perspective, how much of the Regional agricultural land base is required to meet Halton's future needs of being able to produce locally grown food for Regional residents. A 2006 study conducted at Cornell University looked at the issue of food security.<sup>11</sup> By analyzing 42 typical diets of New York State residents and relating these to the food production capabilities in the same area, it attempted to construct a model that would arrive at a per capita land resource requirement. It estimated that a range of 0.18 - 0.86 ha (0.45 – 2.1 acres) per capita was needed. A similar study done for the Ontario Farmland Trust in 2012, concluded that given population growth forecasts, even if the current area of farmland does not change, the province will cease to be self-sufficient in food production by 2036.<sup>12</sup>

The Ontario Farmland Trust study concluded that just over 1 acre of farmland per capita would be needed to be completely self-sufficient in food production. Considering that the population of Halton Region was reported to be 501,669 in 2011, if the lowest reported per capita resource requirement is applied, the CLI soils outside of key features and urban areas at that time would have been sufficient to feed 177,216 people annually or approximately 35 percent of the Regional population. At the present time, Halton Region is not able to grow sufficient food on its existing agricultural land base to meet the entire food needs of its citizens. This vulnerability will only compound over time, given population growth projections and availability of land.

## 2.2 Agricultural Profile

To be effective the RAS must be specific to the unique characteristics of the Regional agricultural resource and tailored to the needs of the Halton agricultural community. Over time, the Region has tracked the statistical profile of the agricultural sector, types of agriculture that have dominated, land use trends and ownership patterns as a means of measuring the overall state of agriculture. This tracking has been based on Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture which is updated on a five year basis. Any person responsible for operating a farm or an agricultural operation must complete a Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

The Census of Agriculture considers an agricultural operation to be any operation that grows or produces any agricultural products with the intent to sell. Farms are defined as agricultural operations generating in excess of \$7,500 in gross farm receipts (GFR) per annum. Farms are classified according to the commodity which generates in excess of 50 percent of GFRs reported for that farm. Individual commodity values are separately tracked.

This update is based on the most recent 2011 Agricultural Census.<sup>13</sup> A review of these numbers assists in understanding the changes that have occurred since the last Regional assessment and to identify

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<sup>11</sup> Peters C.J., Wilkins J.L. and Fick G.W., Testing a complete-diet model for estimating the land resource requirements of food consumption and agricultural carrying capacity: The New York State Example, *Renewable Agricultural and Food Systems*: 22(2); pg. 145-153

<sup>12</sup> McCallum Charlotte "Farmland Requirements for Ontario's Growing Population to 2036" prepared for the Ontario Farmland Trust, Guelph, Ontario, 2012. pg. 2

<sup>13</sup> Note that the protocols used in collecting the 2011 Census of Agriculture differ from those used in 2006 and 2001. Therefore direct comparison of the figures is not always possible or appropriate. Where changes in reporting have occurred it is noted in the appropriate figure.

longer term trends. Conclusions regarding these statistics are provided at the end of the section. It should be noted that the statistics from the Agricultural Census deal with farms and land under production regardless of the underlying land use designation.

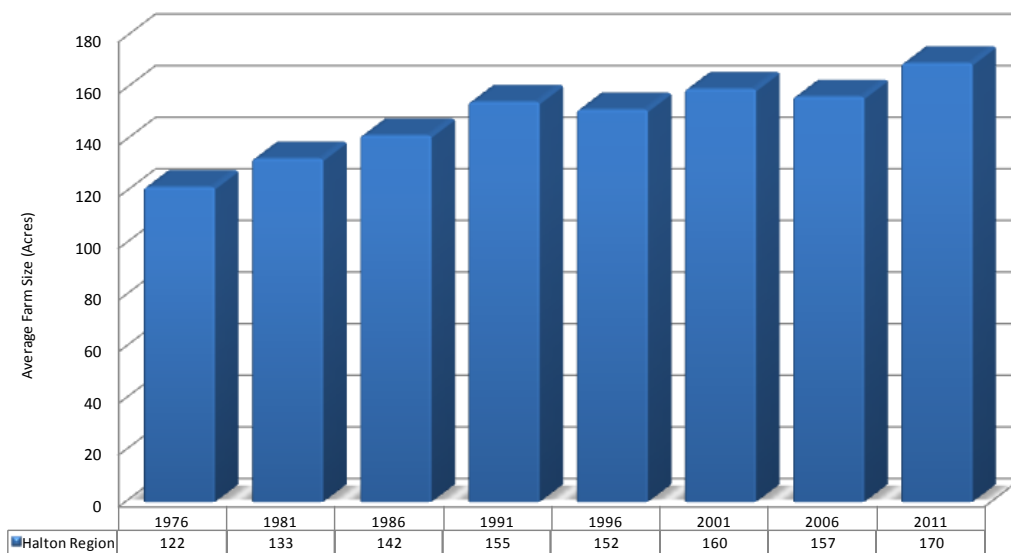
The statistics are considered at the Regional level and on the basis of the breakdown between the four local municipalities.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.1. Average Farm Size/Number of Farms/Area of Farmland

Consistently over time, average farm size has been increasing in Ontario. In 2011, the average farm size in Ontario was reported to be 243 acres. In comparison, the average farm size reported in the Golden Horseshoe during 2011 was significantly smaller at 160 acres. During the period from 1991 to 2011, the average provincial farm size increased by 19 percent. During the same period from 1991 to 2011, farm size in the Golden Horseshoe increased by 25 percent, out pacing the growth in average farm size experienced across the province. Within the Golden Horseshoe, Peel reported the largest average farm size of 212 acres with Durham a close second at 204 acres, while Niagara reported the smallest farm size of 110 acres.<sup>15</sup>

As shown in **Figure 2.5** the trend to increased average farm size is apparent in Halton. The traditional 100 acre parcel that historically was the basis of the predominant farm operations has been replaced by larger operations comprised of a mix of rental and owned land often held in a variety of ownerships. At the same time alternative types of agriculture become more prevalent (i.e. greenhouse, floriculture, nursery, equine, etc.). Despite the rise in average farm size, there is a growing component of agricultural operations located on properties much smaller than 100 acres.

**Figure 2.5 – Average Farm Size (Acres) in Halton Region, 1976 to 2011**



<sup>14</sup> Additional agricultural statistics are provided in Appendix 9.

<sup>15</sup> Agriculture and Agri-Food Economic Profile for the Golden Horseshoe, Planscape Inc., July 2014, Section 2, pg. 2.9.

Although Regionally the trend to larger farms is apparent, the trends differ in the local municipalities, as shown in **Figure 2.6**. Between 2006 and 2011 both Burlington and Oakville actually experienced a decline in average farm size, while Halton Hills and Milton experienced an increase. This variation could be attributable to a number of reasons. Oakville is really an anomaly at this point since the entire area is designated for urban development. It is estimated that 73 percent of the land farmed in Oakville is rented and the number of farms has fallen to 21. In Burlington, the decrease in size may be related to the type of farming that is occurring. The types of operations that are based on smaller parcels such as equine, greenhouse, nursery and vegetable, are becoming more prevalent in Burlington.

**Figure 2.6 – Average Farm Size (Acres) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, showing Percentage Change, 1976 to 2011**

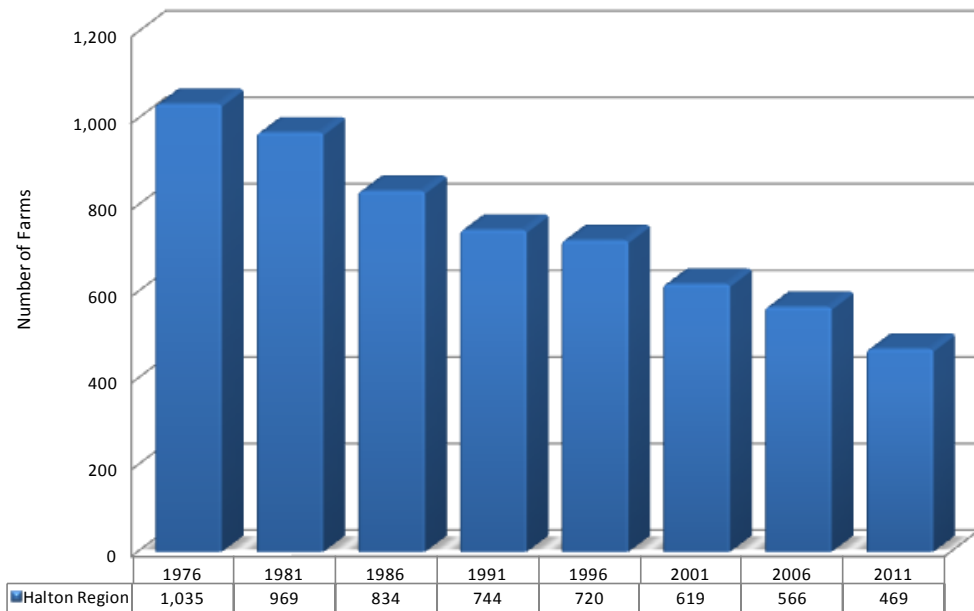
Geographic Location	Average Farm Size (Acres)								Change in Farmland Area (Acres)		Percentage Change in Average Farm Size	
	Census Years								2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011
Halton Region	122	133	142	155	152	160	157	170	-3	13	-2%	8%
Burlington	111	117	122	131	110	128	135	115	7	-20	5%	-15%
Oakville	184	193	184	134	228	165	274	261	109	96	66%	-5%
Milton	108	124	123	120	120	124	120	133	-4	9	-3%	11%
Halton Hills	132	143	169	206	195	215	201	226	-14	11	-7%	12%

Another national trend that is apparent in Halton is the decline in the number of farms. In 1981, there were 82,448 farms in Ontario. Thirty years later this number had decreased 37 percent to 51,950 farms. The 2006 to 2011 period alone showed a decrease of 9 percent in the number of farms at the provincial level. The same trend has occurred across the Golden Horseshoe with 11,336 farms reported in 1981 and 6,090 in 2011. This represents a decrease of 46.3 percent over a thirty year period with a 12 percent drop experienced between 2006 and 2011. The greater rate of decline in the Golden Horseshoe is not unexpected given the growth pressures experienced in the area relative to those across the rest of the province. In examining the Golden Horseshoe over a thirty year span, of all Regions and cities, only the Region of York experienced a marginal growth rate of 2 percent in number of farms for the Census reporting period from 1991 to 1996, for all other areas and census periods there was ongoing decline in farm numbers.

As shown on **Figures 2.7** and **2.8**, the downward trend in number of farms is amplified in Halton Region. Over a thirty year span from 1981 to 2011, Halton experienced a decrease of 51.6 percent in farms. The total number of farms in Halton Region from 2006 to 2011 declined by 17 percent and significantly exceeded the rate of decline experienced across the Golden Horseshoe.

In the local municipalities, the decline in numbers is slightly lower in Burlington, higher in Milton and Halton Hills while Oakville reported no change between 2006 and 2011. According to Statistics Canada, the 2011 census named Milton as the fastest growing Canadian community for the second year in a row. The greatest decline in farm numbers appears to be directly related to the growth rate experienced in each respective local municipality.

**Figure 2.7 – Number of Farms in Halton Region, 1976 to 2011**



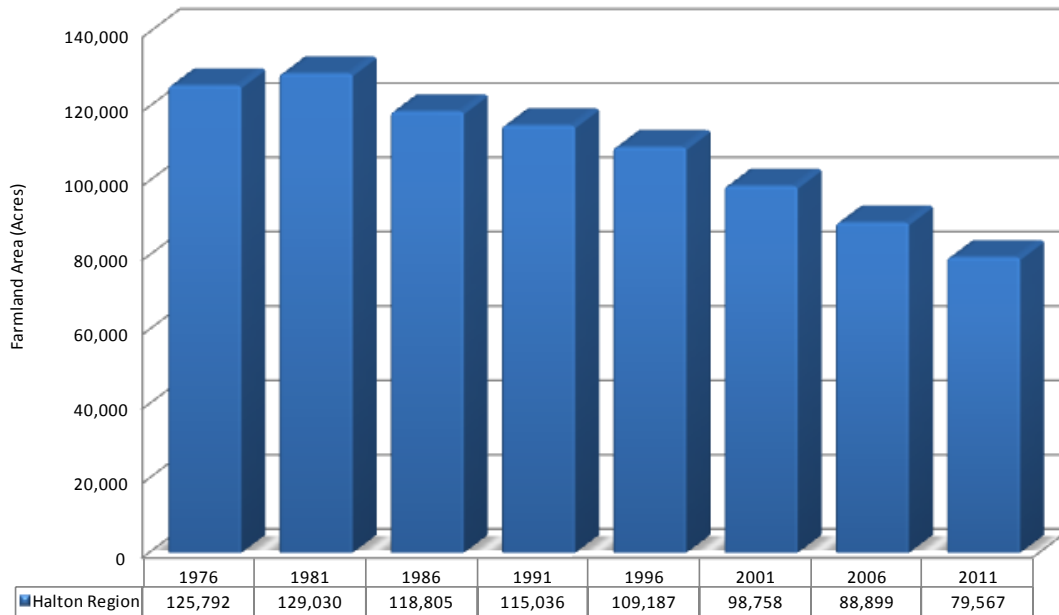
**Figure 2.8 – Number of Farms in Halton Region by Local Municipality, showing Percentage Change, 1981 to 2011**

Geographic Location	Number of Farms							Change in Number of Farms		Percentage Change	
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011
Halton Region	969	834	744	720	619	566	469	-53	-97	-9%	-17%
Burlington	160	130	112	113	95	79	70	-16	-9	-17%	-11%
Oakville	57	63	31	42	27	21	21	-6	0	-22%	0%
Milton	426	365	322	309	271	260	209	-11	-51	-4%	-20%
Halton Hills	326	276	279	256	226	206	169	-20	-37	-9%	-18%

The area of farmland is another important indicator that needs to be examined in order to understand the status of the agricultural land base. Over time, Ontario’s farmland area has been on a steady decline. From 1981 to 2011, over 2 million acres of farmland went out of production representing a 15 percent decrease. The rate of farmland loss has been more pronounced in the Golden Horseshoe with a 25 percent decrease or loss of 318,135 acres of farmland between 1981 and 2011. According to Census of Agriculture figures, there was slightly less than one million acres of farmland area under production in the Golden Horseshoe in 2011.

Halton Region has experienced the highest rate of decline in farmland area in the Golden Horseshoe. While the Golden Horseshoe experienced a decrease of farmland area of 6 percent from 2006 to 2011, Halton experienced a 10 percent loss. The area of farmland decreased by slightly less than 10,000 acres, as shown on **Figure 2.9**. According to Census of Agriculture figures, there are 79,567 acres of farmland remaining. While on a percentage basis this was less than the decrease in the number of farms, this reflects a worrying trend of ongoing decline.

**Figure 2.9 – Farmland Area (Acres) in Halton Region, 1976 to 2011**



In assessing the change in farmland across the Region it is notable that Burlington had the largest percentage decline (**Figure 2.10**). Between 2006 and 2011, the area under production decreased by 24 percent. This is significant given that the farmland area is considerably smaller in Burlington than in either Halton Hills or Milton. In 2011, the agricultural land base in Burlington was approximately one third the size of the farmland area in Milton and slightly more than one quarter that of Halton Hills. Milton and Halton Hills combined account for 83 percent of farmland area in Halton Region.

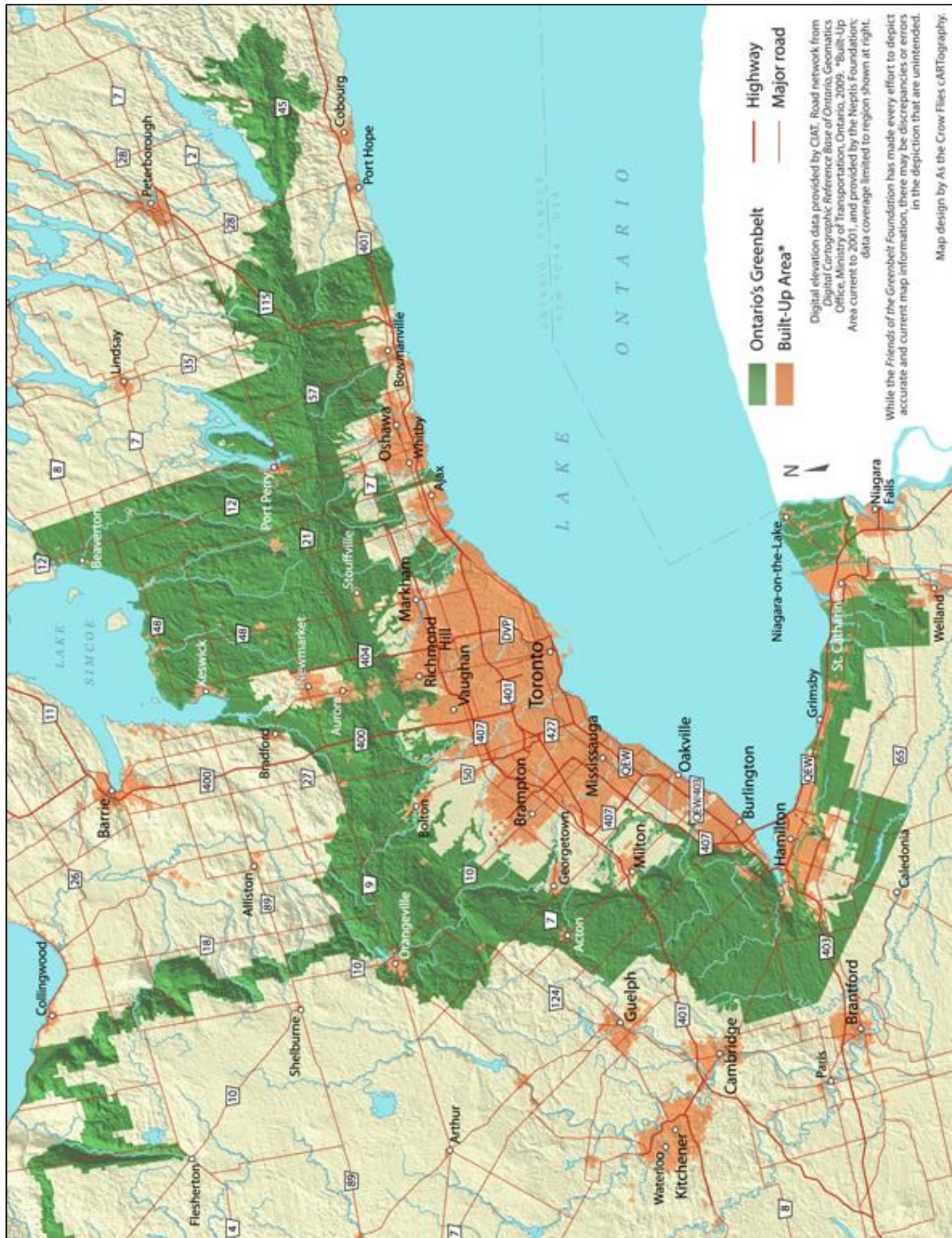
**Figure 2.10 – Farmland Area (Acres) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 1981 to 2011**

Geographic Location	Farmland Area (Acres)							Change in Farmland Area (Acres)		Percentage Change	
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011	2001 - 2006	2006 - 2011
Halton Region	129,030	118,805	115,036	109,187	98,758	88,899	79,567	-9,859	-9,332	-10%	-10%
Burlington	18,671	15,916	14,616	12,469	12,117	10,641	8,054	-1,476	-2,587	-12%	-24%
Oakville	11,028	11,574	4,145	9,559	4,455	5,759	5,475	1,304	-284	29%	-5%
Milton	52,853	44,775	38,778	37,229	33,531	31,116	27,896	-2,415	-3,220	-7%	-10%
Halton Hills	46,478	46,540	57,497	49,930	48,655	41,383	38,142	-7,272	-3,241	-15%	-8%

This finding regarding farmland area in Burlington reinforces the input received from farmers in the area who are finding it increasingly difficult to farm in the face of encroaching urban development and environmental restrictions. Farmers in Halton Hills and Milton have options to redirect or augment their operations north away from the urban swath. Along Lake Ontario, Burlington’s geography, as illustrated on **Figure 2.11** does not provide this opportunity.



Figure 2.11 – Greenbelt Map



## 2.2.2 Gross Farm Receipts

Gross farm receipts (GFR) are a measure of productivity and provide an overview of the volume and type of production that is occurring in an area. On a provincial level, GFR's have been increasing continuously over time reflecting the rising productivity of the Ontario agricultural sector. An integral part of provincial agricultural production occurs in the Golden Horseshoe area. The Golden Horseshoe represents only 8 percent of the provincial farmland however it generates 15 percent of the provincial GFRs. This highlights the importance and agricultural productivity of the Golden Horseshoe.

In Halton, as illustrated in **Figure 2.12a** and **Figure 2.12b**, total value of GFR's declined by 6 percent between 2006 and 2011. All other municipalities across the Golden Horseshoe showed increases in GFR ranging from 8 percent in Niagara to 16 percent in York. The decrease in GFR in Halton was due to declines in values for both Burlington and Halton Hills. The decline in these two municipalities is not surprising given the decrease in the amount of agricultural land under production. The large decrease in Burlington is believed to be due to the closure of one of the last commercial feedlots in Halton Region that<sup>16</sup> occurred following the 2006 Census.

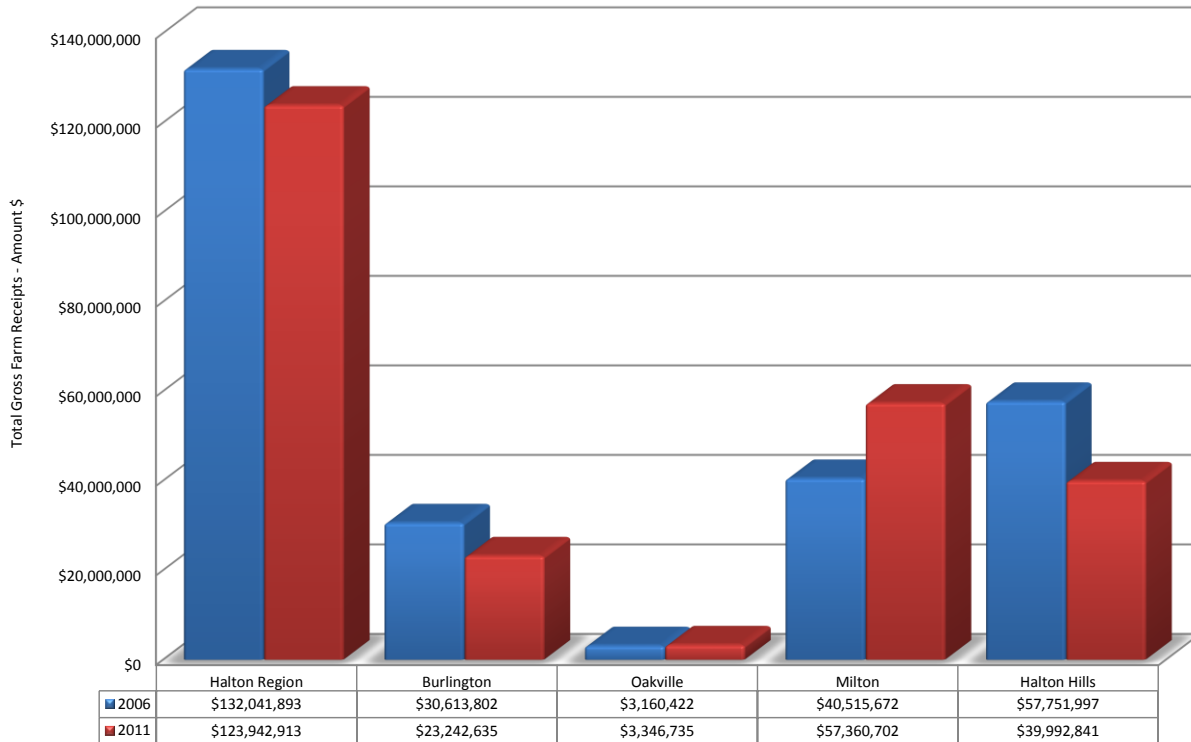
However before drawing conclusions about the agricultural profile, it should be noted that the decline may not be as significant as the statistics suggest. There are factors that could have had an impact on total Regional GFR's, one being a shift in farm operations. If an operation is based in one municipality but farms land in others, the statistics related to that operation will be reported in the municipality where the home farm is located. In Halton, as operators retire and their land is rented to other operators who may be located in other municipalities, this could result in shifts in numbers. The drop in value of GFR's can also be attributed to changes Statistics Canada made in data collection between 2006 and 2011. Data was suppressed in certain categories to address confidentiality issues which complicates matters when making direct comparisons to other areas. For all of these reasons, statistics for GFR's should be interpreted cautiously.

**Figure 2.12a – Total Gross Farm Receipts (\$) (Excluding Forest Products Sold) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, showing \$ Change and Percentage Change, 2006 and 2011**

Geographic Location	Gross Farm Receipts		Change (\$)	Percentage Change
	2006	2011		
Halton Region	\$132,041,893	\$123,942,913	<b>-\$8,098,980</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Burlington	\$30,613,802	\$23,242,635	<b>-\$7,371,167</b>	<b>-24%</b>
Oakville	\$3,160,422	\$3,346,735	\$186,313	6%
Milton	\$40,515,672	\$57,360,702	\$16,845,030	41%
Halton Hills	\$57,751,997	\$39,992,841	<b>-\$17,759,156</b>	<b>-31%</b>

<sup>16</sup> This is further explained in the section "Production Profile".

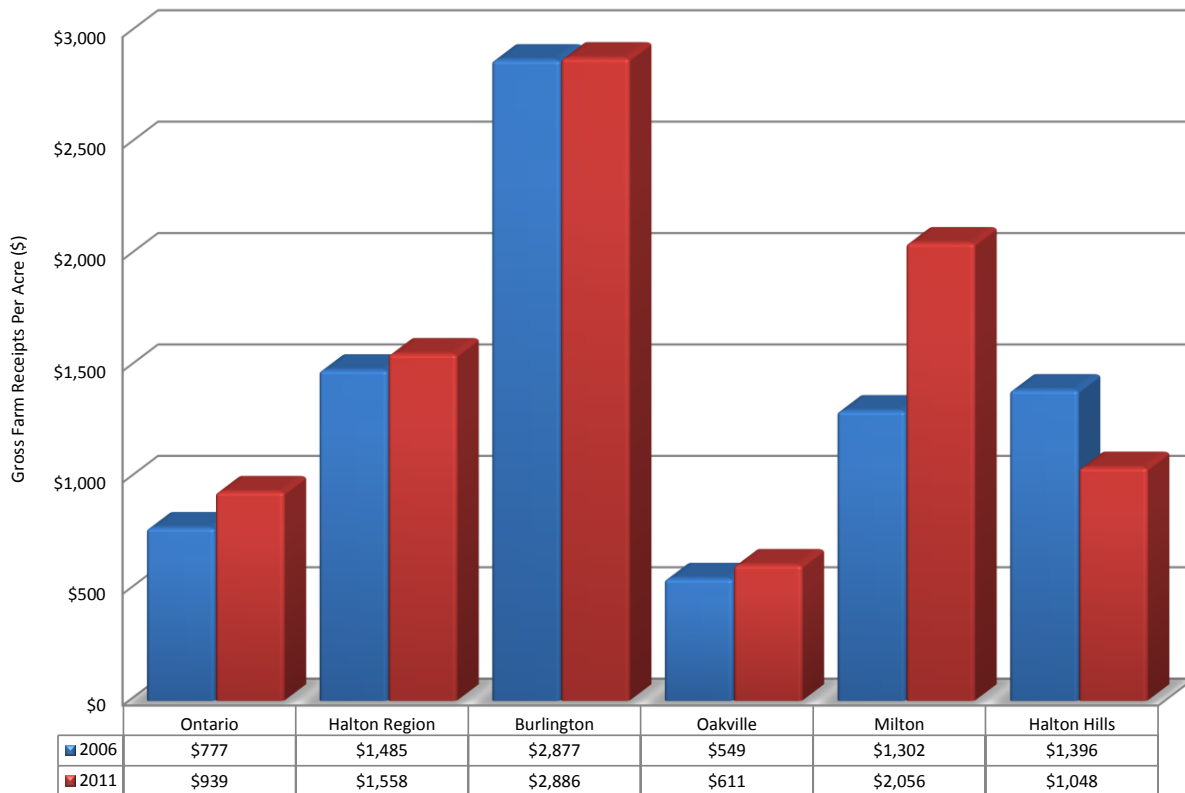
**Figure 2.12b – Total Gross Farm Receipts (\$) (Excluding Forest Products Sold) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**



GFR's per acre is a better indicator of the level of productivity in an area. Based on this measure, Halton has a very high productivity level. **Figure 2.13** shows that GFR's per acre in Ontario in 2011 were \$939. In the Golden Horseshoe, GFR's averaged \$1,756 per acre with Niagara having the highest level of \$3,256 per acre and Durham Region having the lowest level of \$920 per acre. In Halton, GFR's were \$1,558 per acre. Amongst the local municipalities, Burlington has the highest GFR's per acre, and Oakville the lowest. These values will be attributable to the type of production going on in the area, a breakdown of which is provided later in this section.



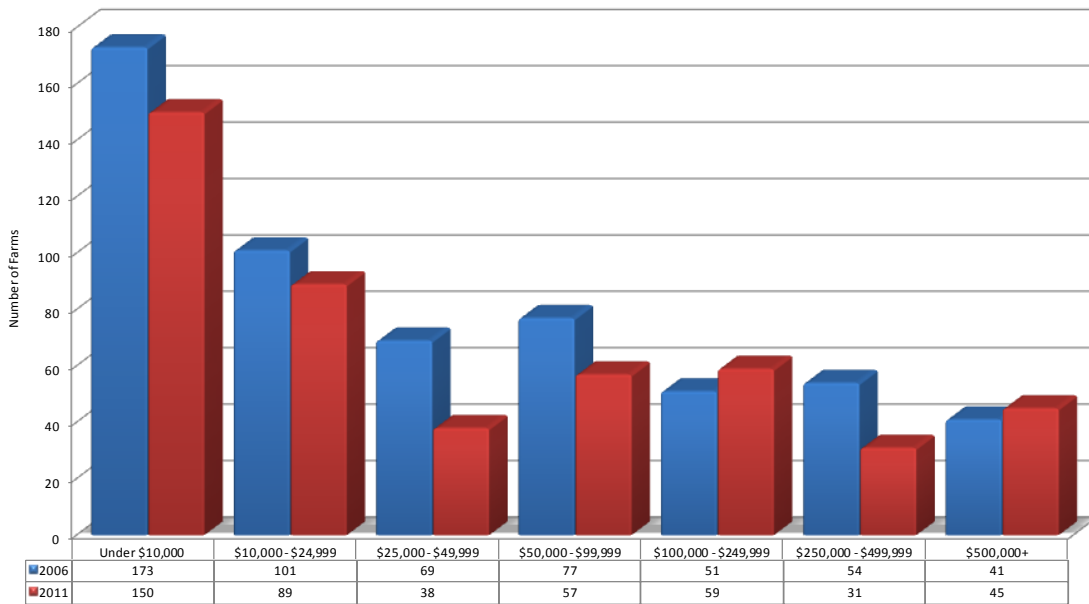
**Figure 2.13 – Total Gross Farm Receipts (Excluding Forest Products Sold) per Acre (\$) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**



A statistic that is useful in assessing the nature of agricultural operations in an area is the breakdown of operations by value of GFR's produced. These statistics for Halton are shown on **Figures 2.14** and **2.15**. To be classified as a farm for tax and other purposes, an operation must generate in excess of \$7,500 in GFR's per annum. Clearly operations generating that level of return or even up to a considerably higher level of return, are not relying on agricultural production as a main source of income. Typically these are hobby farms, lifestyle operations or operations where off farm income is a factor. To understand how many operations there are that are full time businesses, trends associated with the higher economic categories need to be considered.

In reviewing **Figure 2.14**, it is apparent that the number of operations in the lower income categories are declining while there is some growth in the highest category generating GFR in excess of \$500,000 and in the category between \$100,000 and \$249,000. Approximately 29 percent of farms in Halton Region have reported gross farm receipts of \$100,000 or more. This represents an increase of 3 percent from the previous reporting period. It is encouraging that where growth is occurring, it is taking place in operations generating significant annual GFR's.

**Figure 2.14 – Number of Farms Classified by Gross Farm Receipts (\$) in Halton Region, 2006 and 2011**



**Figure 2.15** reflects some interesting trends with respect to the breakdown of operations by GFR’s. It indicates that the growth in the highest category is largely found in Oakville, a municipality where agriculture is in serious decline and where most of the remaining agricultural land is slated for urban expansion. However as noted previously, there have been changes and anomalies in the reporting of GFR’s and shifts in primary residence for farmers, that could be responsible for these numbers. These factors need to be carefully considered when evaluating the statistics.

**Figure 2.15 – Number of Farms Classified by Gross Farm Receipts (\$) in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**

Geographic Location	Total	Under \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$249,999	\$250,000 - \$499,999	\$500,000 +
2006								
Halton Region	566	173	101	69	77	51	54	41
Burlington	79	25	16	7	10	12	4	5
Oakville	21	6	3	1	2	3	6	0
Milton	260	84	47	37	32	15	23	22
Halton Hills	206	58	35	24	33	21	21	14
2011								
Halton Region	469	150	89	38	57	59	31	45
Burlington	70	28	6	4	11	12	4	5
Oakville	21	3	6	2	1	4	2	3
Milton	209	64	45	18	23	21	13	25
Halton Hills	169	55	32	14	22	22	12	12

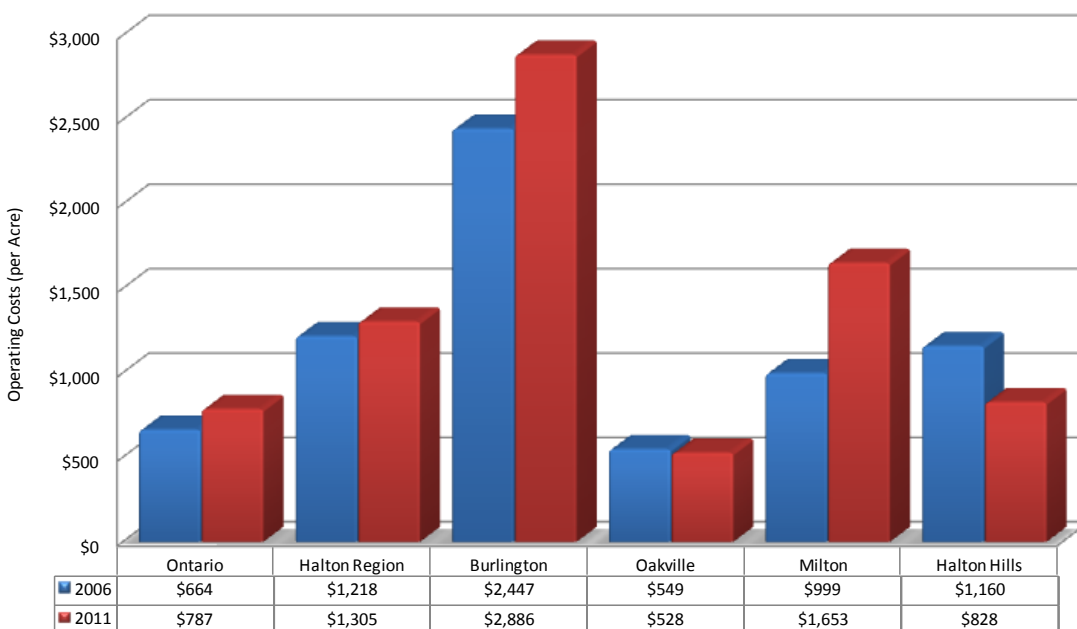
### 2.2.3 Farm Operating Expenses and Capital

In considering GFR's, it is also important to consider both trends and expenses. **Figures 2.16** and **2.17** compare operating costs per acre and per farm for the province, the Region and the local municipalities. Operating expenses include items such as property taxes, wages, interest, electricity, heating fuel, machinery fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, feed, seed, artificial insemination and veterinary fee's, machinery, containers, etc.

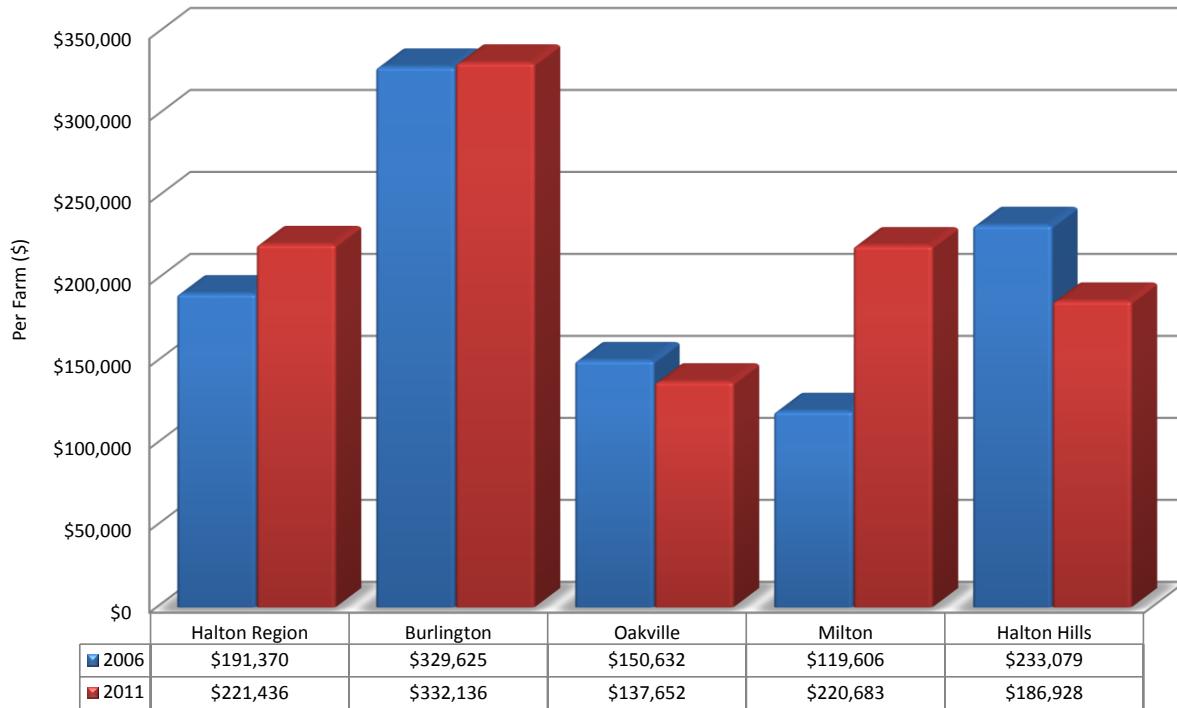
In Ontario, farm operating expenses per acre climbed from \$664/acre in 2006 to \$787/acre in 2011. This represents an increase in farm operating expenses of 19 percent. There was a similar trend seen across the Golden Horseshoe with farm operating expenses increasing 17 percent from \$1,309/acre in 2006 to \$1,527/acre in 2011. Niagara consistently has the highest farm operating expenses/acre of \$2,865 relative to other municipalities that make up part of the Golden Horseshoe.

Farm operating expenses in Halton increased from \$1,218 per acre in 2006 to \$1,305 per acre in 2011 representing an increase of 7 percent. These numbers reflect an interesting variation that will be related in part to the type of farming operation. Costs of more intensive operations (i.e. greenhouse, nursery) that are more dominant near urban centres, tend to be higher than for more land extensive crops (i.e. cash crops). However, there is also a variation between municipalities with Milton experiencing a significant increase in expenses compared to the other municipalities which were either relatively stable or experienced a decline. This increase is troubling given the general decrease in GFR's in Halton Region. Revenue is declining while costs continue to increase.

**Figure 2.16 – Farm Operating Costs (\$) per Acre in Ontario and Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**



**Figure 2.17 - Farm Operating Expenses (\$) per Farm in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**



**Figure 2.18** compares operating costs per acre to GFR's per acre. This comparison confirms that in Halton, revenue per acre is higher than the provincial average. However it should also be noted that operating costs are considerably higher per acre in Halton than in Ontario as a whole.

**Figure 2.18 – Comparison of Gross Farm Receipts (per Acre) and Operating Costs (per Acre) for Ontario and Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**

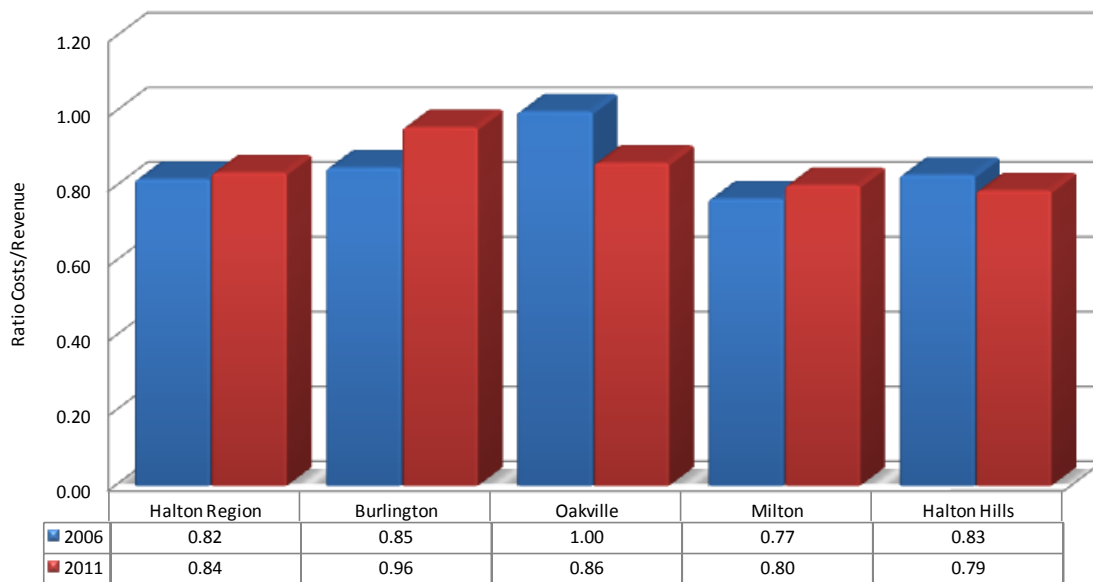
Geographic Location	2006			2011		
	Gross Farm Receipts per Acre	Operating Costs per Acre	Net Revenue	Gross Farm Receipts per Acre	Operating Costs per Acre	Net Revenue
Ontario	\$777	\$664	\$113	\$939	\$787	\$152
Halton Region	\$1,485	\$1,218	\$267	\$1,558	\$1,305	\$253
Burlington	\$2,877	\$2,447	\$430	\$2,886	\$2,886	\$0
Oakville	\$549	\$549	\$0	\$611	\$528	\$83
Milton	\$1,302	\$999	\$303	\$2,056	\$1,653	\$403
Halton Hills	\$1,396	\$1,160	\$236	\$1,048	\$828	\$220

Figures 2.19a and b, provide a summary of the ratio of costs to revenue. For Halton as a whole, this ratio is the same as for Ontario (.84).

Figures 2.19a – Ratio of Cost/Revenue in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011

Geographic Location	2006			2011		
	Receipts	Expenses	Ratio Costs/Revenues	Receipts	Expenses	Ratio Costs/Revenues
Halton Region	\$132,041,893	\$108,315,374	0.82	\$123,942,913	\$103,853,615	0.84
Burlington	\$30,613,802	\$26,040,401	0.85	\$24,242,635	\$23,249,501	0.96
Oakville	\$3,160,422	\$3,163,270	1.00	\$3,346,735	\$2,890,686	0.86
Milton	\$40,515,672	\$31,097,507	0.77	\$57,360,702	\$46,122,647	0.80
Halton Hills	\$57,751,997	\$48,014,196	0.83	\$39,992,841	\$31,590,781	0.79

Figure 2.19b – Ratio of Cost/Revenue in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011



At the local level there is a wide variation in the ratio of costs to revenue. This will be attributable in part to the type and distribution of operations. To understand what is driving these numbers, a review of the type of farms in each area is required. This review is discussed in **Section 2.2.4**.

The impact of the price of land is reflected in the farm capital statistics shown on **Figure 2.20**. Average farm capital has risen in all of the local municipalities in Halton and on a “per acre basis” is the second highest in the province after Peel. The total farm capital in Halton increased 60 percent from \$2,054,603 in 2006 to \$3,281,355 in 2011, representing the highest increase in the Golden Horseshoe.



**Figure 2.20 – Comparison of Farm Capital per Acre (\$) for Ontario and Various Municipalities and Counties, 2006 and 2011**

Geographic Location	2006			2011		
	Farm Capital (\$)	Farmland Area (Acres)	Farm Capital (\$) (per Acre)	Farm Capital (\$)	Farmland Area (Acres)	Farm Capital (\$) (per Acre)
Ontario	\$65,336,796,501	13,310,216	\$4,909	\$85,703,337,499	12,668,236	\$6,765
Peel Region	\$1,899,013,166	95,289	\$19,929	\$2,509,556,166	93,843	\$26,742
York Region	\$2,196,500,117	167,076	\$13,147	\$2,482,312,605	153,559	\$16,165
<b>Halton Region</b>	<b>\$1,162,905,055</b>	<b>88,899</b>	<b>\$13,081</b>	<b>\$1,538,955,649</b>	<b>79,567</b>	<b>\$19,342</b>
Niagara Region	\$2,411,945,808	231,728	\$10,409	\$2,885,632,318	222,911	\$12,945
Hamilton	\$1,150,076,588	133,205	\$8,634	\$1,435,189,039	130,589	\$10,990
Waterloo Region	\$1,854,827,886	226,384	\$8,193	\$2,477,941,057	221,087	\$11,208
Oxford County	\$3,343,431,050	415,974	\$8,038	\$4,476,582,451	395,950	\$11,306
Essex County	\$2,559,092,935	329,776	\$7,760	\$3,021,507,297	328,580	\$9,196
Perth County	\$3,760,488,182	498,161	\$7,549	\$5,343,326,860	506,291	\$10,554
Durham Region	\$2,276,879,803	326,702	\$6,969	\$2,642,495,110	297,012	\$8,897
Wellington County	\$3,282,276,494	485,862	\$6,756	\$4,539,047,921	499,176	\$9,093
Brant County	\$1,117,592,951	167,356	\$6,678	\$1,301,345,968	160,739	\$8,096
Middlesex County	\$3,675,270,246	617,258	\$5,954	\$5,051,203,242	609,344	\$8,290
Halldimand-Norfolk County	\$2,595,116,783	502,698	\$5,162	\$3,367,908,782	480,155	\$7,014
Simcoe County	\$3,023,654,719	533,753	\$5,665	\$4,026,293,640	510,584	\$7,886
Dufferin County	\$1,035,870,767	190,607	\$5,435	\$1,325,464,859	172,344	\$7,691
Chatham-Kent	\$2,819,302,472	553,769	\$5,091	\$4,083,820,744	546,615	\$7,471
Huron County	\$3,733,820,496	723,533	\$5,161	\$5,654,442,198	725,546	\$7,793
Elgin County	\$1,987,339,254	393,595	\$5,049	\$2,406,875,344	361,196	\$6,664
Lambton County	\$2,843,368,830	589,407	\$4,824	\$3,996,441,702	591,862	\$6,752
Ottawa	\$1,177,594,505	283,366	\$4,156	\$1,796,462,629	268,325	\$6,695

## 2.2.4 Production Profile

There are two ways of analyzing the Regional production profile; by number of operations or by GFR's. Number of farms is based on what an operation reports as the commodity which represents 50 percent or more of the production on the farm. GFR's are based on value of production for that commodity. Therefore GFR's give a much more accurate understanding of the production profile; the number of farms gives an understanding of key areas of focus.

**Figure 2.21** provides a comparison of the number of farms by commodity type in 2006 and 2011. The most obvious change between 2006 and 2011 is the decline in livestock operations, specifically cattle and hogs. This is particularly notable in Burlington where between 2006 and 2011, the number of cattle operations declined from eight to one. The decline includes the loss of one of the last remaining commercial feedlots in Halton Region and as a result, the impact on GFR's was very significant. There are several reasons that could explain this decline. Between 2001 and 2011 Canadian beef producers were experiencing the residual effects of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) which resulted in a collapse in beef prices as countries closed their doors to Canadian animals and meat products. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to see movement of livestock away from agricultural properties that are close to the urban fringe due to increased pressures of operating on the rural-urban interface. The requirements of



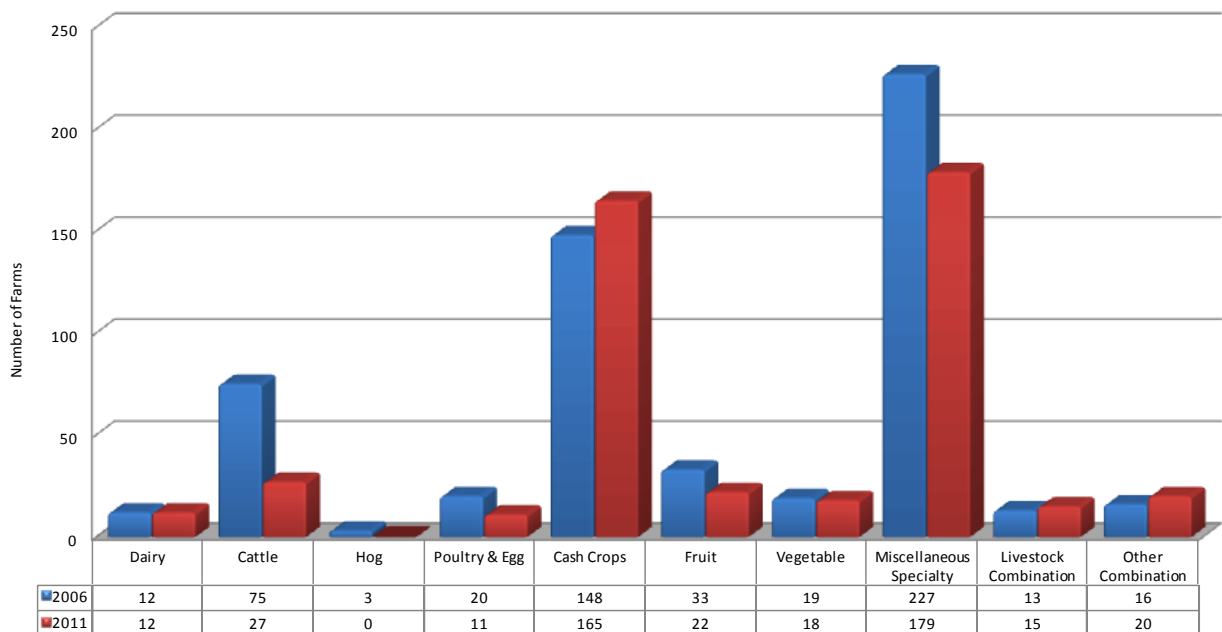
meeting minimum distance separation standards and conflicts with urban residents over off site impacts such as odour make livestock farming in proximity to non-farm development increasingly challenging.

In contrast to the decline in livestock operations, the number of cash crop operations across the Region has increased significantly. This will be due to a variety of factors. Commodity prices were strong between 2006 and 2011 so many operators expanded production by renting land. This land was available from non-farm owners who want the land to be farmed in order to qualify for the farm property tax rebate which in Halton is 20 percent of the residential mill rate.



Miscellaneous specialty operations include horse and pony, greenhouse, nursery and sod, and mushroom; all types of these farms being well represented in Halton. The largest category is horse and pony reflecting the strong equine sector that characterizes the Region. In 2011, farms classified as producing commodities grouped under the category of Miscellaneous Specialty continued to be the largest grouping of farms although the total number of these operations declined between 2006 and 2011. Within the Miscellaneous Specialty sector, the only farm type that increased in number between 2006 and 2011 was livestock combination which includes sheep and goats.

**Figure 2.21 – Number of Farm by Farm Type in Halton Region, 2006 and 2011\*\***



\*\* Cash Crops Includes – Wheat, Grains & Oilseeds and Field Crops

Figure 2.22 shows the Regional production profile by number of farms.

Figure 2.22 – Number of Farms by Farm Type in Halton Region, 2011

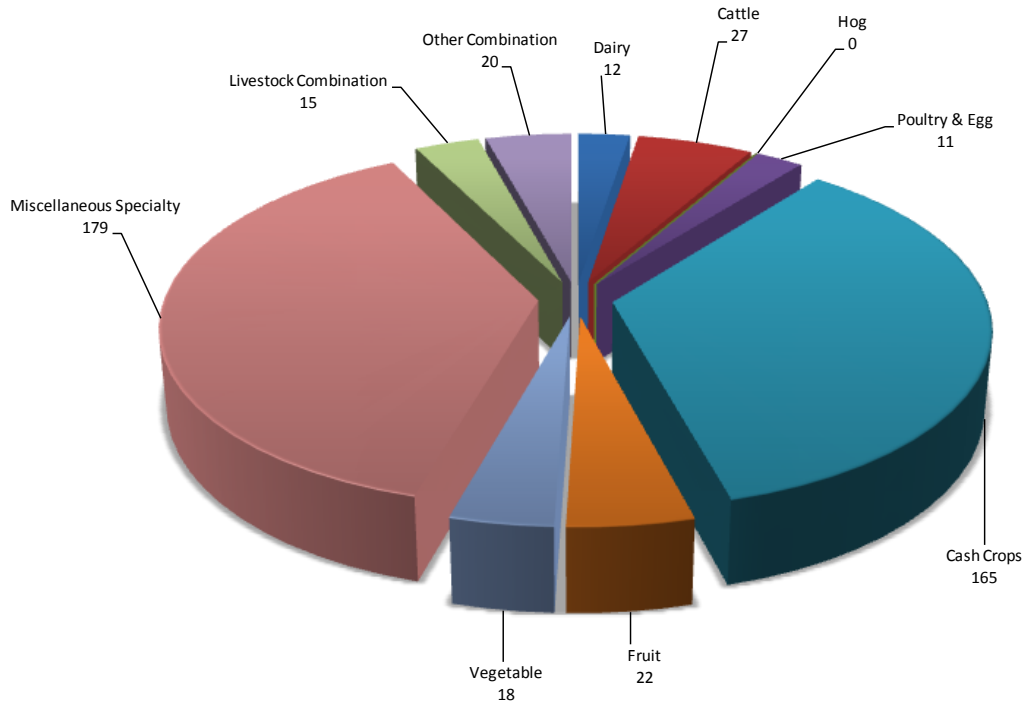


Figure 2.23 provides a breakdown of production by number of farms by local municipality. Cash crop operations are spread across the Region with larger numbers of operations in Milton and Halton Hills. Dairy is almost exclusively located in Halton Hills and miscellaneous specialty operations dominate in Milton.

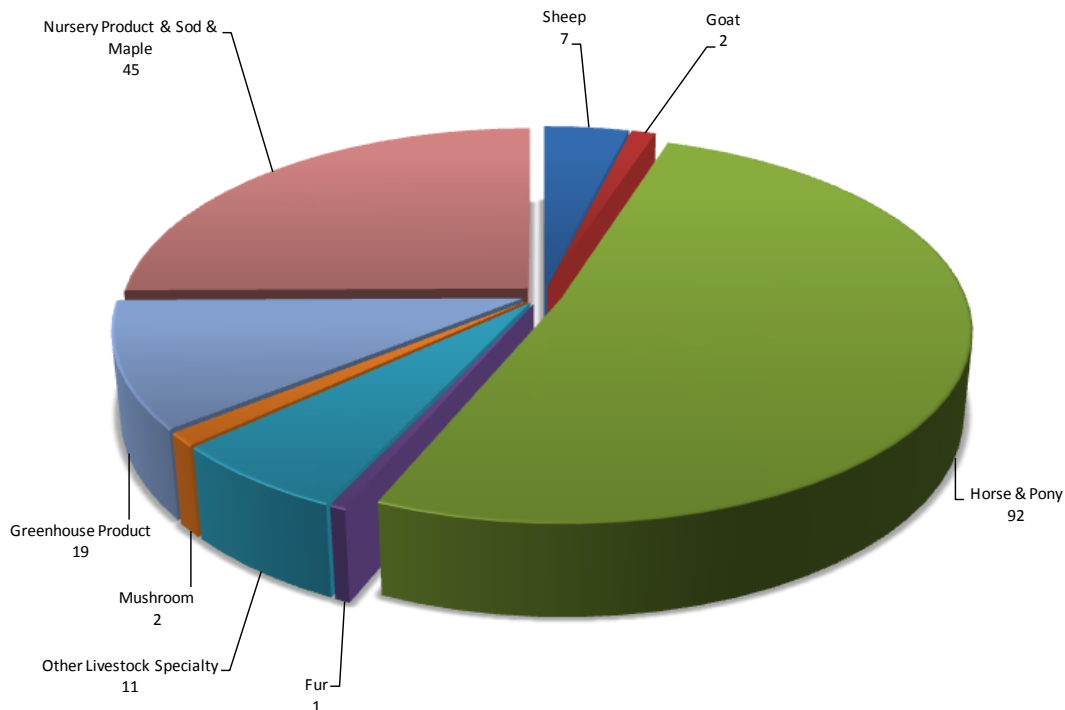
Figure 2.23 – Number of Farms by Farm Type in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011\*\*

Geographic Location	Number of Farms	Dairy	Cattle	Hog	Poultry & Egg	Cash Crops	Fruit	Vegetable	Miscellaneous Specialty	Livestock Combination	Other Combination
<b>2006</b>											
Halton Region	566	12	75	3	20	148	33	19	227	13	16
Burlington	79	0	8	0	1	27	5	3	31	1	3
Oakville	21	0	0	0	2	6	2	1	8	1	1
Milton	260	4	31	2	9	60	10	12	122	6	4
Halton Hills	206	8	36	1	8	55	16	3	66	5	8
<b>2011</b>											
Halton Region	469	12	27	0	11	165	22	18	179	15	20
Burlington	70	0	1	0	1	20	4	2	33	4	5
Oakville	21	0	1	0	0	12	1	2	5	0	0
Milton	209	2	11	0	8	60	9	10	94	6	9
Halton Hills	169	10	14	0	2	73	8	4	47	5	6

\*\* Cash Crops Includes – Wheat, Grains & Oilseeds and Field Crops

**Figure 2.24** breaks down the Miscellaneous Specialty Farm Type by number of farms for Halton Region.

**Figure 2.24 – Miscellaneous Specialty Farm Type by Number of Farms in Halton Region, 2011**



Looking at the location of operations within the Region there are several apparent patterns. Operations which are typically located on smaller properties, including mushroom, greenhouse and nursery, are well represented in Burlington and are prevalent in Milton. **Figure 2.25** provides a breakdown of Miscellaneous Specialty Farm Type by number of farms by local municipality.

Horse and pony operations are found in all of the local municipalities and are the one type of livestock operation that continues to be present in Burlington and Oakville in relatively significant numbers.

**Figure 2.25 – Miscellaneous Specialty Farm Type by Number of Farms in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2011**

Geographic Location	Number of Farms	Sheep	Goat	Horse & Pony	Fur	Livestock Specialty	Mushroom	Greenhouse Product	Nursery Product & Sod & Maple
Halton Region	179	7	2	92	1	11	2	19	45
Burlington	33	0	0	15	1	1	1	4	11
Oakville	5	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1
Milton	94	3	2	50	0	4	1	8	26
Halton Hills	47	4	0	24	0	5	0	7	7

Turning to the commodity profile based on GFR's<sup>17</sup>, the patterns are similar to those based on number of operations but the changes between 2006 and 2011 are much more apparent. Of most significance is

<sup>17</sup> Note that due to suppressions in data certain commodities (specifically poultry and egg) are significantly underrepresented in the 2011 statistics.

the fact that with the exception of cash crops, GFR's for all of the commodities decreased over the five year period. This is a trend that is of concern. Cash crops are the commodity most readily produced on rental land. It is a type of production that does not require a major investment but can provide a good return on investment over the short term. While it is positive that when prices are high, more land is brought into production for these commodities, the shift to this type of production can indicate reluctance on the part of operators to invest in the infrastructure related to other commodities perhaps due to an uncertain future.

As noted previously, the production profile for municipalities can be assessed using two parameters; number of farms and gross farm receipts (GFR's). Number of farms gave an indication of the number of farms producing a particular commodity but was typically considered of lesser importance than the GFR profile. This is because it includes operations of all sizes ranging from those that generated between \$7,500 and \$10,000 in GFR's and those generating in excess of \$1 million in GFR's. The GFR numbers were determined to more accurately reflect the production profile.

However for the 2011 Census, the codes for tracking commodities changed from Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes making comparisons with historic data challenging. This problem was compounded by the fact that the categorical breakdown under the NAICS codes is much finer than with SIC codes and issues of confidentiality became much more prevalent. In Halton where there are a number of farms in the categories where the breakdown is more detailed (i.e. poultry and egg), this suppression has resulted in statistics which no longer provide an accurate picture of the actual production profile. The sectors for which large amounts of data are suppressed become undervalued.

For example, the Ontario Chicken Industry recently commissioned a study on the Economic Contribution of the Ontario Chicken Industry. The report ranked counties in Ontario by share of chicken value to overall cash farm receipts. It reports that the 2012 market value of chicken in Halton was \$3.6 million<sup>18</sup> yet based on NAICS codes and Statistics Canada information, shows GFR's of \$2.6 million.

One particularly significant area which is vastly underrepresented in census data is the mushroom sector. **Figure 2.25** identifies that there are two mushroom operations in Halton Region however due to the limited size of the industry, GFR data has been suppressed both in 2006 and 2011. In other reports, Statistics Canada has provided data on area, production and sales of mushrooms. It reported that in 2011 mushroom production in Ontario was valued at \$155 Million.<sup>19</sup> Representatives from Mushrooms Canada suggest that growers in Halton Region likely grow about 20 to 25 percent of the total provincial mushroom production which would indicate sales of \$31 million to \$39 million. Mushroom production is likely the top commodity produced in Halton Region in terms of gross farm receipts; however when assessed with suppression factored in, it ranked 17<sup>th</sup> according to Census of Agriculture reports.

This weakness in the GFR numbers should be considered when analyzing the commodity profile presented in **Figure 2.26**. The change in reporting for the SIC code categories of "Grain and Oilseed" and

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<sup>18</sup> Economic Contribution of the Ontario Chicken Industry, Oct 2013 (stats based on distribution of quote units)

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 001-0012 – Area, production and sales of mushrooms, annual CANSIM (database)

“Field Crops” has been addressed by combining them into the Category of “Cash Crops” comparable with past censuses but other categories, “poultry and egg” in particular, will be underrepresented in 2011. Mushroom values are suppressed for confidentiality. **Figure 2.27** shows GFRs for all Farms including the breakdown of Miscellaneous Specialty by category.

**Figure 2.26 – Gross Farm Receipts (all Farms) in Halton Region Including Breakdown of Miscellaneous Specialty by Category – Showing Increase/Decrease and Percentage Change between 2006 and 2011**

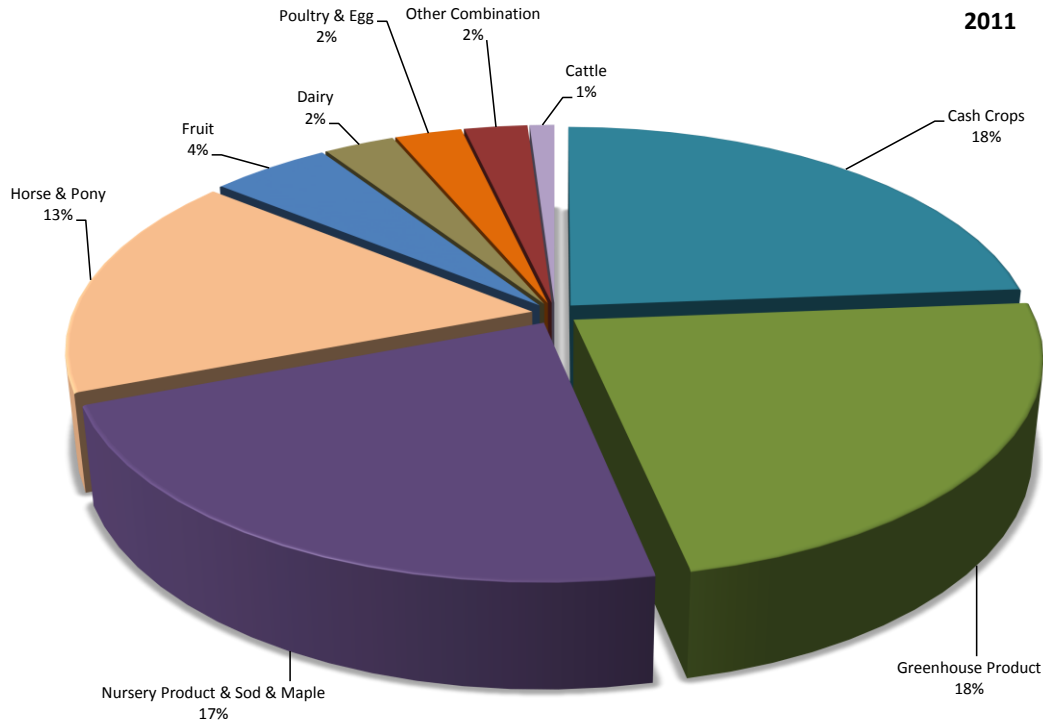
Commodity	Gross Farm Receipts (\$) 2006	Gross Farm Receipts (\$) 2011	Change (\$)	Percentage Change
Greenhouse Product	\$24,773,138	\$21,811,325	<b>-\$2,961,813</b>	<b>-12%</b>
Nursery Product & Sod & Maple	\$24,722,749	\$21,252,188	<b>-\$3,470,561</b>	<b>-14%</b>
Horse & Pony	\$19,888,415	\$15,906,280	<b>-\$3,982,135</b>	<b>-20%</b>
Cash Crops	\$15,442,283	\$22,517,963	\$7,075,680	46%
Cattle	\$9,596,613	\$957,974	<b>-\$8,638,639</b>	<b>-90%</b>
Fruit	\$7,433,540	\$4,636,825	<b>-\$2,796,715</b>	<b>-38%</b>
Poultry & Egg	\$5,898,168	\$2,596,097	<b>-\$3,302,071</b>	<b>-56%</b>
Dairy	\$2,740,315	\$2,746,721	\$6,406	0%
Vegetable	\$2,259,316	x	x	x
Hog	\$1,460,755	\$0	<b>-\$1,460,755</b>	<b>-100%</b>
Livestock Combination	\$969,045	x	x	x
Other Combination	\$557,690	\$2,458,960	\$1,901,270	341%
Sheep	\$142,766	x	x	x
Other Livestock Specialty	\$53,318	x	x	x
Fur	\$0	x	x	x
Goat	x	x	x	x
Mushroom	x	x	x	x
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$132,041,893</b>	<b>\$123,942,913</b>	<b>-\$8,098,980</b>	

\*\* Cash Crops Includes – Wheat, Grains & Oilseeds and Field Crops

Overall the profile of production in Halton is consistent with the characteristics of agricultural areas in close proximity to expanding urban areas. Typically these areas experience an ongoing shift away from production that is incompatible with urban development (i.e. livestock) or that requires large capital investments and time for a return on that investment (i.e. dairy), to commodities that benefit from proximity to an urban market and urban infrastructure (i.e. greenhouse, nursery) or to commodities that can be produced with less investment (i.e. cash crops).



**Figure 2.27 – Gross Farm Receipts (all Farms) Including Breakdown of Miscellaneous Specialty by Category, 2011\*\***



\*\* Cash Crops Includes – Wheat, Grains & Oilseeds and Field Crops

### 2.2.5 Land Tenure

The incidence of rental farmland in Halton continued to rise between 2006 and 2011. In 2006, the amount of rental land being farmed was 51 percent of the total; in 2011 it rose to 58 percent. This is the highest rental rate for farmland in the Golden Horseshoe. For Ontario in 2011, as shown on **Figure 2.28**, the rental rate is 29 percent.

**Figure 2.28 – Farmland Area (Acres) Owned and Rented/Leased/Crop Shared in the Golden Horseshoe, 2011**

Geographic Location	Total Area (Acres)	Total Area Owned (Acres)	Percentage of Total Area Owned	Total Area Rented/Leased or Crop Shared From All Sources	Percentage of Total Area Rented, Leased, or Crop Shared
2011					
Ontario	12,668,236	8,952,054	71%	4,060,926	29%
Halton Region	7,956	33,775	42%	44,662	58%
Peel Region	93,843	42,811	46%	48,375	54%
York Region	153,559	73,151	48%	79,911	52%
Durham Region	297,012	180,461	61%	116,343	39%
Hamilton	130,589	69,492	53%	65,215	47%
Niagara Region	222,911	139,365	63%	88,787	37%
Golden Horseshoe	977,481	539,055	55%	443,293	45%

**Figure 2.29** shows that the highest rental rate is in Oakville, the lowest is in Burlington. This could be explained by the fact that most of the remaining rural area in Burlington is in the Greenbelt and so the future of that farmland is more stable. In Oakville, the rates undoubtedly reflect the fact that all of the land in the municipality is designated for urban development.

**Figure 2.29 – Farmland Area (Acres) Owned and Rented/Leased/Crop Shared in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**

Geographic Location	Total Area (Acres)	Total Area Owned (Acres)	Percentage of Total Area Owned	Total Area Rented/Leased/ Crop Shared From All Sources	Percentage of Total Area Rented, Leased, or Crop Shared
2006					
Halton Region	88,899	45,598	48%	45,522	52%
Burlington	10,641	x	65%	3,777	35%
Oakville	5,759	x	26%	4,289	74%
Milton	31,116	18,022	54%	13,568	44%
Halton Hills	41,383	19,210	43%	23,277	56%
2011					
Halton Region	79,567	33,775	42%	44,662	56%
Burlington	8,054	4,206	52%	3,666	46%
Oakville	5,475	1,038	19%	4,011	73%
Milton	27,896	13,477	48%	14,205	51%
Halton Hills	38,142	15,054	39%	22,665	59%

One of the aspects of land tenure that can have a negative impact on the integrity of an agricultural area is the presence of non-farm residential lots. In the past, creation of residential lots was permitted for a number of reasons including provision of a residential retirement lot for farm operators and severance of a farm dwelling rendered surplus due to a farm amalgamation. These practices had the unfortunate effect of creating non-farm residential lots in the midst of active farm operations. As ownership of the lots changed and non-farm owners took possession, conflicts tended to arise between these new residents and existing farmers. In response, the Region prohibited the creation of these lots in 1996 when the Regional Official Plan was approved. This has helped preserve the integrity of the agricultural areas and reduced conflicts.

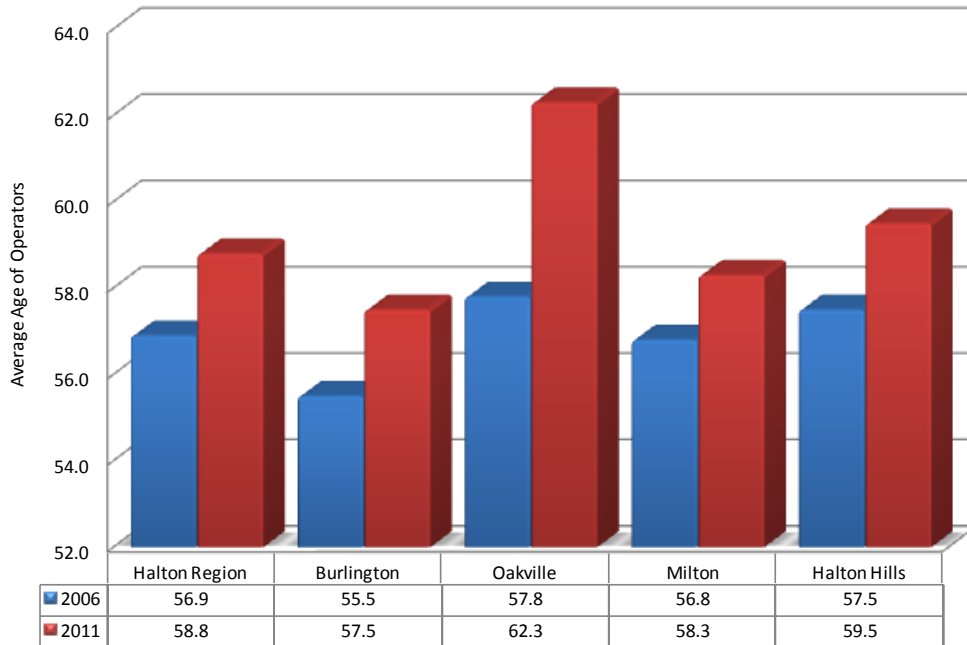
Provincially, the practice of permitting retirement lots has declined and was prohibited in the 2005 PPS. Severance of surplus dwellings is the only type of non-farm residential development that continues to be permitted by the Province under the 2014 PPS, but it is only at the discretion of local municipalities and is increasingly prohibited.

### 2.2.6 Farm Operators

The average age of operators continues to be higher in Halton (58.8 years) than the provincial average (54.5 years). Average age of operators is also higher than in the other regions in the Golden Horseshoe. Within Halton, as shown on **Figure 2.30**, farmers in Oakville have the highest average age; farmers in Burlington the lowest.



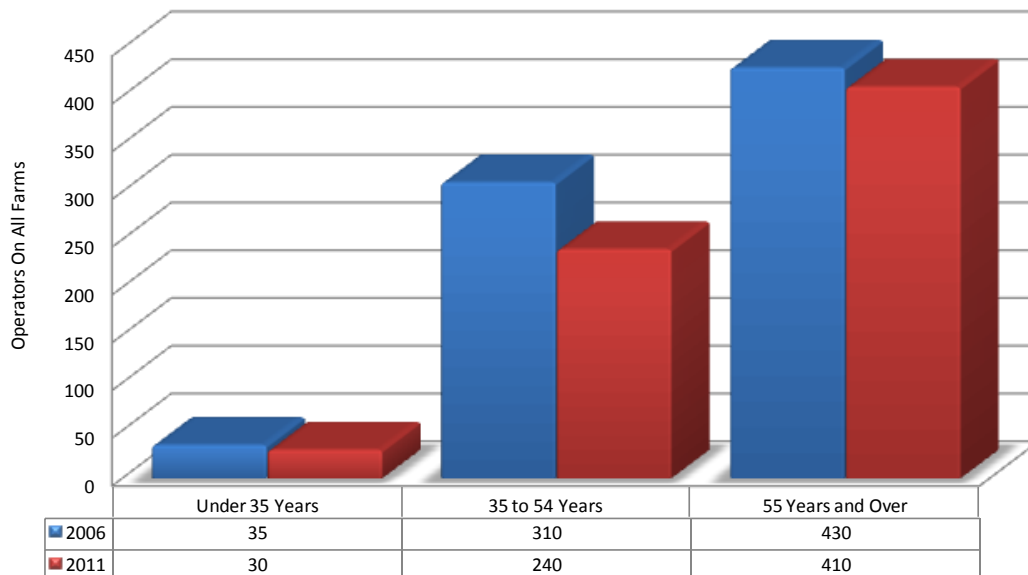
**Figure 2.30 – Average Age of Farm Operators in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**



Average age is not necessarily the best indicator for assessing trends and issues associated with agriculture. Not only is the age profile rising generally in rural Ontario but on the agricultural census up to three operators can be reported per farm. Often you will get a father/son or even a grandfather/father/son combination. Ownership of the operation typically stays with the older partner even when younger operators are running the farm. Looking at the age profile is therefore a better indicator.

Looking at the age profile in **Figure 2.31**, it is apparent that there are a significant number of operators under 54 years of age and some in the under 35 years category.

**Figure 2.31 – Operators on All Farms by Age Group in Halton Region, 2006 and 2011**



Proportionately, the number of female operators was somewhat more stable between 2006 and 2011 than the number of male operators, as shown on **Figure 2.32**.

**Figure 2.32 – Characteristics of Farm Operator in Halton Region by Local Municipality, 2006 and 2011**

Geographic Location	Total Number of Operators	Gender		Age			Average Age of Operators
		Male	Female	Under 35 Years	35 to 54 Years	55 Years and Over	
2006							
Halton Region	785	545	240	35	310	430	56.9
Burlington	110	75	30	5	50	50	55.5
Oakville	35	20	10	0	15	20	57.8
Milton	370	250	125	20	145	205	56.8
Halton Hills	270	195	80	10	100	160	57.5
2011							
Halton Region	675	460	220	30	240	410	58.8
Burlington	100	75	35	0	45	50	57.5
Oakville	35	25	10	5	10	20	62.3
Milton	310	205	100	20	110	185	58.3
Halton Hills	235	155	75	5	75	150	59.5

## 2.3 Summary

Trends in Halton are consistent with the trends generally experienced in regions where urban growth is prevalent. The number of operations continues to drop and the rental rates continue to rise. Although average farm size is increasing, there is a concurrent increase in the number of smaller operations and growth in the types of farms that can prosper on smaller properties in proximity to urban areas, greenhouse, nursery and in the case of Halton, mushroom. Equine farming operations are also often found in close proximity to urban areas, continue to have a significant presence in Halton.

However, overall the agricultural base in Halton is shrinking. Total acreage under production is down 10 percent from 2006. There is a noticeable shift of livestock operations away from rapidly urbanizing municipalities to areas with a larger rural land base. This is a trend seen across the Greenbelt and Golden Horseshoe.

There is also a worrying decline in the value of Regional GFR's coupled with an increase in operating costs. Halton is the only Region in the Golden Horseshoe where GFR's decreased between 2006 and 2011. Given the change in Statistics Canada reporting, it is difficult to accurately assess the validity and therefore the implications of the decrease.

Operating costs also continue to rise. It is important to note that property assessments are conducted every four years in Ontario by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) with the last update taking place in 2012. Property taxes for 2013 to 2016 are based on these assessment values. In 2012, farm assessment values significantly outpaced residential levels in the province with Halton Region experiencing some of the highest increases in assessment rates/acre along with Peel Region. For example, vacant farmland assessment rates increased by 93.8 percent. While farm land is taxed at a lower mill rate, it does represent a significant increase in operating costs that will be phased in over the next four years for farmers in Halton Region.

The trends that are occurring are not new. They have long been apparent in rural areas in proximity to urban areas. The following quote, taken from a book written in 1984, sums up the problems that have persistently faced the farming sector in attempting to remain viable in proximity to urban development.

“Farmers in the urban fringe often succumb to what is called the “impermanence syndrome,” a decreasing concern for the best production and conservation methods as the inevitable sale and conversion of the land approaches (Conklin and Dymysza 1972). This is accelerated when leapfrogging development surrounds individual farms or farm neighborhoods and large amounts of farmland are acquired by investors.

A Connecticut survey found, for example, that about half the dairy operations in the state were operating on rented land available on a year-to-year basis (Josephy 1976). The dairymen involved had no incentive to take care of the land or to spend money modernizing their operations.

Only when farmers are secure for a long period of time are they free to make long-term investments. These include barns, fences, and other capital improvements; soil-saving structures like terraces; and long-term investments like vineyards, orchards, and greenhouses. Young people often hesitate to start farming in these areas because they anticipate rising taxes, increased regulations, and other pressures associated with urbanization and assume they will eventually be forced to sell out. Farmers near retirement age tend to be the most likely to sell in urban fringe areas (Brown and Roberts 1978). Middle-aged farmers, who feel unable to start up a new farm and are not ready for retirement, tend to continue farming the longest as urban pressures mount.

Lack of permanence also threatens the viability of agriculture as an economic venture. A minimum amount of productive land is needed to provide the economic base for cooperatives, implement dealers, feed and fertilizer suppliers, and other small enterprises that serve farmers. A study prepared for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture found that the minimum needed to support dairying was at least 90,000 acres (36,450 ha) of cropland and pasture and 26,000 cows within a radius of 30-50 miles (48.27-80.45 km) (Rutgers University 1973). These requirements ranged down to 10,000 acres (4050 ha) in a 10-mile (16.09 km) radius for vegetable and potato production, which would appear to make enterprises of the kind much more appropriate for urban fringe areas.”

Halton contains outstanding soils and a benevolent growing environment. Farmers interviewed as part of this study consistently noted that productivity in the south part of “Halton Region” has always been higher than on the land they are currently farming in the north. In developing the RAS, attention must be paid to this statistical profile so innovative solutions can be found to sustain a viable and permanent agricultural sector.

Historically the Region has supported strong, vibrant, rural communities linked to prosperous farming operations. However, as urbanization spreads and the legislative framework is adjusted to address

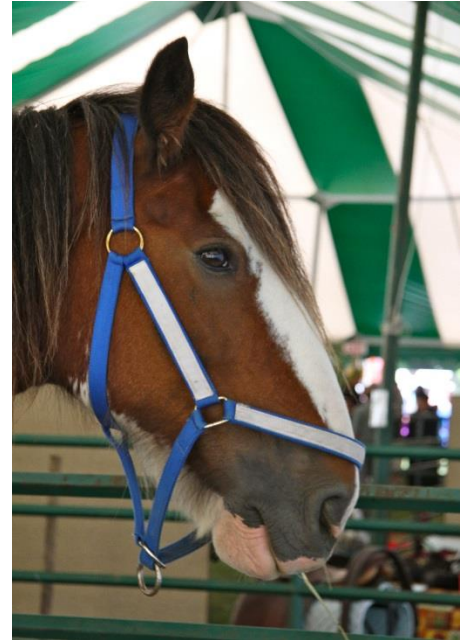
change, the rural sector increasingly shows signs of stress. The number of farms continues to drop and the area under production is declining. Conflicts between urban, rural and agricultural land uses are growing, rural and agricultural land values are increasing, non-agricultural land uses are creeping into what have been traditionally agricultural areas and the agricultural and rural service infrastructure is disappearing. Increasingly the agricultural community is being challenged to adapt to a rapidly changing community. Despite the fact that Regional policies have been in place since 1996 to prohibit the creation of non-farm lots in agricultural areas, as land values increase, pressure to allow this continues.

Despite all of these issues, there continues to be a significant agricultural sector in Halton which is an essential element of the Regional rural economy. Consistently in consultations with Regional residents, there is strong support for a strong and viable agricultural sector. As issues of sustainability, local food supply and climate change become more pressing, the importance of maintaining a strong viable and adaptable agricultural sector grows. To achieve this, the Region needs to continue to monitor the trends, characteristics of and overall pulse of the agricultural and rural sectors, the stresses they are encountering, and the steps other jurisdictions have taken to counteract similar stresses. “Made in Halton solutions” to support farmers and rural residents must be developed to address the unique near-urban environment that exists in Halton and to address the high costs of farming in this area.

### **Conclusions based on the 2011 agricultural profile:**

- Prime agricultural land is a finite resource that needs to be protected;
- 6.4 percent of Ontario’s land base is prime agricultural land (Class 1, 2, or 3); the majority of Halton Region’s land base is classified as prime;
- A study done for the Ontario Farmland Trust in 2012, concluded that given population growth forecasts, even if the current area of farmland does not change, the province will cease to be self-sufficient in food production by 2036;
- Change in the reporting structure with the Census of Agriculture makes it difficult to provide reliable trend analysis. This is unfortunate since it is one of the few tools available to understanding what is happening in the agricultural sector;
- Average farm size continues to increase in Halton Region and currently sits at 170 acres;
- Number of farms continues to decrease with Halton Region experiencing one of the highest rates of decline in the Golden Horseshoe;
- Gross farm receipts have decreased by 6 percent in Halton Region in 2011 as compared to 2006. It is believed that this is in part due to the closure of one of the last commercial feedlots located in Burlington and to changes Statistics Canada has made in data collection resulting in data suppression to address confidentiality issues;
- Gross farm receipts/acre have increased;
- Number of operations in the lower income categories is decreasing however there has been growth in the highest income category of \$500,000 and more;
- Farm operating costs per acre are almost double the provincial average; property taxes is one of a number of factors contributing to the discrepancy;

- Farm capital/acre in Halton Region is one of the highest in the province (\$19,343/acre) making it difficult for those wanting to enter the sector;
- There is a decline in the number of livestock operations (cattle and hog) that in addition to market factors could be due to challenges with nutrient management standards, minimum distance separation standards and conflict with non-farm neighbours;
- There is an increase in the number of cash crop operations;
- Miscellaneous specialty which consists of horse and pony, greenhouse, nursery and sod, and mushroom are well represented in Halton Region with horse and pony being a leading category;
  - In terms of 2011 gross farm receipts (with certain qualifiers described in this chapter), the following are listed in order of value:
    - Mushroom,
    - Cash crops,
    - Greenhouse product,
    - Nursery product, sod, maple,
    - Horse and pony,
    - Fruit;
- Land tenure has shifted to a higher amount of farm land being leased (58 percent) compared to owned (42 percent);
- Average age of farm operators is higher in Halton Region (58.8 years) than the provincial average (54.5 years).



The Census of Agriculture provides one of the only means of obtaining reliable data with respect to what is occurring in the agricultural sector. Political pressure needs to be applied from a federal level to ensure that changes that could further compromise the quality of information from the Census of Agriculture do not occur.



## Chapter 3

# Halton's Countryside: The Rural Area







### 3. Halton's Countryside: The Rural Area

This section provides the background describing the rural area, hamlets and settlements and the links to the food system as a whole thereby establishing the context for the strategy. This overview is based on information available through the Regional databases, research, and Statistics Canada information. It is augmented by input from Regional staff and targeted investigations.



#### 3.1 Rural Profile

A healthy rural community or sector includes a blend of agricultural activities supportive and vital to the prosperity of the primary agricultural sector along with non-agricultural economic activities. The approaches available to obtain proper insight into the rural area and the interconnectedness that may exist for the purpose of this background report were limited. Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) offers business information that can be brought down to a Census tract level, however, this information does not allow differentiation between businesses in the urban area and those in the rural areas. All it does is offer some insight into the occupations and fields that are predominant in Halton Region as well as each of the local municipalities.

Fortunately, in addition to the information available through CBP, each year Halton Region conducts an annual comprehensive employment survey which identifies the type of employment and number of employee's in both the urban and rural areas. Attempts are made to administer the employment survey to all business establishments. This information helps track Halton Region's economic health, aids in policy and decision making and assists in identifying economic patterns and trends geographically.

Under this approach, visits are made to any establishment that appeared to be carrying out business activities, and are identified with some type of signage. Survey questions are used to gain a glimpse into the various types of business activity, the scale and employment levels. The Halton Regional Employment Survey offers one of the few ways of effectively being able to identify what exists in the rural area. However, there are some limitations particularly with the identification of home based businesses. Readily available, comprehensive and/or up to date directories of businesses in the hamlets and rural areas are not available to help fill this gap.

The Chamber of Commerce for Burlington and Halton Hills were contacted in efforts to find ways to potentially address gaps in data. The Chamber of Commerce can only report on businesses that are members. Only by narrowing down postal codes to a six digit level in desired areas, can a list of business members be derived. Even when this is done, most business members are in the urban area.

Milton Chamber of Commerce was able to run an individual query using hamlet postal codes and these were cross referenced against businesses captured in the Regional Employment Survey. There were an additional 40 businesses identified that are suspected of being home based. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether these are within or outside of the rural area as many do not supply a physical address. The types of businesses that were identified included landscape contractors, health/wellness related business, computer services, electrical/roofing/mechanical/construction/excavation contractors, chimney/furnace services, sawmilling and furniture builders, computer consultants and riding stables. There is a deficiency in data about the quantity and types of home based businesses that make it difficult to provide a more complete picture of employment in Halton Region.

To address this deficiency, in addition to the Regional Employment Survey and the data from the Chamber of Commerce, additional data was collected using a framework developed by the consulting team. For each hamlet, a listing of the main employers (including local and destination businesses), an indication of whether the employment is full or part time, whether the business is agricultural-related, and whether it is a home based business was prepared.

This profile provided a snapshot in time identifying the types of businesses that exist in the rural and hamlet areas. The profile also provided an overview of availability of local services (specifically water), availability of vacant lots, evidence of a local meeting space, signage and a discussion of community ambience.

Finally, the analysis of the rural sector included an inventory and analysis of a full range of rural activities including farm and support businesses, on-farm businesses secondary and accessory, non-agricultural businesses in hamlets and rural area, cottage industries and home occupations. It also included Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) land parcel data as well as Regional data to help gain a full understanding of what exists in each of the hamlets.

Together all of these sources provided the basis of the profile offered in this section.

### **3.2 Profile of Hamlets and Rural Clusters**

Hamlets and rural clusters have very distinctive roles. The Regional Official Plan states that “the objectives of hamlets and rural clusters are: *“to provide limited opportunities for rural, non-farm residences in identifiable communities and to accommodate rural non-farm uses”*.<sup>1</sup>

It also states that *“hamlets are compact rural communities designated to accommodate future residential growth in the rural area and small scale industrial, commercial and institutional uses serving the farming and rural communities. Hamlets cannot be expanded and only minor rounding out of the boundary may be considered.”*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Regional Official Plan Part III-Land Stewardship Policies, Land Use Designations, Hamlets and Rural Clusters.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The Regional Official Plan defines rural clusters as “existing small settlement areas with a historic identity, where limited residential growth and some small scale commercial and institutional uses serving the local community may be permitted.”<sup>3</sup>

Hamlets and rural clusters are important to an agricultural plan because they:

- act as a vital supply centre to a surrounding population base that is largely agricultural;
- act as community centres and focal point for rural-based populations;
- help convey the “look and feel” of an agricultural area and therefore are important for agri-tourism; and
- generally contribute to the quality of life of citizens in the rural areas.

A summary of the businesses located in the hamlets and rural clusters by NAICS codes is included in **Appendix 1**.

### **3.2.1 The Hamlets**

Following is a brief profile of each of the main hamlets in Halton Region including Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo and Norval and the rural clusters of Ballinafad, Bannockburn, Crewson’s Corners, Henderson’s Corners, Limehouse, Silvercreek and Terra Cotta. Each hamlet profile will provide a general outline of the number and types of businesses and estimated total employment numbers. As well, the approximate numbers of destination businesses, which are those that offer retail or service activities that attract visitors from beyond the local area or are tourist attractions, are provided. Home based businesses, agriculture support businesses and agri-food businesses are also identified in terms of total numbers.

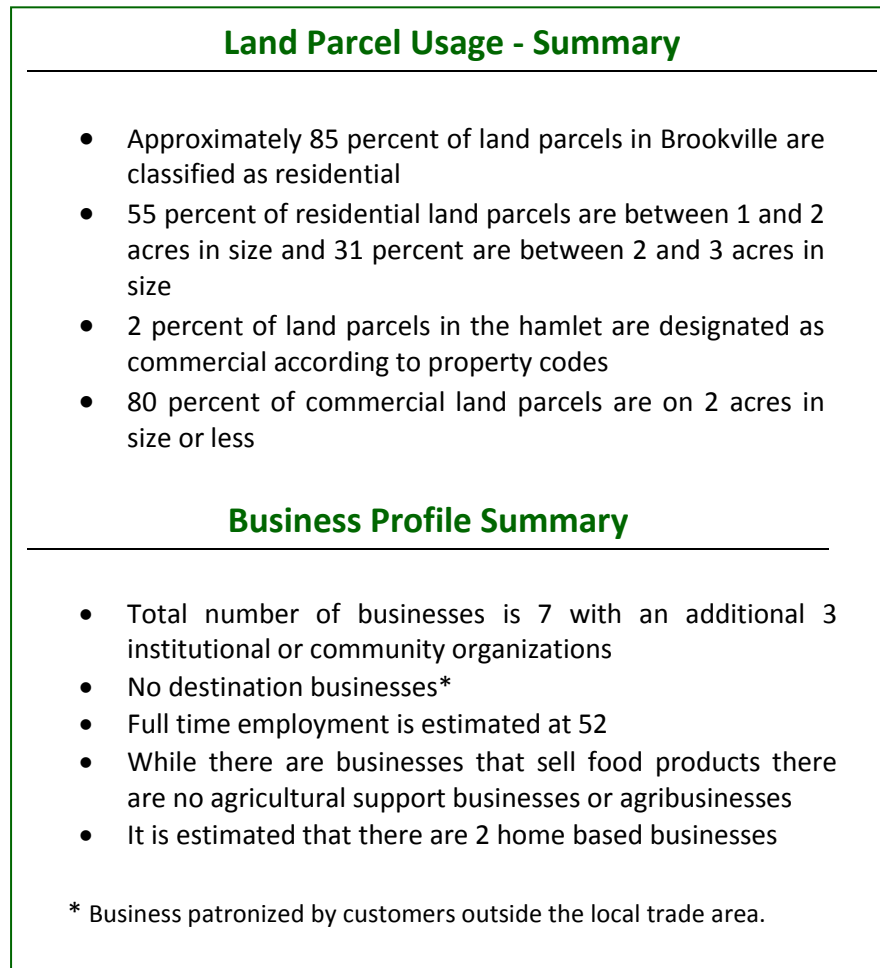
#### **Brookville**

Brookville is a small hamlet in Milton located North of Hwy 401 on the Guelph Line. Attractive stone signage is visible upon entry and exit from the hamlet. Brookville has no historic core but rather a cluster of businesses flanking both sides of Guelph Line. The hamlet has a park with an entrance that is visible from Guelph Line along with a community centre located across the road that serves as a central meeting place. Larger estate homes are located in the periphery of the hamlet. There does not appear to be any residential or commercial vacant lots. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems.

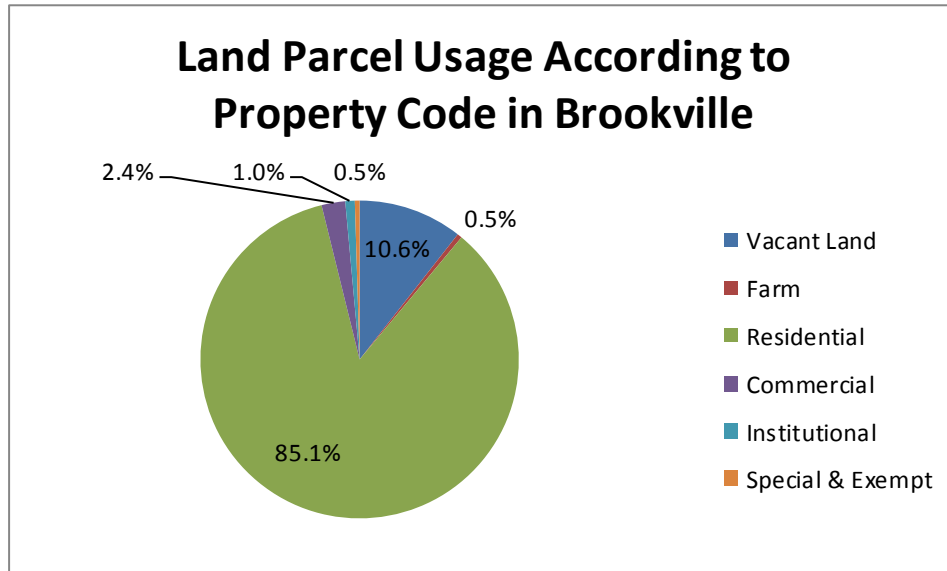
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<sup>3</sup> The Regional Official Plan Part III-Land Stewardship Policies, Land Use Designations, Hamlets and Rural Clusters.

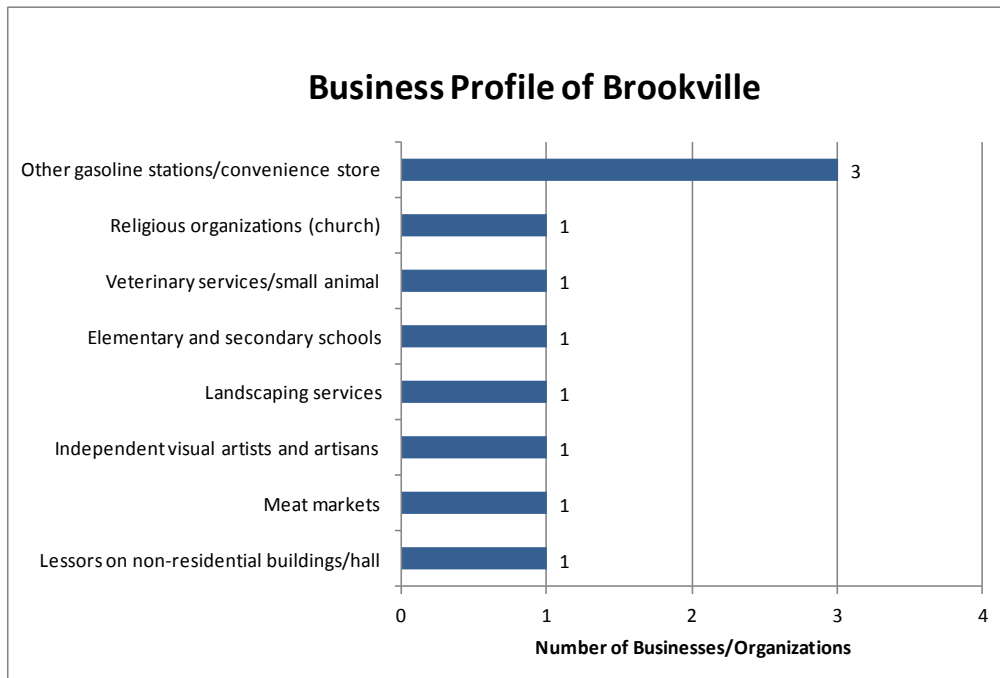
**Figure 3.1 – Brookville Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.2 - Land Parcel Usage - Brookville**



**Figure 3.3 - Business Profile - Brookville**



## Campbellville

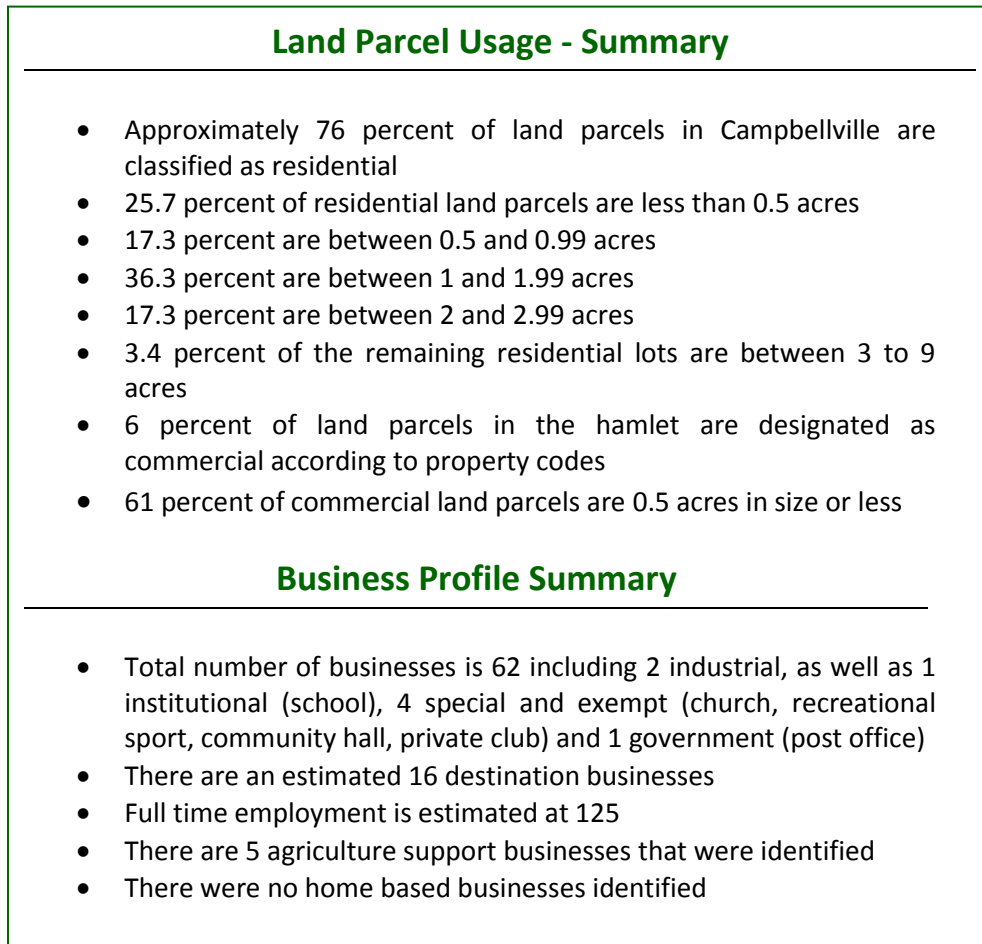
Campbellville is a hamlet located immediately south of the 401 just off Guelph Line in Milton. Currently, there is signage visible upon entry, on one side of the road, into the hamlet. As part of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in 2014, plans were developed for a small park at the north end of the village. Three local businesses have designed and produced a large metal sculpture depicting a mare and foal, representative of the historical ties and strong influence of horses in the area that are located upon entry at the north end of Campbellville enhancing the profile of the community.

The core has many original renovated buildings while the peripheral area is populated with a number of estate homes. While many travel through en route to other areas, the hamlet does have a fair degree of walkability. More recently, there appears to be an increase in the number of retail businesses within the hamlet. A number of consulting type businesses exist in the large commercial centre located on Crawford Crescent.

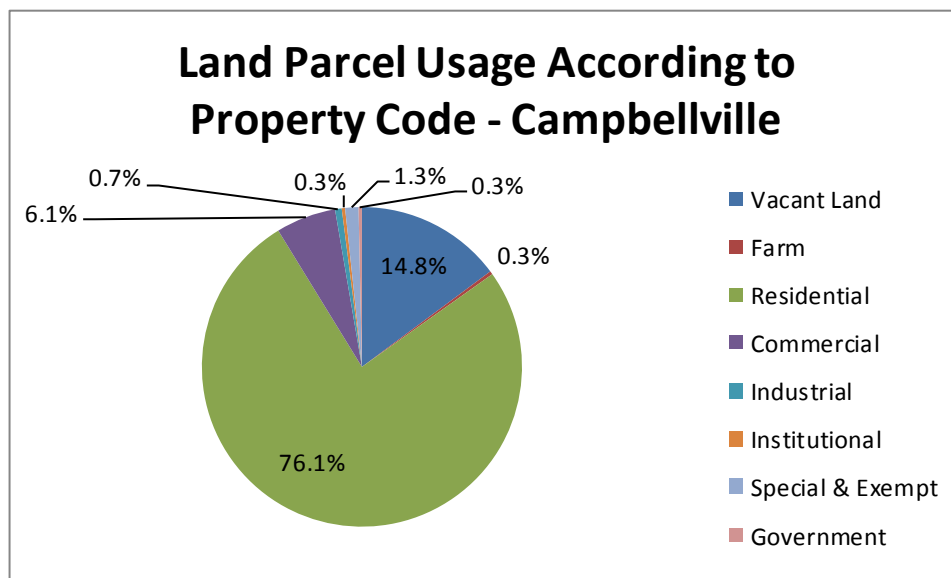
The smallest conservation area in Ontario also happens to be located in Campbellville. This area has been beautified with a gazebo, park benches and landscaping. The hamlet also has a very active citizens group called DCCA (Destination Campbellville Community Association), also referred to as the Campbellville Community Association, to promote the hamlet as well as several venues where the community can meet. The hamlet has a strong sense of community demonstrated by the fact that they host an annual Santa Claus parade and come together annually to celebrate Campbellville at a street festival. At the time of survey, there were 9 residential and 3 commercial vacant lots. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems, however, there is a residential cluster that is partially serviced with water. The Nassagaweya Tennis Club, located immediately outside of the hamlet, can serve as a meeting place.



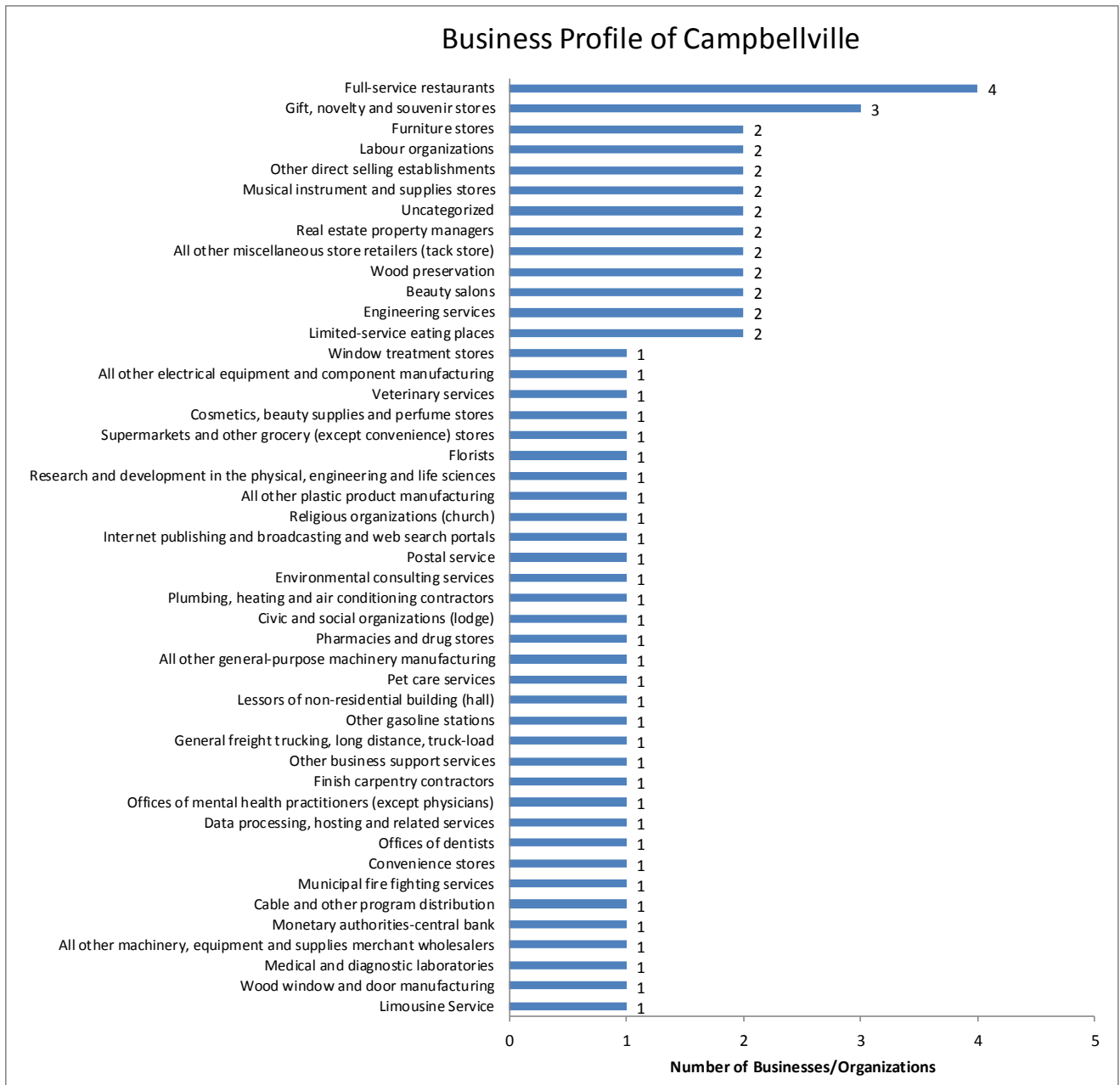
**Figure 3.4 – Campbellville Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.5 – Land Parcel Usage - Campbellville**



**Figure 3.6 – Business Profile – Campbellville**

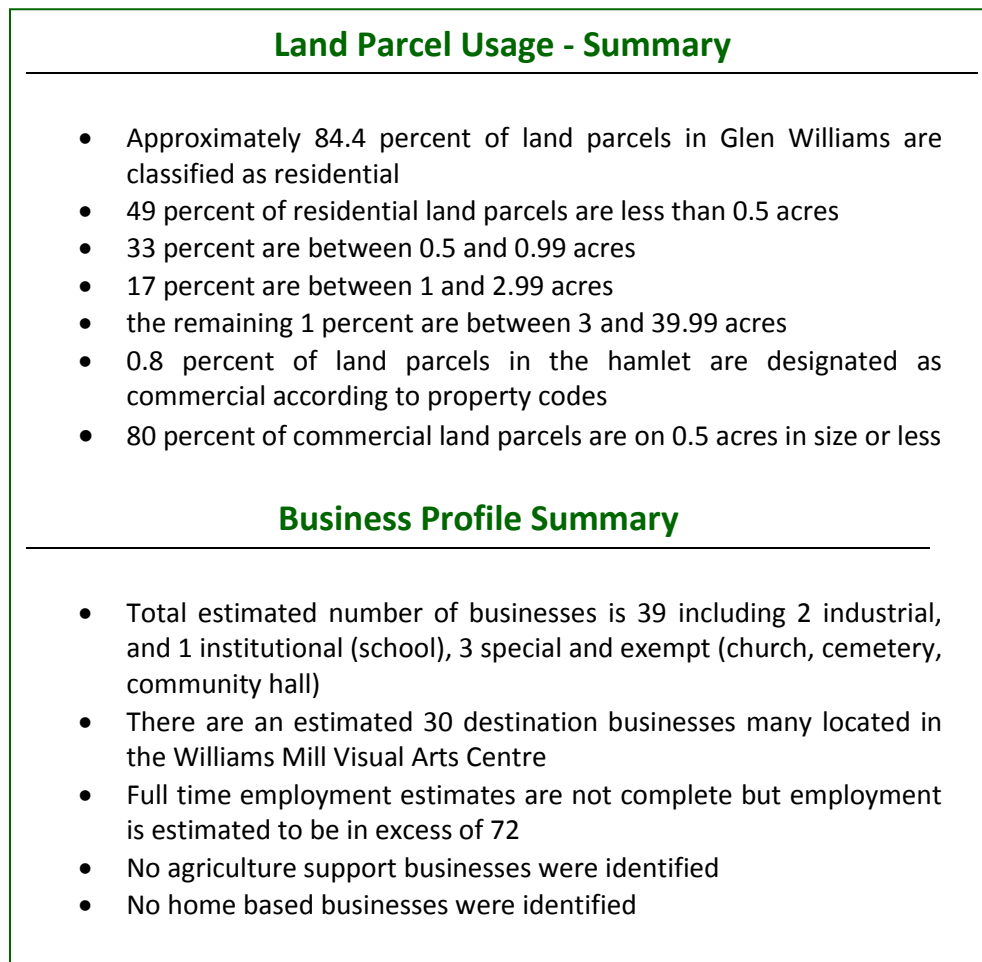




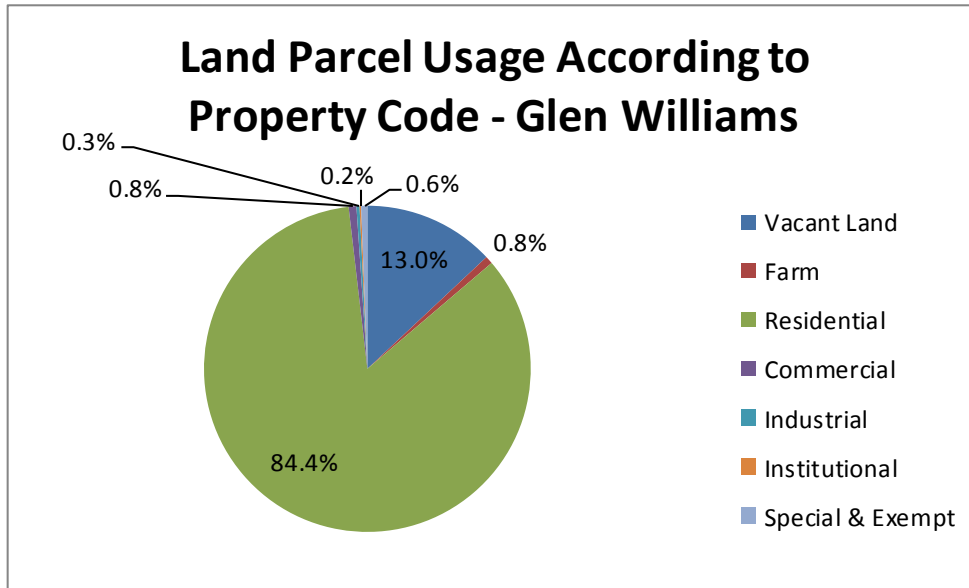
## Glen Williams

Glen Williams is a hamlet located in Halton Hills. It was settled in the 1800's when the power of local steam was used to run saw and flour mills. There is attractive stone signage visible upon entry into Glen Williams. The Credit River meanders through the area. Originally home to the Williams Saw Mill, now the renovated Williams Visual Arts Centre and Beaumont Knitting Mill, home to Beaumont Mill Antiques and Collectibles Ltd, the hamlet of Glen Williams is steeped in history. It is rumored that the storefront where Reeve and Clarke Fine and Rare Books is located is where Timothy Eaton (founder of Eaton's) first worked retail. The heavy influence of numerous artisans in the historic core of the hamlet in the Williams Visual Arts Centre draws visitors from all over. The significant presence of well cared for and restored homes, and small touches such as the individual flag poles that flank either side of the main street, add to Glen William's charm. The hamlet has two churches and a town hall which serve as community spaces. There are no residential or commercial vacant lots. There is partial servicing of water for businesses and some residential lots. The remaining area has water and wastewater management provided by private wells and septic systems.

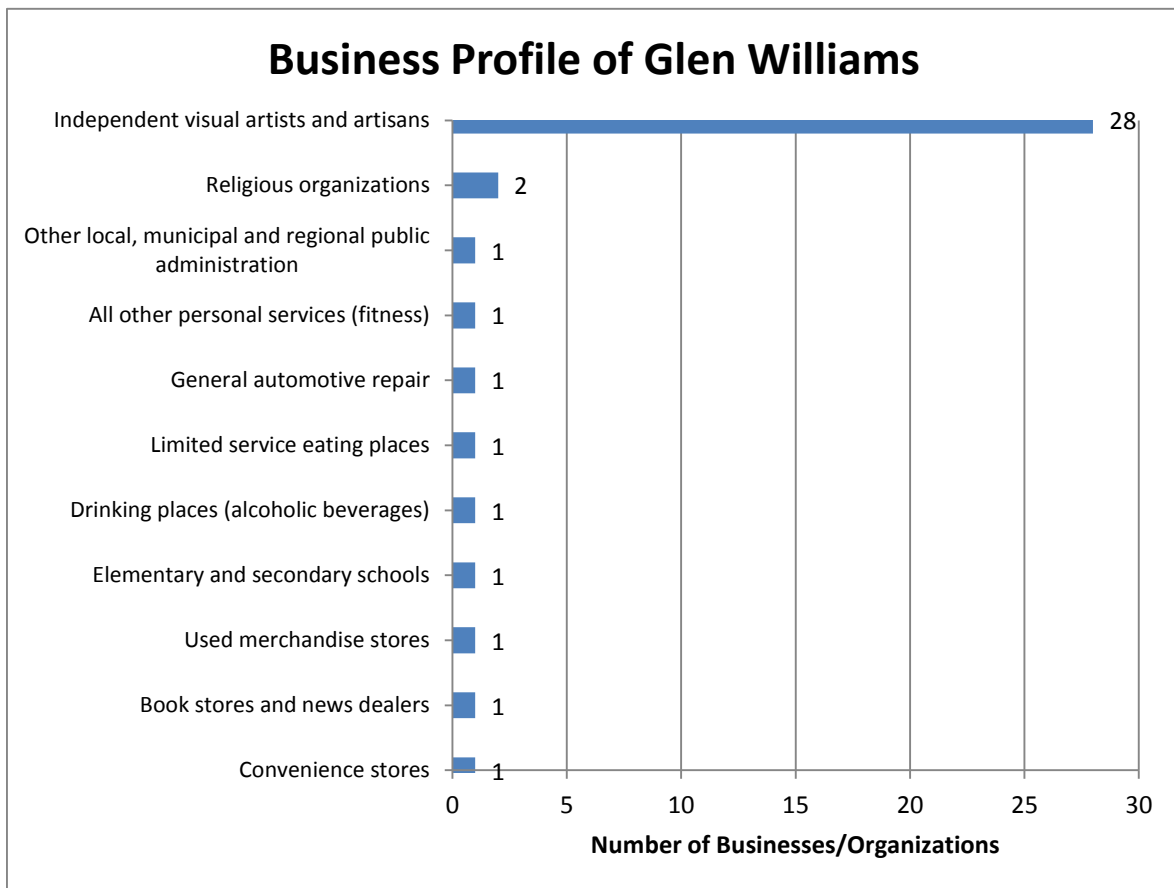
**Figure 3.7 – Glen Williams Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.8 – Land Parcel Usage – Glen Williams**



**Figure 3.9 – Business Profile – Glen Williams**

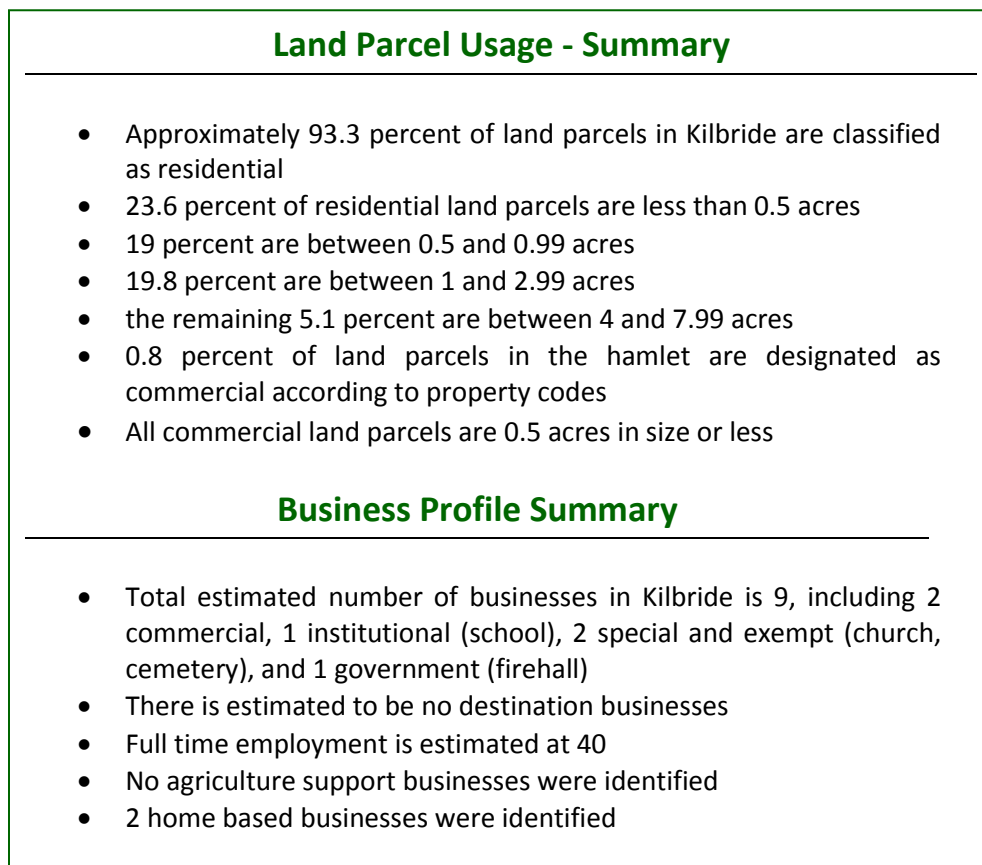


## Kilbride

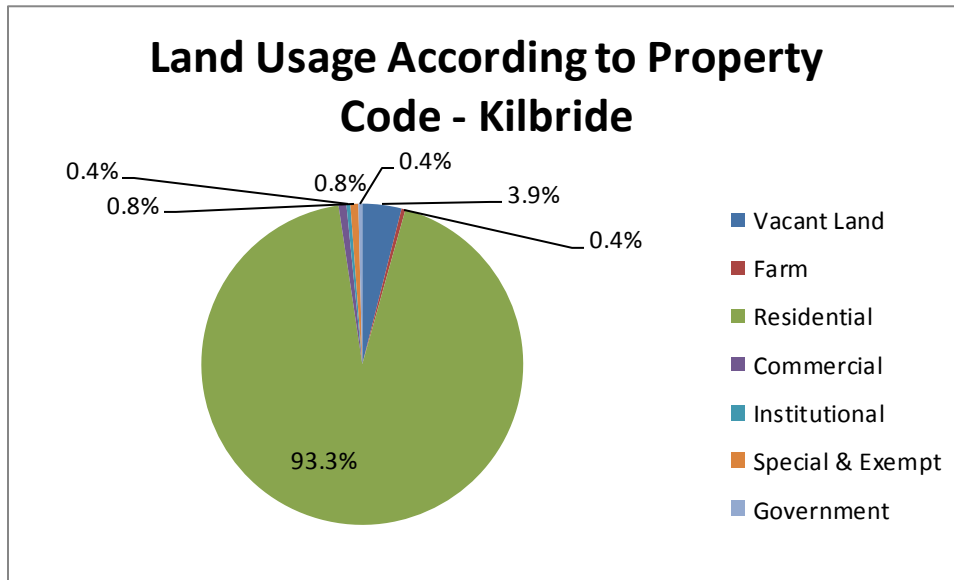
Kilbride is a small hamlet located in Burlington that was settled in the mid 1800's. Signage is visible upon entry into the hamlet. A creek transects the area. The peripheral areas of Kilbride consist of large estate lots, whereas the historic core has more modest lot sizes. There are very few commercial/industrial/institutional uses. At the time of the survey, there were 2 possible infill residential lots and no commercial vacant lots.

Kilbride has two historic pioneer cemeteries, and a fire department/police station and school. The public school, public library and Kilbride United Church provide possible meeting spaces for the community. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems.

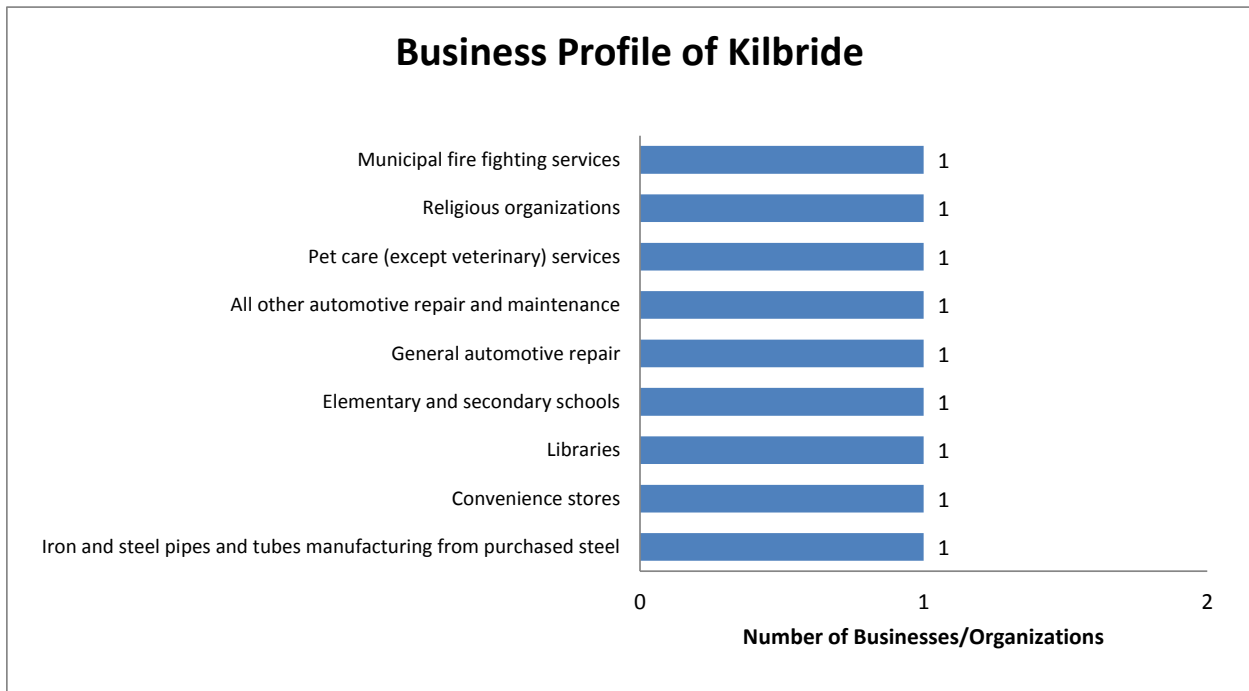
**Figure 3.10 - Kilbride Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.11 – Land Parcel Usage - Kilbride**



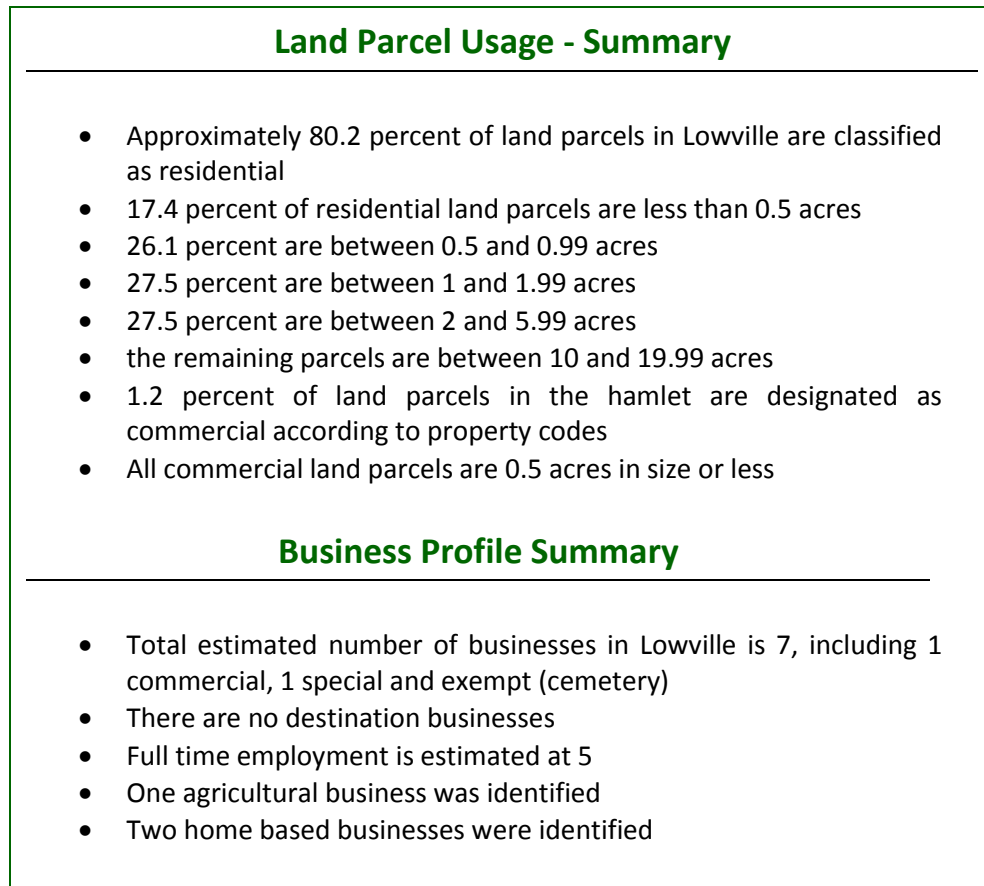
**Figure 3.12 – Business Profile - Kilbride**



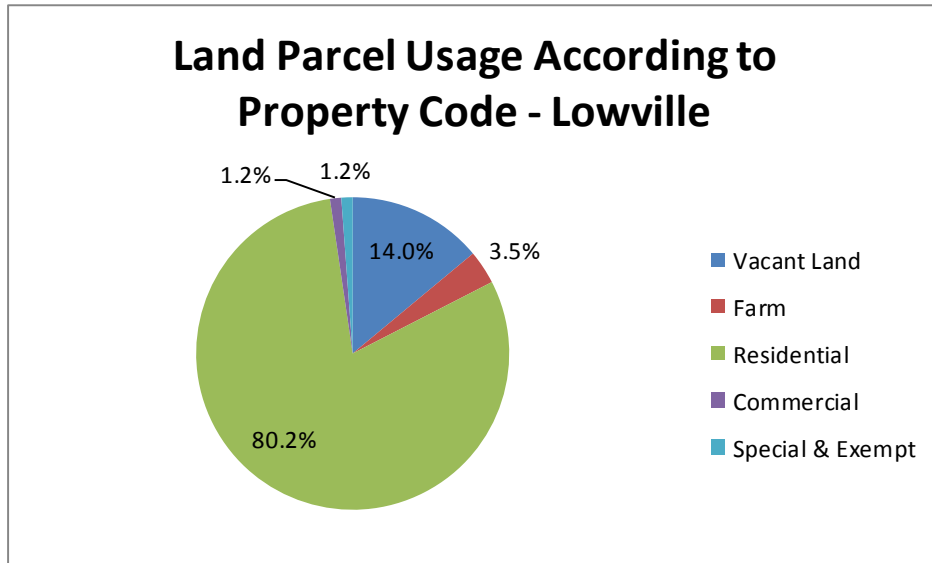
## Lowville

Visitors to Lowville will first notice the attractive stone signage as they enter the hamlet followed by the laser cut flower motif signs throughout the downtown core. The hamlet of Lowville is located in Burlington. There is historic ribbon development along Guelph Line which defines the hamlet. A number of historic homes exist down the main corridor of Guelph Line; one historical commercial building and the Lowville Park anchor the area. Due to the high traffic volume, walkability in the hamlet is limited. There are between 7 to 12 vacant residential lots and no vacant commercial lots. The church provides a central meeting area in the hamlet. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems.

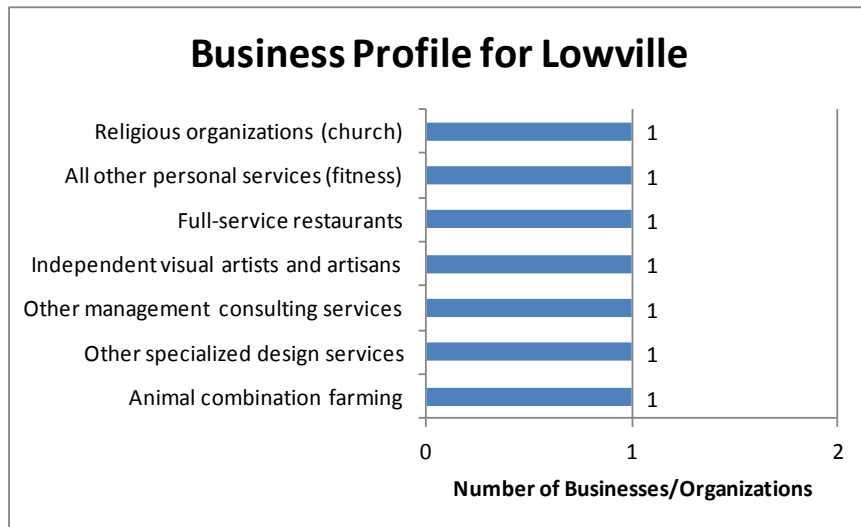
**Figure 3.13 – Lowville Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.14 – Land Parcel Usage - Lowville**



**Figure 3.15 – Business Profile - Lowville**



## **Moffat**

Moffat is a small hamlet located immediately north and west of Campbellville in Milton. Signage upon entry into the hamlet is standard. Moffat essentially is a bedroom community with little retail, commercial, or industrial activity. The west side of the hamlet has 15 vacant residential lots within the hamlet with 11 estate lots that are currently for sale, each in excess of 2 acres. There are 7 commercial vacant lots. (These are identified in the Milton Official Plan and designated as commercial but not being used for these purposes.) All of these lots are being used for residential purposes with no signs of commercial activity. There is no formal community meeting place. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems.

**Figure 3.16 – Moffat Profile Summary**

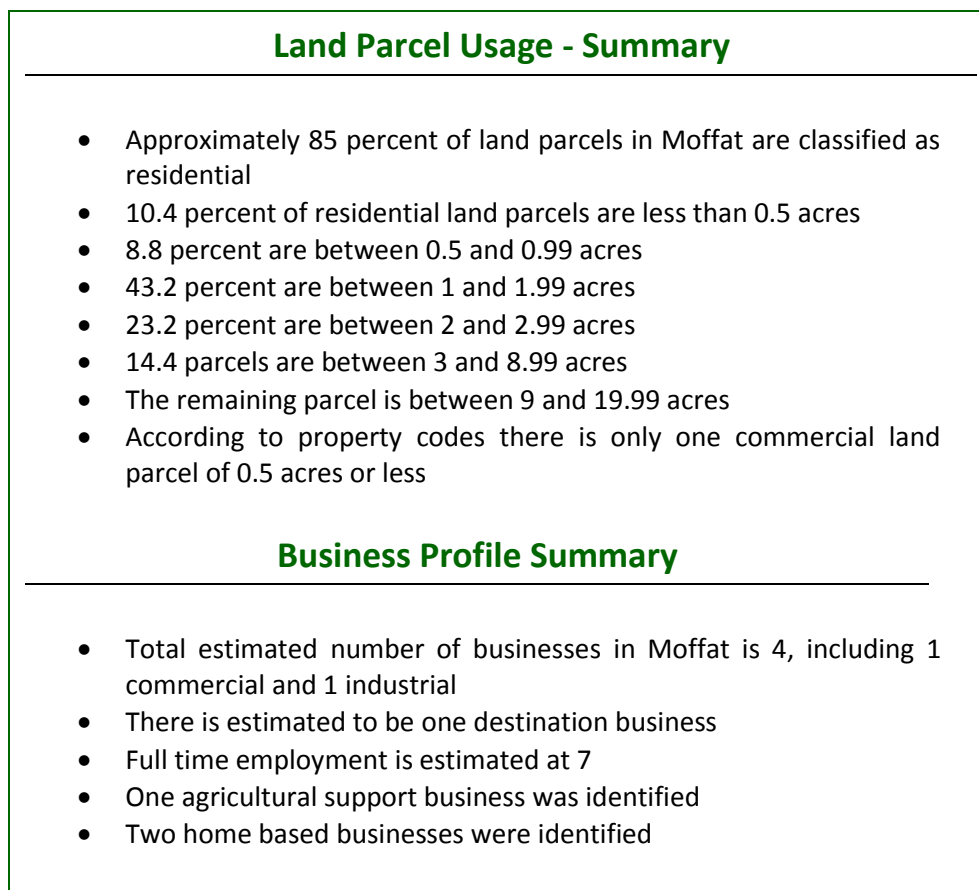


Figure 3.17 – Land Parcel Usage - Moffat

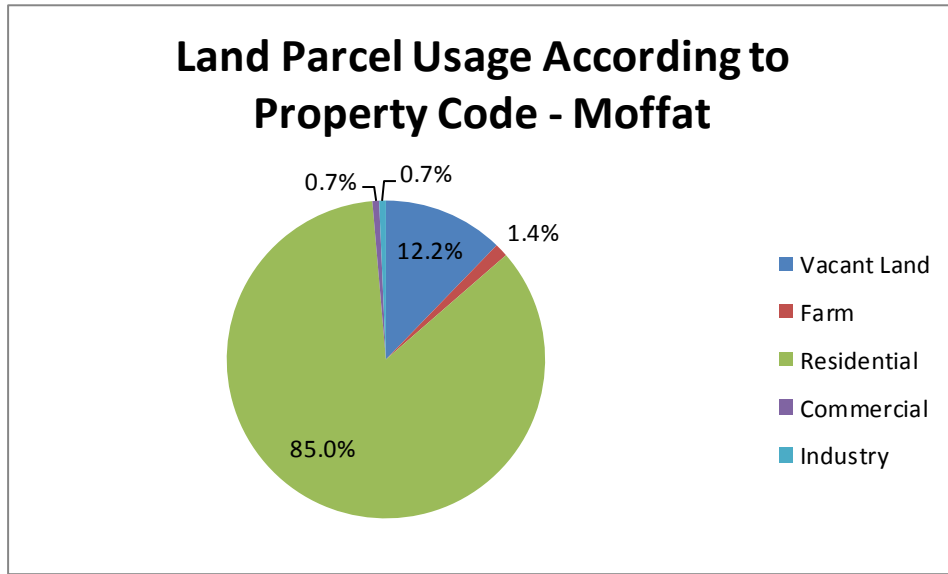
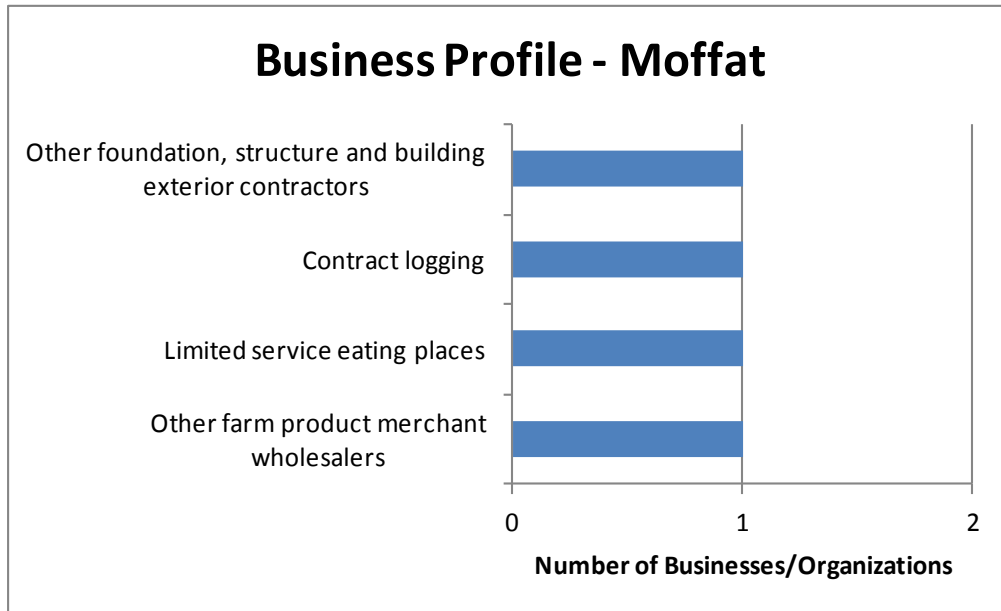


Figure 3.18 – Business Profile - Moffat

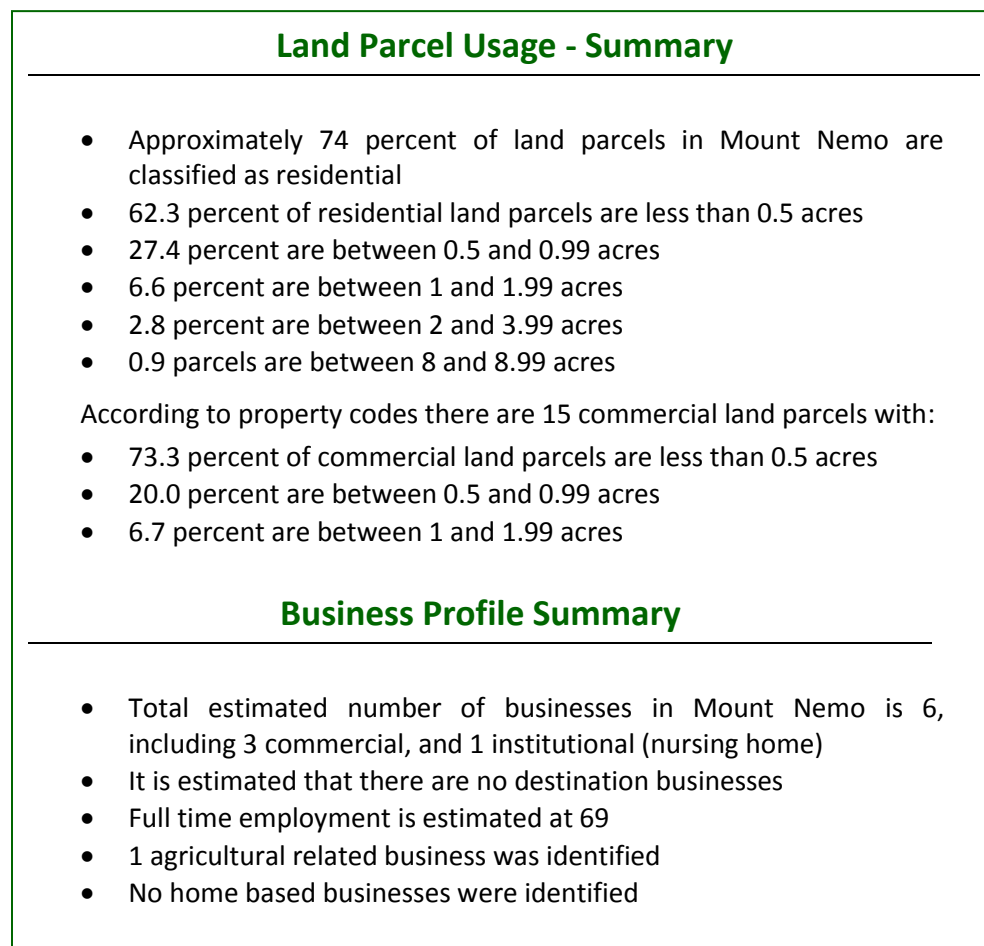




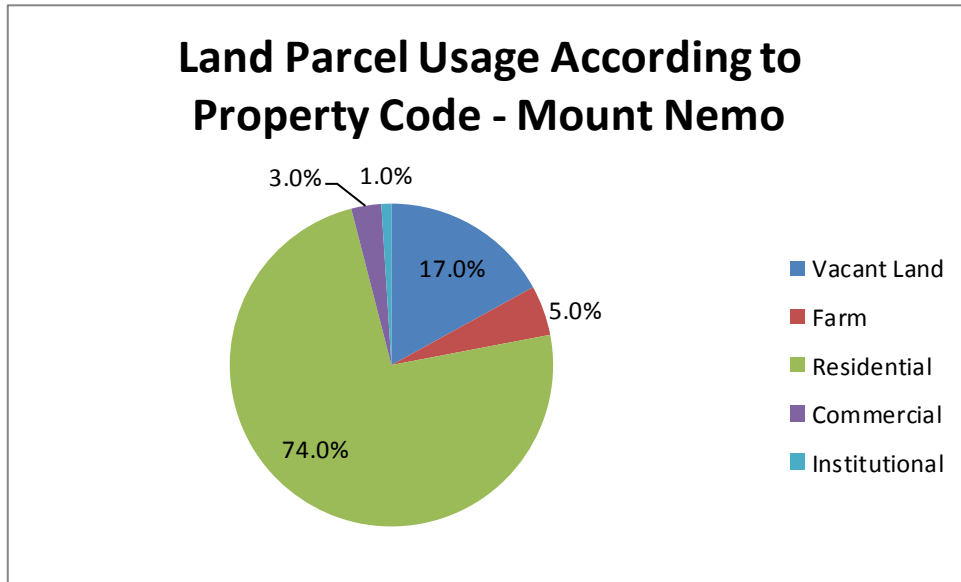
## Mount Nemo

Mount Nemo does not have any entry signs that clearly identify the hamlet. However, there is a predominant Mount Nemo conservation sign and a number of business signs on Guelph Line that are the only indicators of the existence of the hamlet. The hamlet does not have a historic core. It essentially functions as a bedroom community. There are 13 or 14 vacant residential lots in the hamlet and no vacant commercial lots. There is a collection of small businesses and historical lots along the Guelph Line but traffic conditions limit the level of walkability. There is no community gathering place that was identified although the hamlet is very close to the Mount Nemo Conservation Area. The periphery of the hamlet has a number of luxury estate homes that are very prestigious. Water and wastewater management is provided by private wells and septic systems.

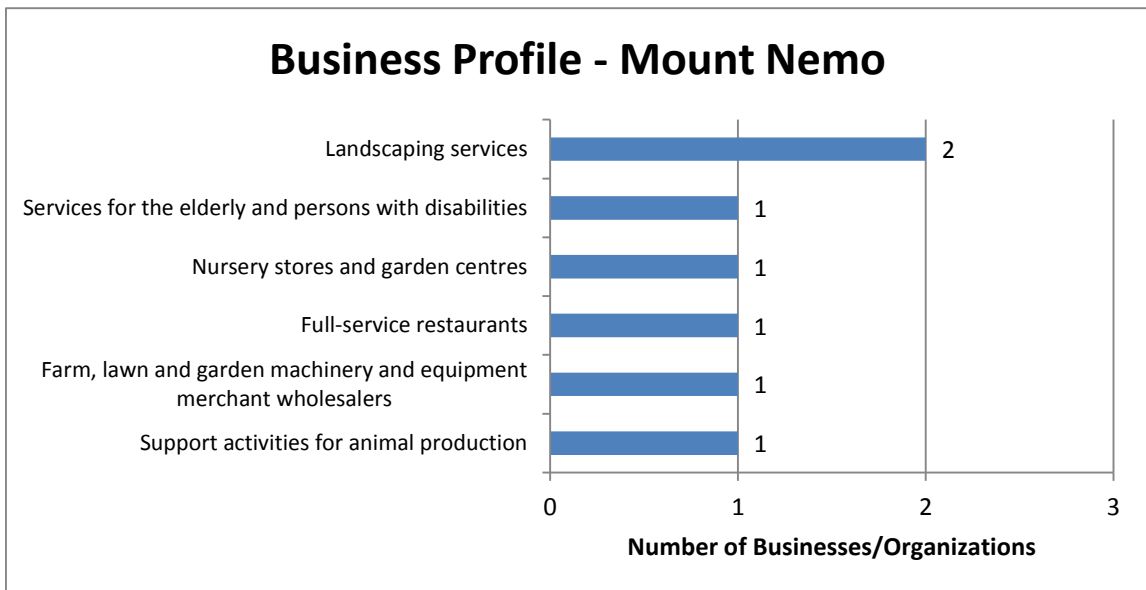
**Figure 3.19 – Mount Nemo Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.20 – Land Parcel Usage – Mount Nemo**



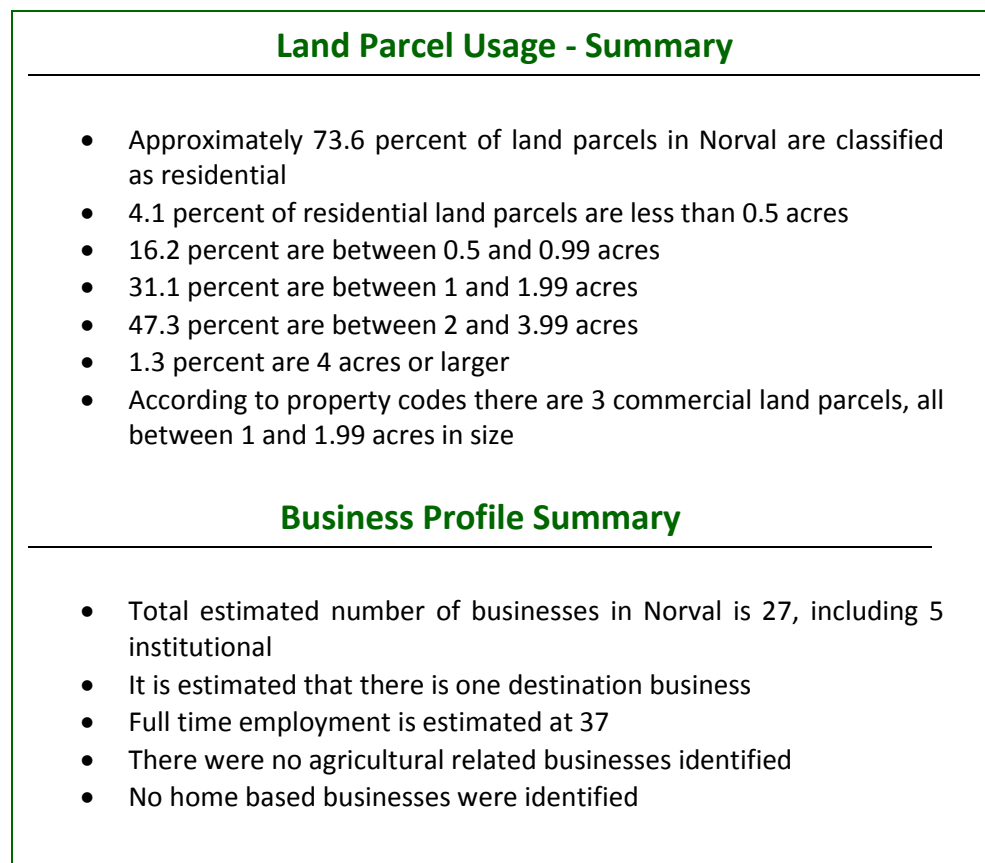
**Figure 3.21 – Business Profile – Mount Nemo**



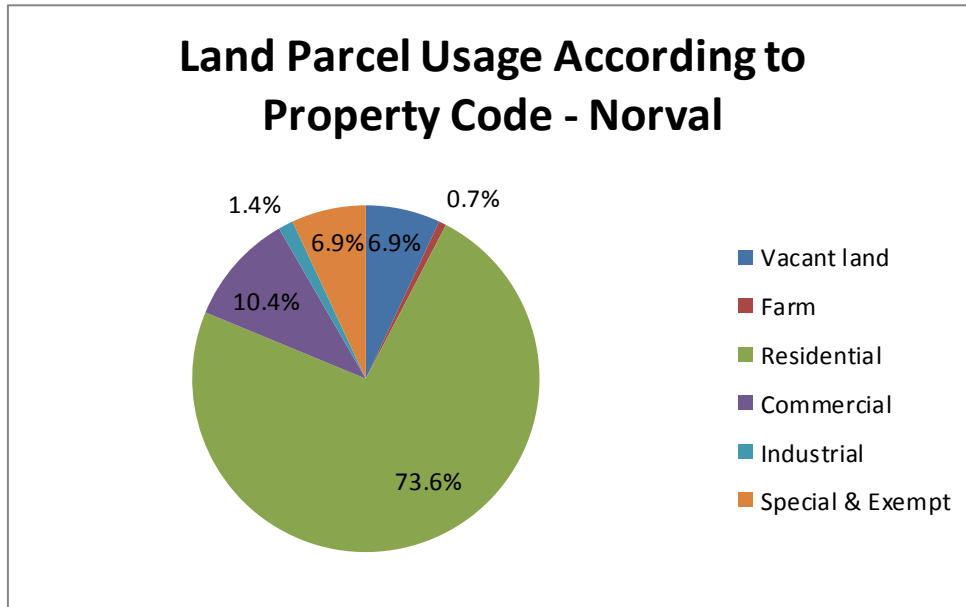
## Norval

The hamlet of Norval is situated along the Credit River in Halton Hills. There is signage that welcomes visitors upon entry into the hamlet. Norval was home to famous Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery in 1926 and as a result, the hamlet draws visitors from many parts of the world looking to view the extensive collection of artifacts and some of the original buildings from that time period. Some of the original buildings are located within the historic core. There are also a number of historic homes outside of the core that have been renovated. Houses in the area are generally modest in size. There are no vacant residential or commercial lots in the hamlet. The church provides a central meeting place for the community. Municipal water servicing exists. Wastewater management is provided by private septic systems.

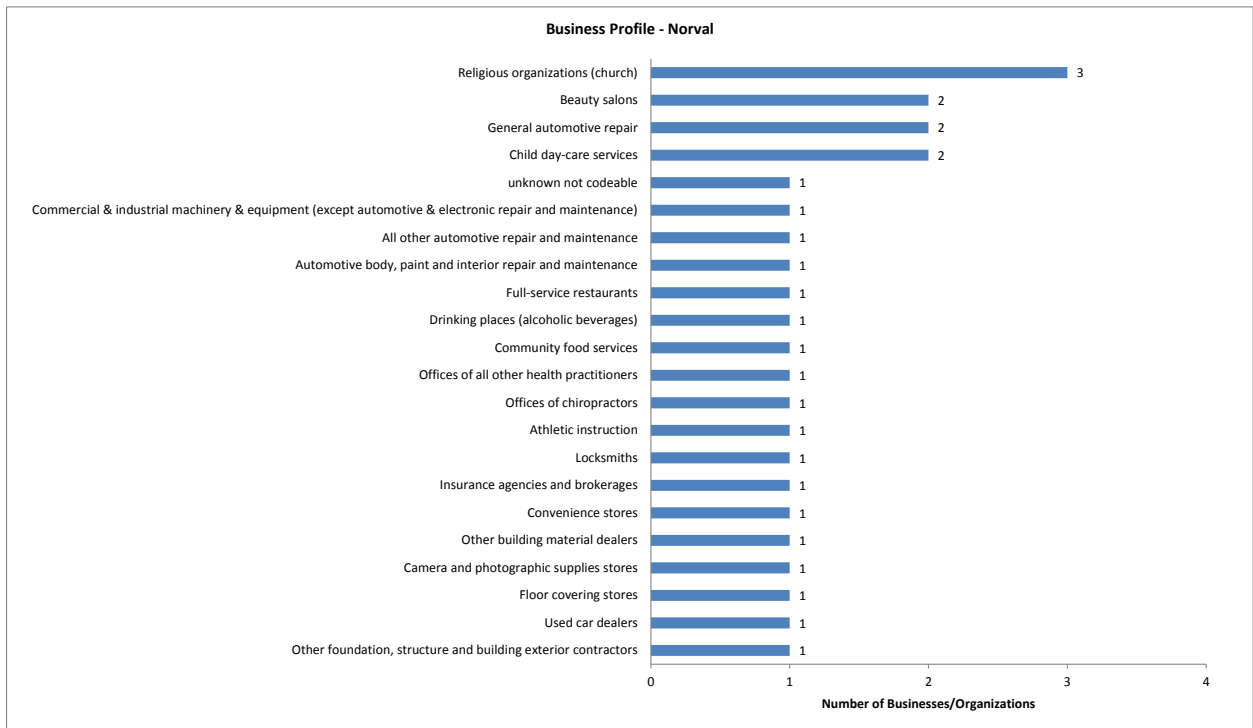
**Figure 3.22 – Norval Profile Summary**



**Figure 3.23 – Land Parcel Usage - Norval**



**Figure 3.24 – Business Profile - Norval**



### 3.2.2 The Rural Clusters

The nine designated rural clusters are the smallest settlements in the Region. The number of non-residential uses in the rural clusters range for 0 to 7. Two rural clusters, Hornby and Henderson’s Corners, are home to a range of businesses but the rest are limited to a very small number of businesses and some institutional uses (churches and one school in Limehouse). The planning policies for the Region limit development in these clusters to within the existing settlement pattern. There is clear direction that any development that occurs must be compact and not contribute to extension of ribbon development along a road way.

Figures 3.25

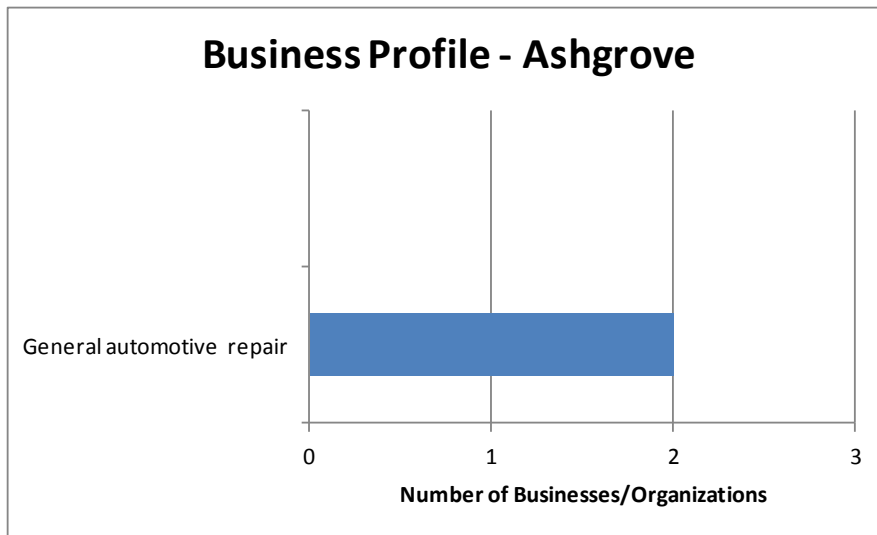
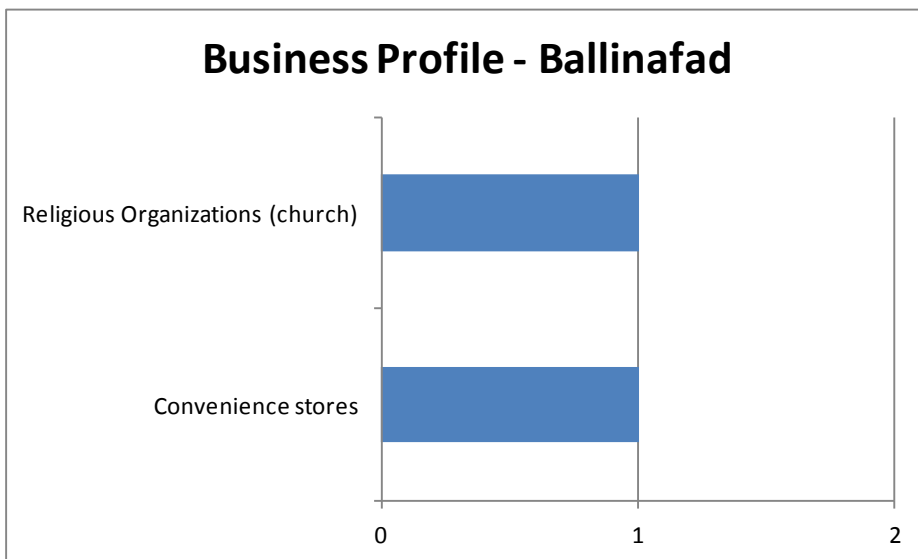


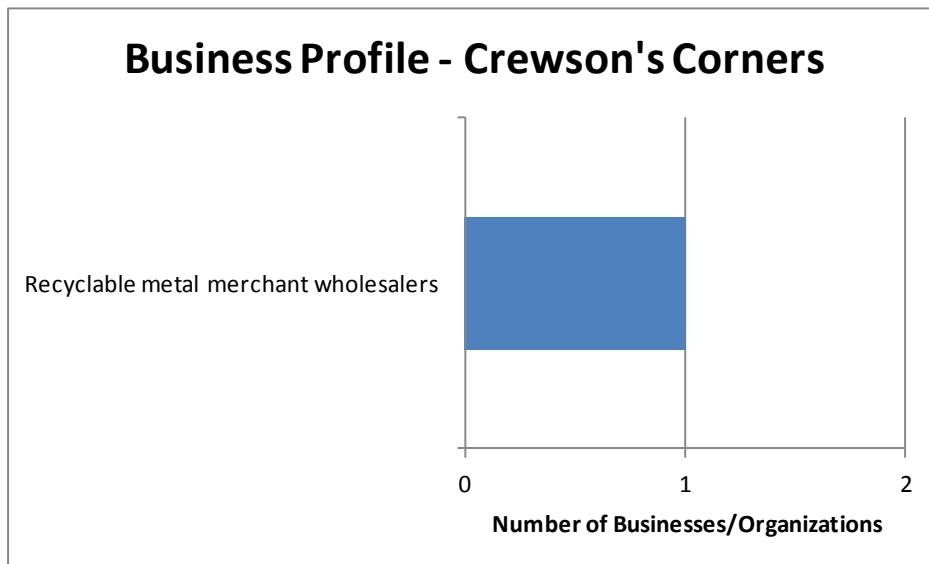
Figure 3.26



**Bannockburn** has no commercial, industrial, institutional activity, merely ribbon development.

**Terra Cotta** has no commercial, industrial or institutional activity within the boundary of Halton Region.

**Figure 3.27**



**Figure 3.28**

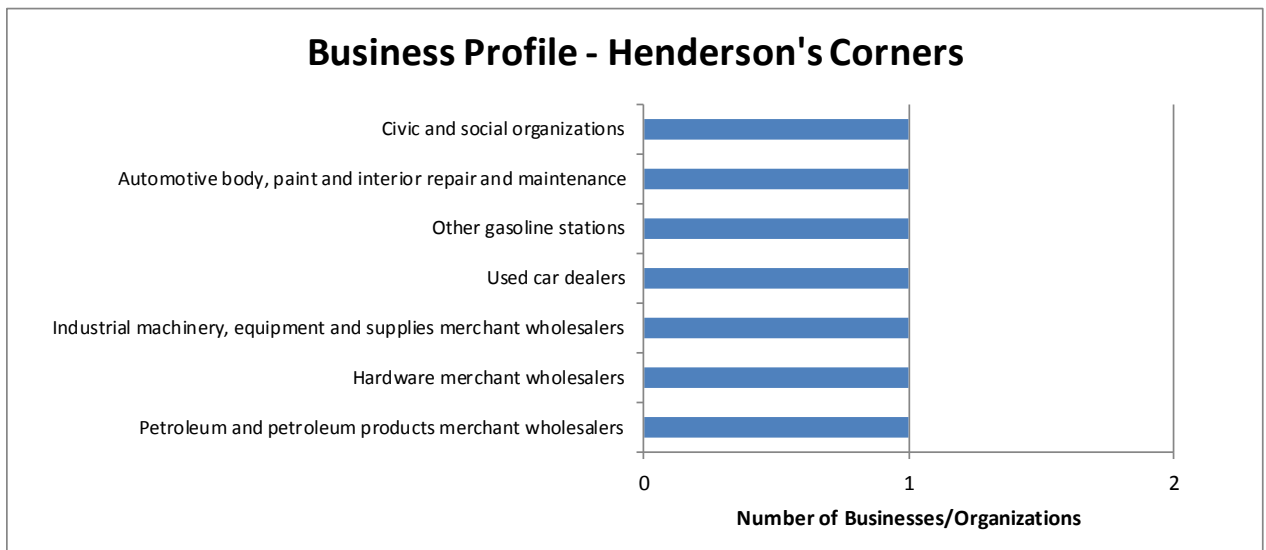


Figure 3.29

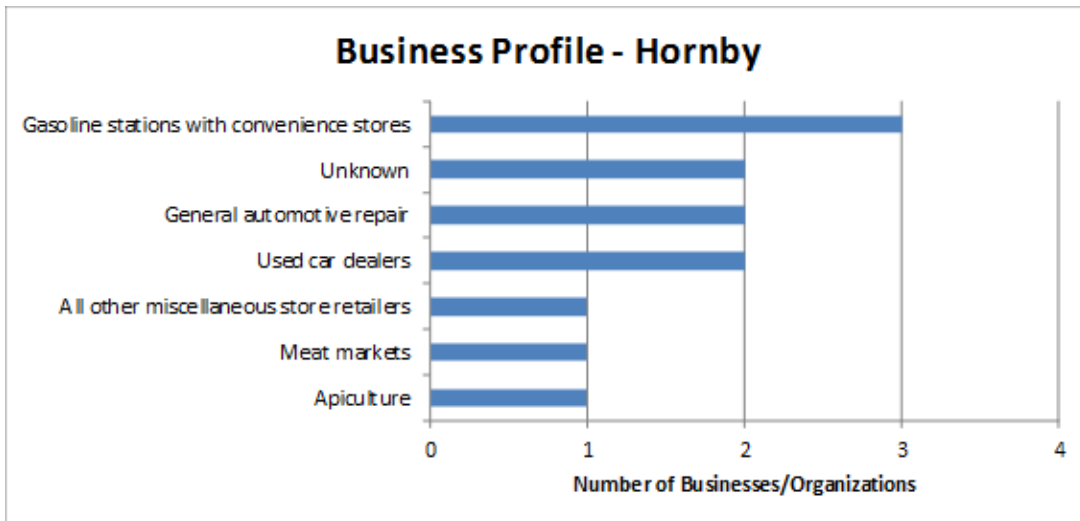


Figure 3.30

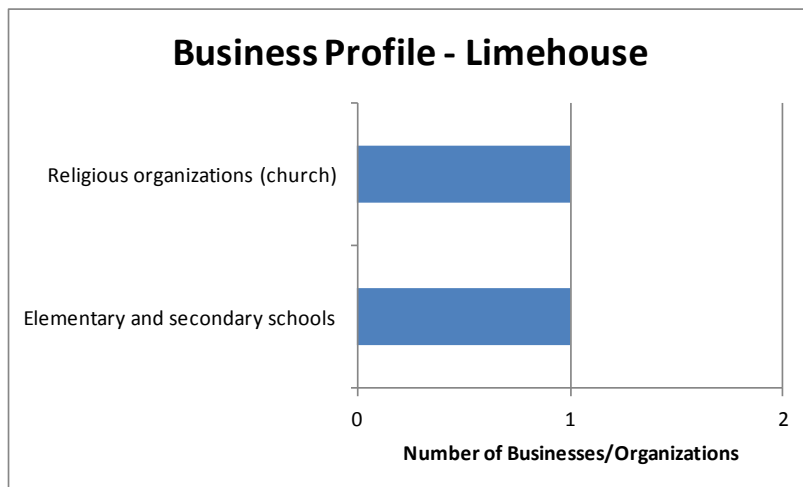
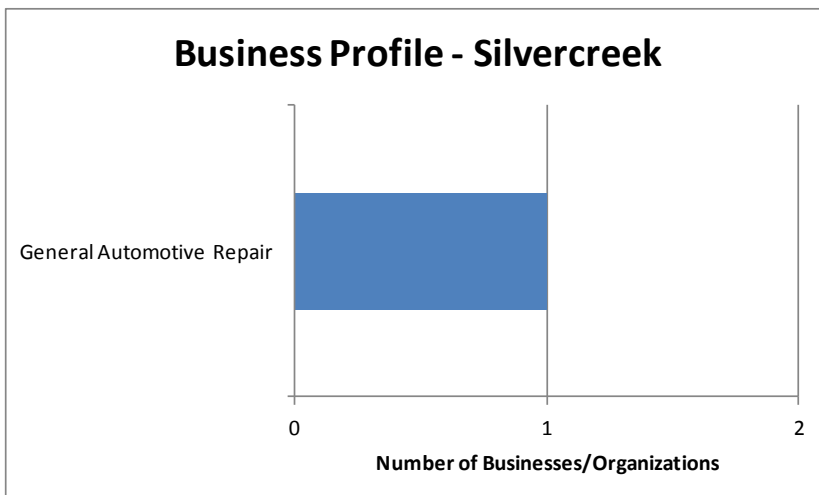


Figure 3.31



### 3.2.3 Rural Area Outside of Hamlets and Rural Clusters

New uses permitted in the Rural area of the Region are restricted in the Regional Official Plan to agricultural uses, uses that support agriculture and small scale operations such as home occupations and cottage industries. However, there are a number of existing businesses, many of which were established in the past under less restrictive policies. The result of attempts to identify and inventory these existing businesses is documented in this section.

Those rural businesses located outside of a hamlet or rural cluster that have signage and appear to be carrying out business activities are picked up in the Regional Employment Survey. As previously discussed, it is difficult to identify home based or farm based businesses as these are also private homes so may be missed.<sup>4</sup> However, this is the only information currently available. While admittedly not a complete picture, the input from the Regional Employment Survey, in addition to the information provided about hamlets and rural clusters provides some sense of what is happening in the rural areas.



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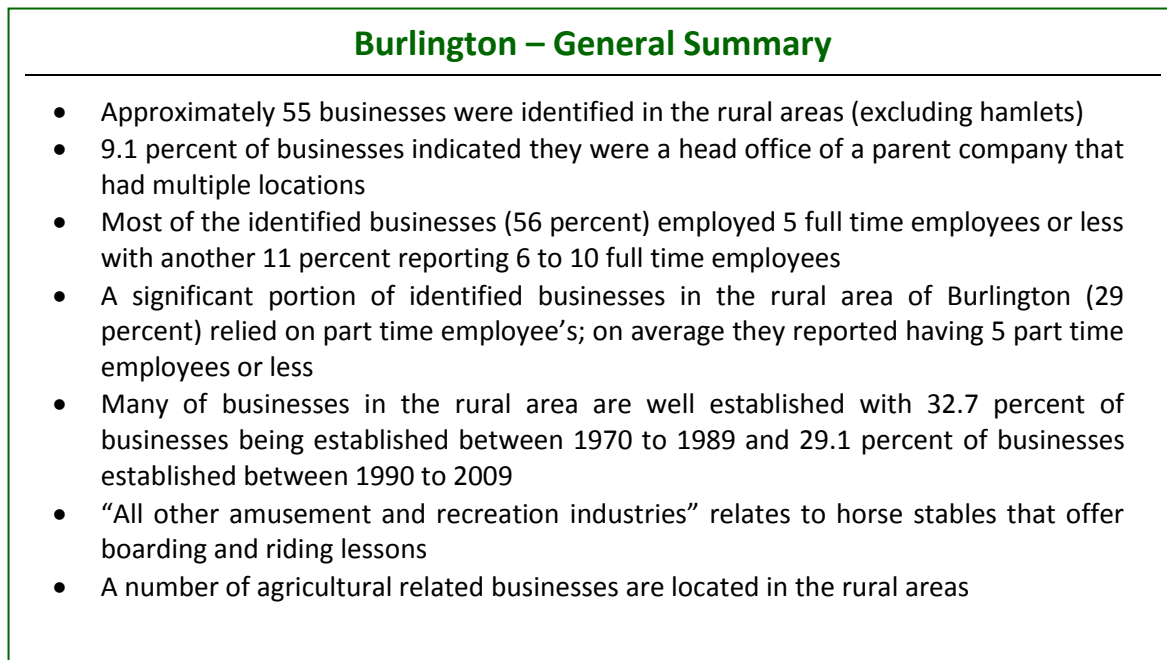
<sup>4</sup> Farm businesses may be missed and under-represented in the business profiles for each local municipality.



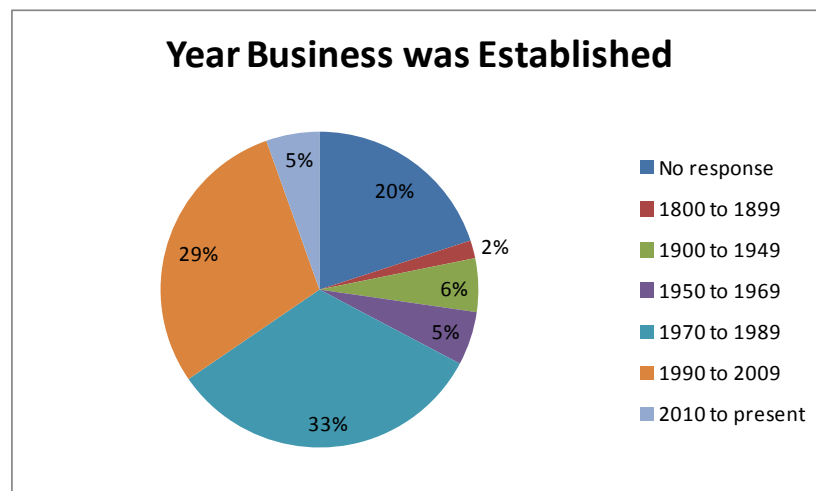
## Burlington

Based on information from the 2013 Employment Survey (as verified at the time of writing of the background study), some general observations are included.

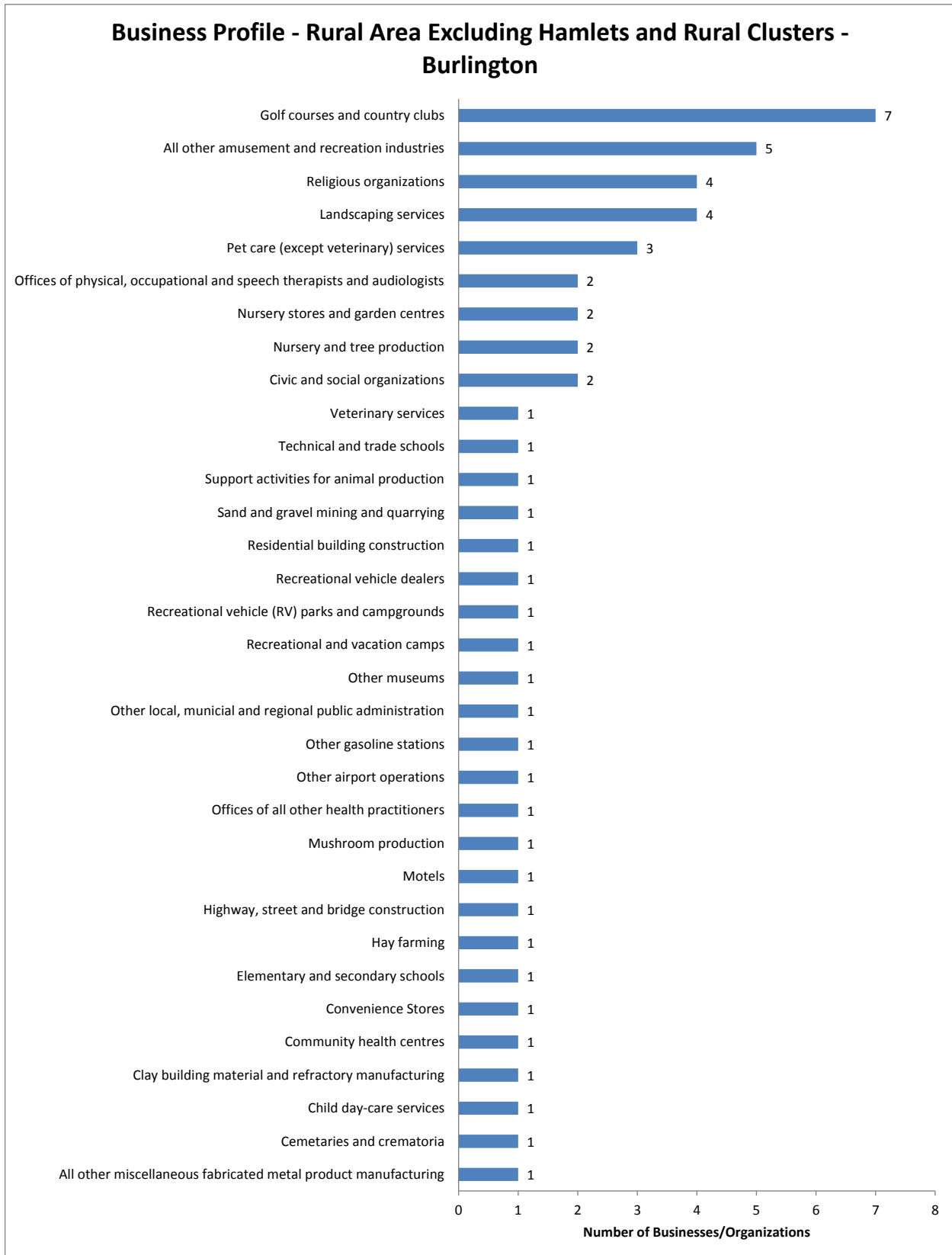
**Figure 3.32**



**Figure 3.33**



**Figure 3.34**



## Halton Hills

Based on information from the 2013 Employment Survey, some general observations are included.

Figure 3.35

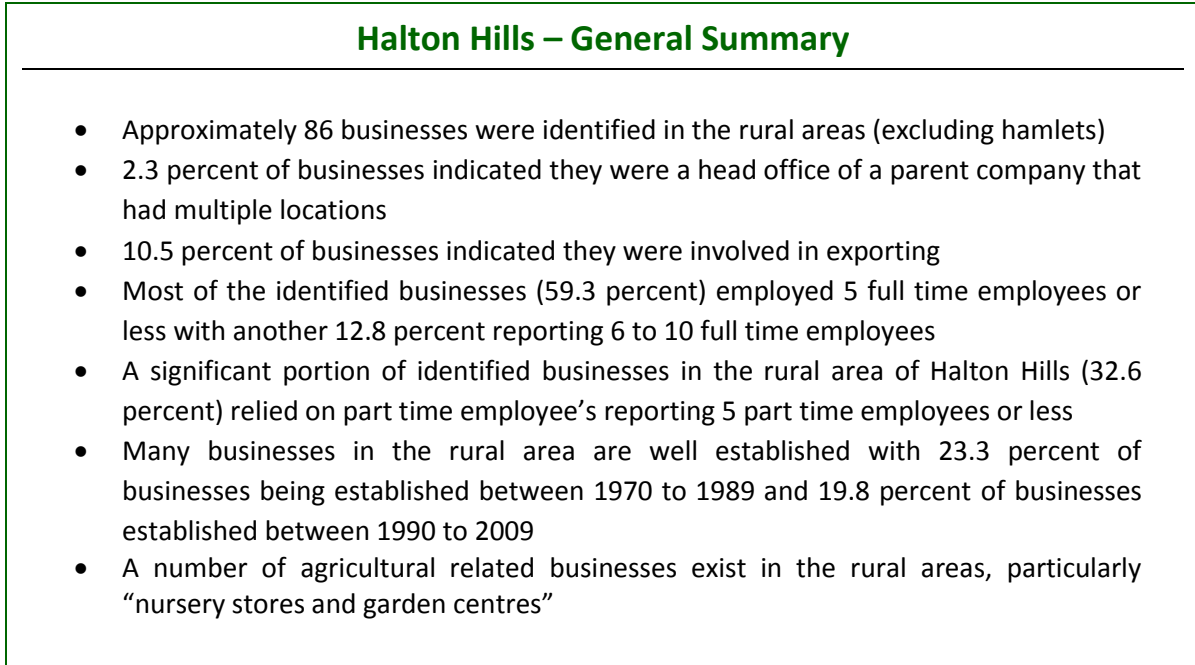
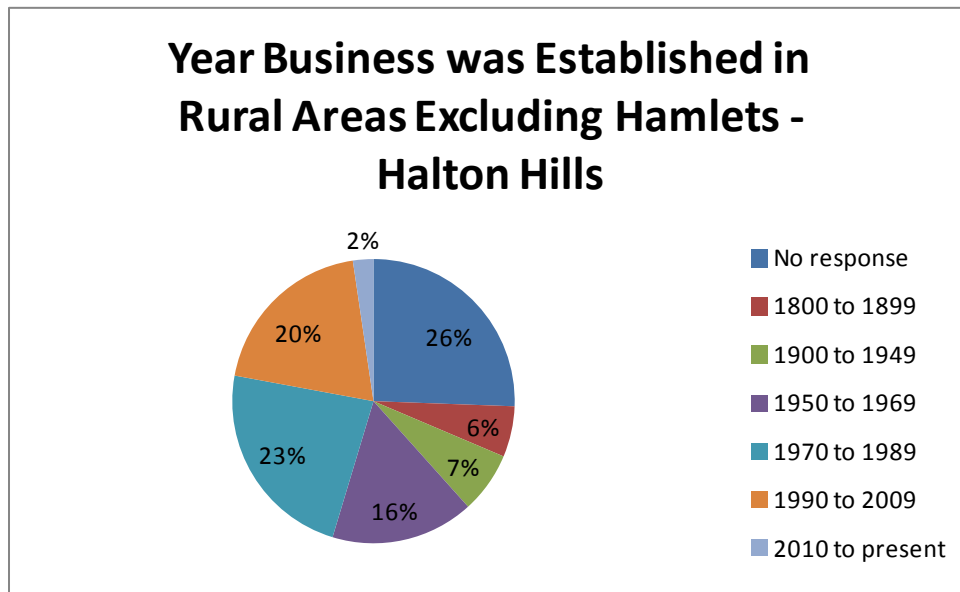
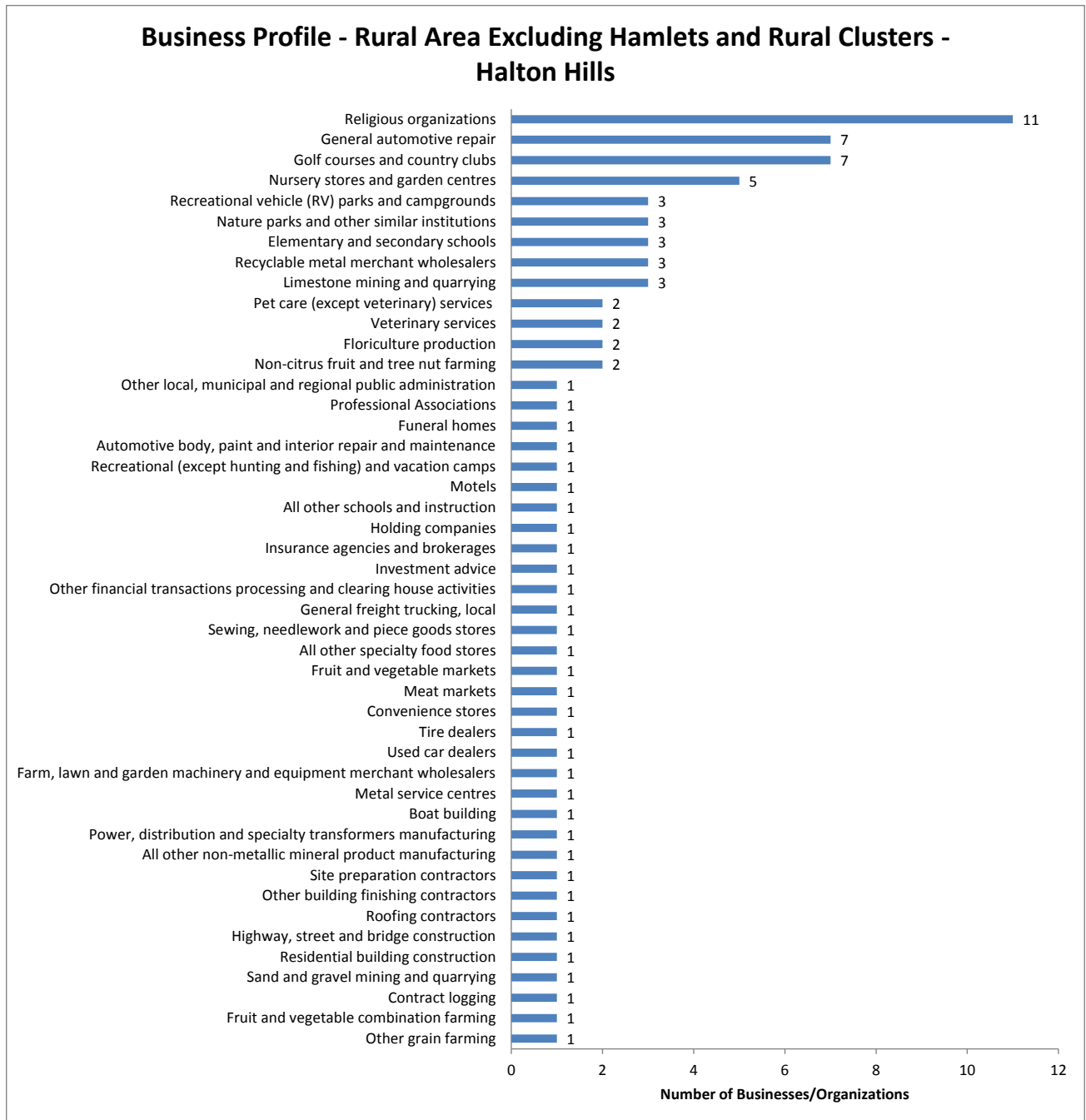


Figure 3.36



**Figure 3.37**



## Milton

Based on information from the 2013 Employment Survey, some general observations are included.

Figure 3.38

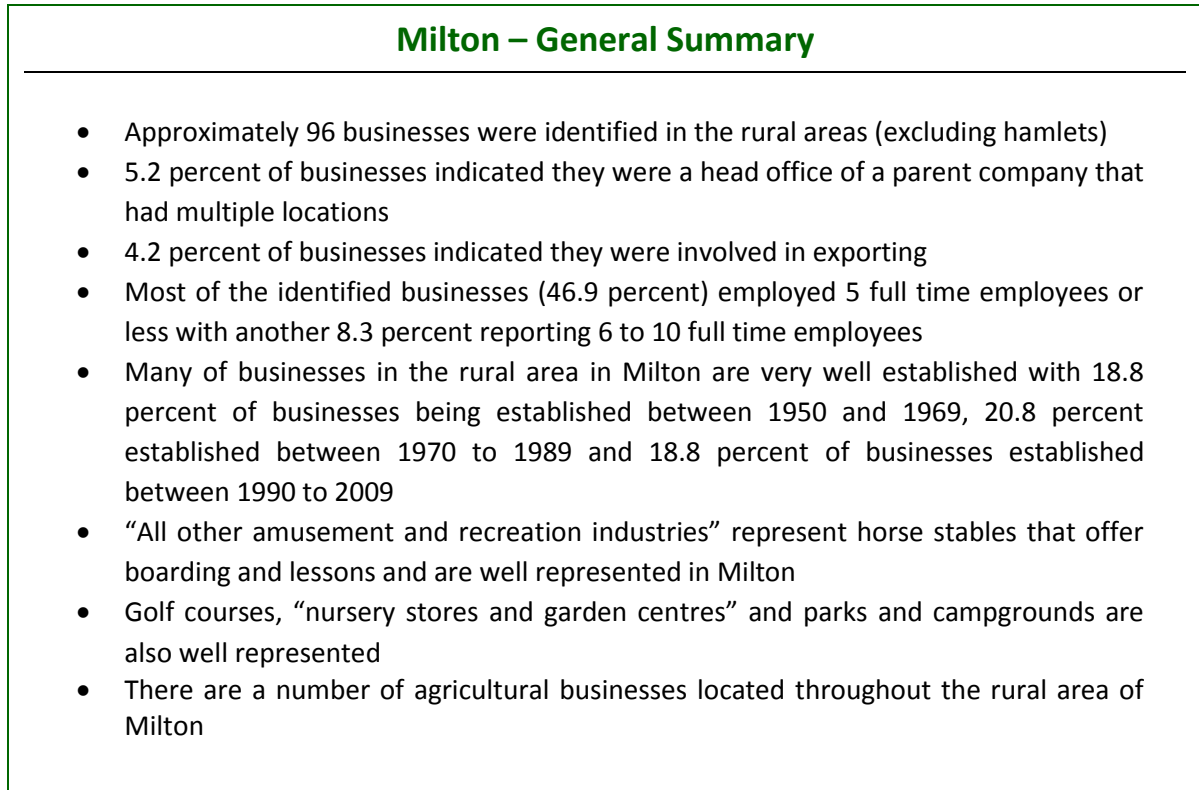
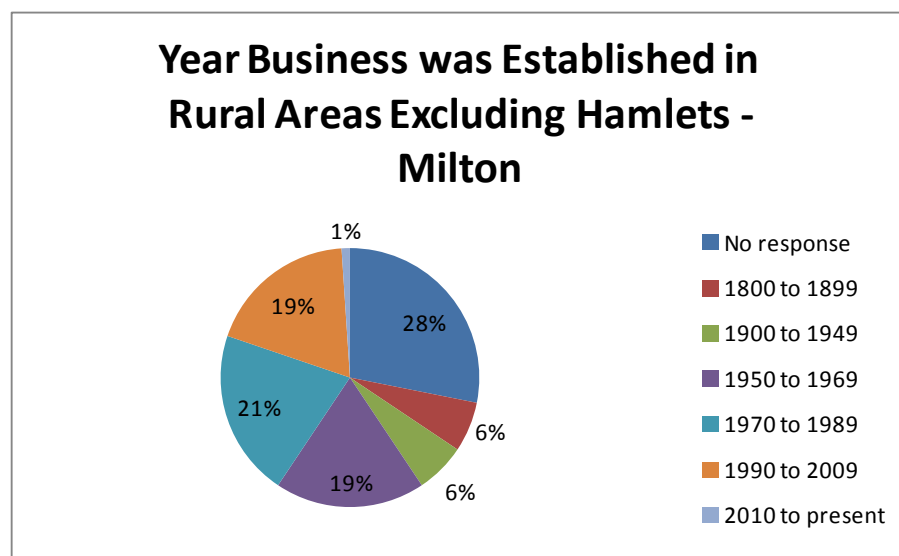
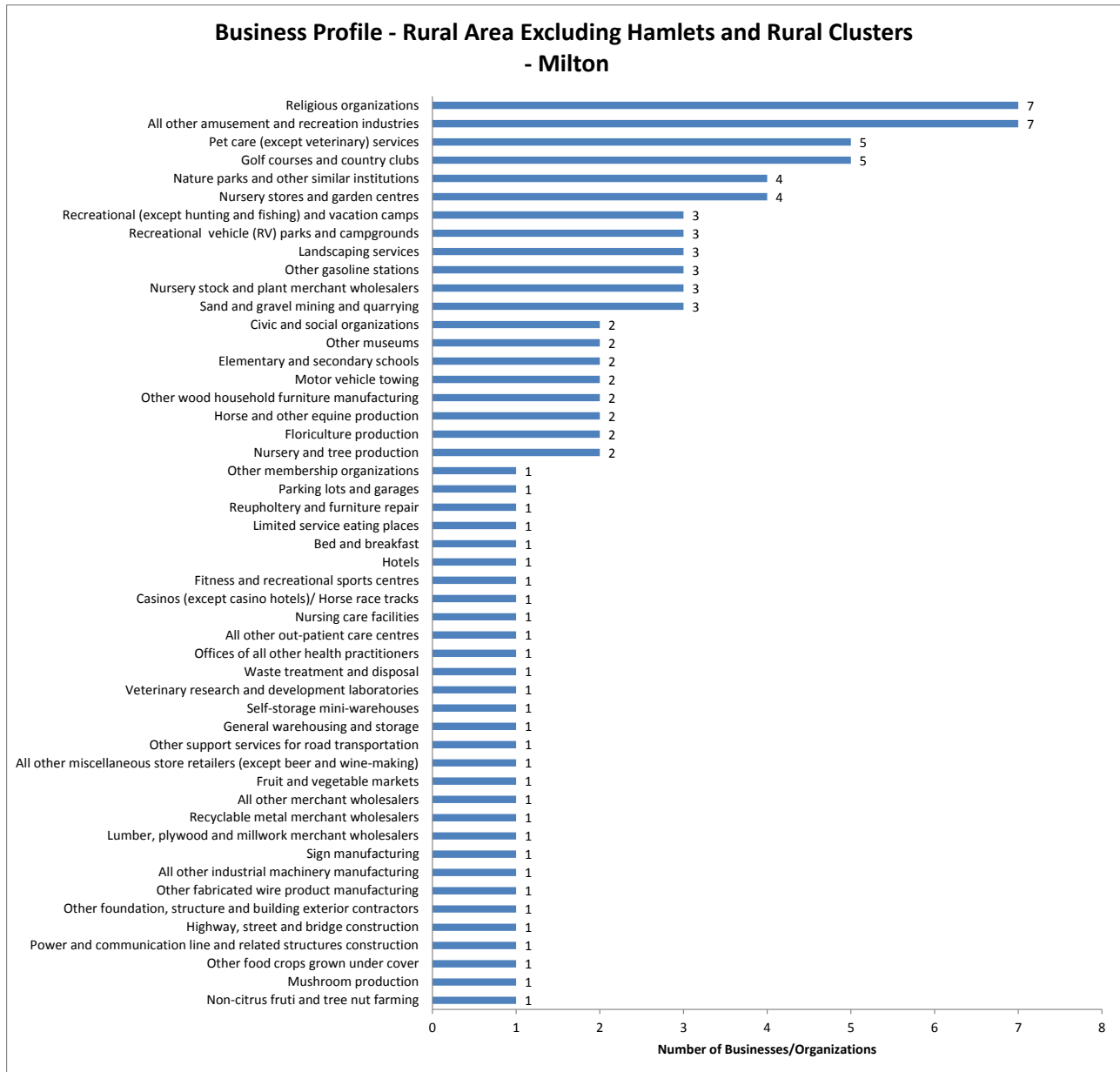


Figure 3.39



**Figure 3.40**



## Oakville

Based on information from the 2013 Employment Survey, some general observations are included.

Figure 3.41

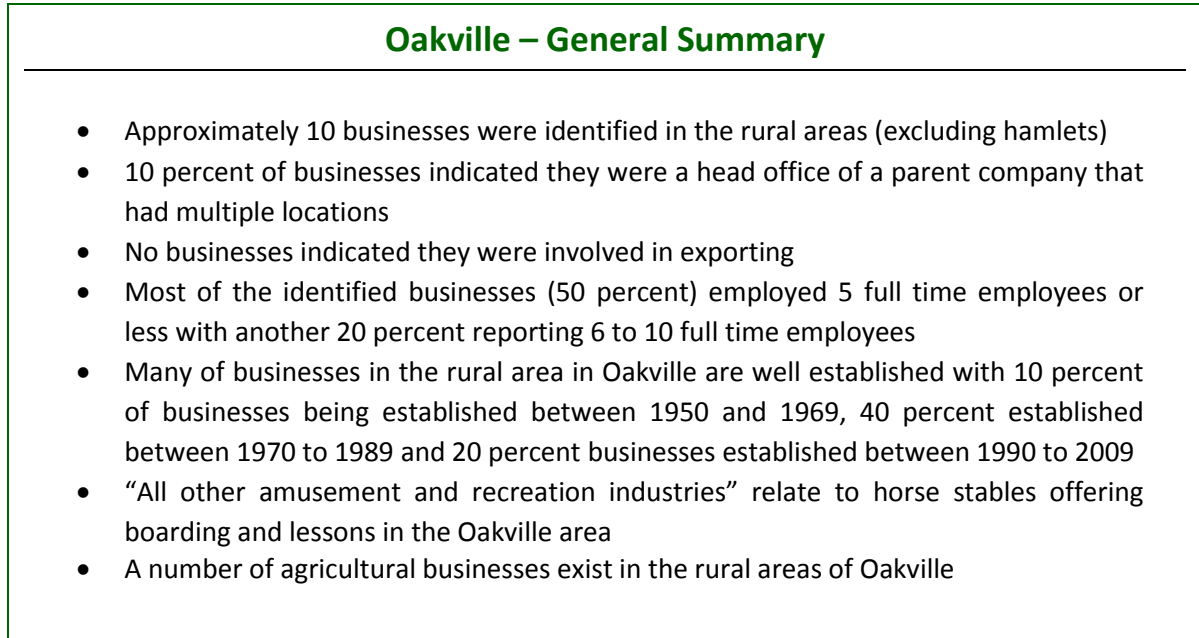


Figure 3.42

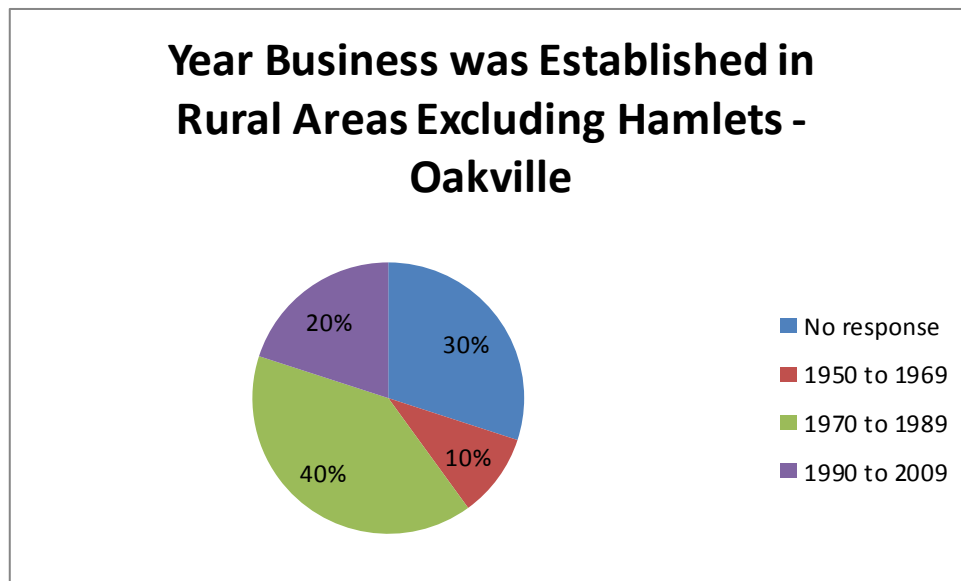
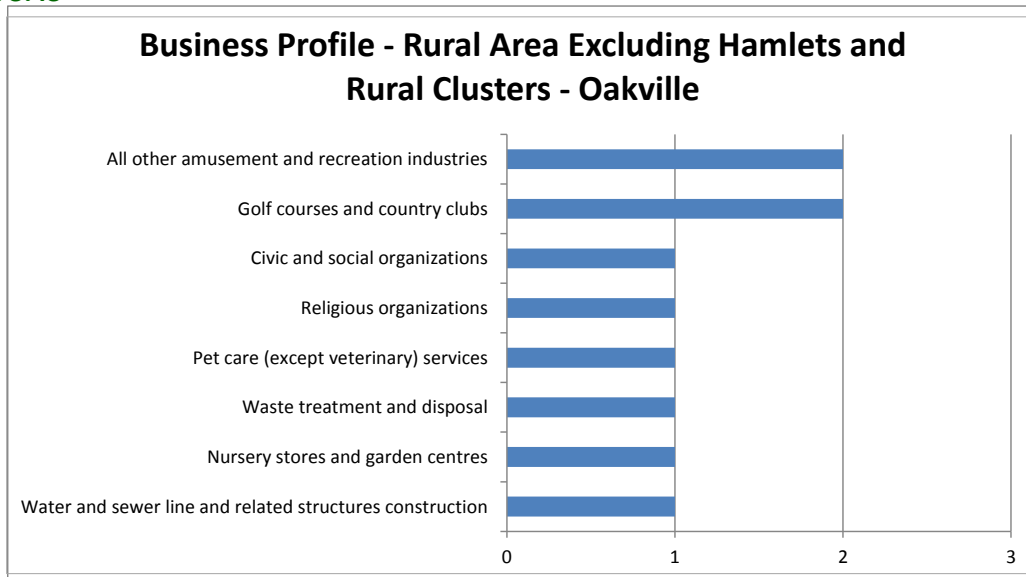


Figure 3.43



### 3.2.4 Process to Assess Viability in Hamlets and Rural Clusters

The policies in the Regional Official Plan limit development in the Rural Agricultural area to agriculture, uses related to agriculture and small scale uses. This is intended to protect the land base and buffer farmers from conflicting uses and is appropriate. However, there is a need to consider the health and vitality of the rural community by allowing for some limited residential development and accommodating rural businesses that contribute to the sustainability of that community. In Halton this is to be achieved in the hamlets and rural clusters. As outlined previously, some of these settlements are more vibrant than others. In this section the existing hamlets and clusters are assessed to determine what actions might be required to sustain and revitalize these rural settlements.

#### *Process to Assess Viability of Hamlets and Rural Clusters*

Based upon the foregoing, it is clear that hamlets make a significant contribution to the rural character of the Region. However, because hamlets tend to be small commercial areas in an age of retail consolidation, businesses located in hamlets have to compete against large box stores, specialty shopping areas and on-line retailing activity. This can be challenging. This is an area where the RAS may be of some assistance.

To assess the current state of hamlets (and thus be able to see where Regional policy initiatives might have the most positive effect), a framework to measure 'hamlet sustainability' was developed. This was based upon a review of relevant literature analyzing small rural commercial areas elsewhere, as well as the consultant's expertise in downtown revitalization and business retention and expansion (BR+E) projects in other areas. The framework developed is presented in the following table. Rural clusters were also evaluated in terms of viability. Armed with this framework, Regional staff undertook on-site visits to each hamlet, and gathered the data to populate the framework. A summary of the data gathered, and the resulting assessment, is presented in the table following the framework.



### Six Criteria for Hamlet Viability

Criterion	Rationale	Specific Measure
1) Having a sustaining population base in the immediate area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a thriving hamlet should have a sufficient population base within a walking distance to support a variety of 'lower order' functions</li> <li>'within a walking distance' supports the image of a bucolic and rural area (as well as promoting healthy exercise)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>having a population base of at least 500 within a reasonable walking distance (say 1 km)</li> </ul>
2) Having a critical mass of retail and service businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a thriving hamlet should have sufficient businesses and activities to convey the impression that it is a viable retail and service centre</li> <li>these should be a mix of lower order convenience activities as well as higher order (destination shopping) type items (see below)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there should be at least seven businesses (retail or services activities) in the hamlet to convey the impression that there are 'many' businesses<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
3) Having a variety of lower order service activities in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'lower order' retail and service activities are those that need a relatively small population base to survive because everybody uses them</li> <li>businesses that need a population base of between 1,000 and 2,000 are grocery stores; restaurants; beauty salons; gas stations and auto repair; and accounting / bookkeeping services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>most of the businesses in the community should be 'lower order in nature', serving the surrounding population base</li> </ul>
4) Having at least one 'higher order' function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'higher order' functions are retail and service activities that attract visitors from beyond simply the local area</li> <li>these may be businesses and enterprises that are tourist attractions (such as higher-end restaurants, museums, B&amp;Bs, etc.) or retail and services activities that have a market draw from a larger area (e.g. dress shops, furniture stores, etc.)</li> <li>these will help to ensure that the hamlet is known as a place from beyond just the local area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least one of the businesses in the community should be 'higher order in nature', serving a larger population base</li> </ul>
5) Community Centre function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a thriving hamlet should feature a gathering place where the community comes together periodically for events, activities, special occasions, etc.</li> <li>this creates a sense of community for those in the area, as well as a feeling that the hamlet is the focal point for local community life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the hamlet should have a community centre, a church a park or similar space where the local community gathers periodically for activities, events, etc.</li> </ul>
6) Signage and attractiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a thriving hamlet should have its own identity, and it should be obvious to an external visitor that they are in a place that is distinct from surrounding areas</li> <li>this sense of identity is important from the perspective of businesses who will be concerned about marketing to their clientele (i.e. location, location, location)</li> <li>it will also be significant in terms of those who live in the hamlet, in terms of their feeling of connection to the area, their investment in their homes, involvement in the hamlet community, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>this is a more qualitative measure than the others but it should be obvious to an outsider visiting the hamlet for the first time that he or she is in a distinct place with its own identity</li> <li>in particular, the name (unique identity) of the hamlet should be obvious through signage, business names, etc.</li> <li>as well (and this is the most subjective of all) the hamlet should appear 'attractive'</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> There is a well-known phenomenon in psychology that suggests that 'seven plus or minus two' is a threshold number beyond which most people immediately perceive a collection of items as being 'many' – that is not immediately understood as a specific number. For some people the threshold is as low as five, for others as high as nine, but seven seems to be the average. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Magical\\_Number\\_Seven,\\_Plus\\_or\\_Minus\\_Two](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Magical_Number_Seven,_Plus_or_Minus_Two)

### Analysis of Hamlets

HAMLET	VIABILITY CRITERION						TOTAL VIABILITY SCORE (# of clear 'yes's')
	(1) Having a sustaining population base in the immediate area	(2) Having a critical mass of retail and service businesses	(3) Having a variety of lower order service activities in the area	(4) Having at least one higher-order function	(5) Community Centre function	(6) Signage and attractiveness	
Ashgrove	no	no	no	no	no	no	0
Ballinafad	no	no	no	no	yes	no	1
Bannockburn	no	no	no	no	no	no	0
Brookville	no	yes (7)	yes	no	yes	yes	4
Campbellville	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	6
Crewsons Corners	no	no	no	yes	no	no	1
Glen Williams	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	6
Henderson's Corners	no	no	no	no	no	no	0
Kilbride	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	2
Limehouse	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	2
Lowville	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	3
Moffat	no	no	no	yes	no	yes (basic)	2
Mount Nemo	no	no	no	no	no	no	0
Norval	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	6
Silver Creek	no	no	no	no	no	no	0
Terra Cotta	no	no	no	no	no	no	0

### Approach to Analysis of Hamlets

**Score Summary:** 5 or 6: hamlet appears commercially viable and sustainable in longer term  
3 or 4: hamlet needs some assistance in order to be commercially viable

0 to 2: Commercial function of hamlet or rural cluster is extremely limited or may be representative of an area converting totally to residential

### 3.2.5 Hamlet Categorization

The analysis procedure above has led to the effective categorization of hamlets into three tiers that in turn leads to a 'triage' system of support that enables the Region to allocate resources for hamlet assistance into areas where it will have the greatest leverage effect. Three categories are proposed:

**Tier A:** These are hamlets that appear to be sustainable and viable on their own, without any extraordinary assistance. They are those that have scored a '5' or a '6' on the procedure identified above. In some cases, these are hamlets on the fringe of larger urban areas and are effectively in the process of being functionally incorporated into them. They include: Campbellville, Glen Williams, and Norval.

**Tier B:** These are hamlets that scored a '3' or a '4' on the assessment procedure and, therefore, are in some need of assistance in order to be assured of a thriving and viable future. They are: Brookville, Kilbride, Lowville, and Moffat.

**Tier C:** These hamlets scored a '0', '1' or '2', on the assessment procedure and are likely too small to be assured of a sustained future, lacking many of the basic features that are vital to community identity and functionality. In many cases there is no real physical evidence that a hamlet area even exists. These areas are: Ashgrove, Ballinafad, Bannockburn, Crewsons Corners, Henderson's Corners, Limehouse, Mount Nemo, Silver Creek and Terra Cotta.

The recommended stance for the Region with respect to these clusters or categories of hamlets is as follows:

**Tier A:** Because these hamlets are largely sustainable and viable on their own, they may need less assistance from the Region. These areas should be left 'as is' and dealt with through the normal planning policies of the lower tier municipality (which are Milton [Campbellville], and Halton Hills [Glen Williams and Norval]).

**Tier B:** These are hamlets where Regional assistance, in concert with efforts from the lower tier municipalities, could help to ensure that they are sustainable in future and continue to contribute to the special rural character of the Region. Here the Region should develop a range of assistance mechanisms relating to signage, services support, property improvement (through CIP assistance, etc.) to support appropriate hamlet development and growth. A range of recommendations concerning the types of support that could be provided will form part of the 'Rural Agricultural Strategy'. The lower-tier municipalities that would be affected would be Burlington (Kilbride and Lowville) and Milton (Brookville and Moffat).

**Tier C:** The basic policy recommendation for the Region with respect to Tier C hamlets is to provide no prescribed assistance to these areas. If the lower tier municipalities wish on their own to be proactive about support and assistance to these areas, and are prepared to come to the Region with a defined plan of support, then the Region should respond on a case-by-case basis.



### 3.3 Summary

A look at the rural areas in Halton Region included an in depth assessment of businesses existing inside each of the hamlets and rural clusters along with an assessment of businesses outside of the areas. Obtaining a complete picture of business patterns in the rural area is difficult, especially capturing home based businesses. Recognizing this shortfall, strategies could be developed in the future to help improve the tracking of rural businesses.

Figure 3.45 below shows the summary results for each of the hamlets presented in this section.

**Figure 3.45 – Summary of Businesses in Halton’s Rural Areas by Hamlets**

Hamlet	Local-serving businesses, organizations (e.g. convenience store, gas station, family restaurant, etc.)	Destination businesses (those whose clientele come from a greater distance)	Full-time employment	Note if agricultural or agri-food related business.	Home Based Business
Brookville	10	0	52	0	2
Campbellville	46	16	125	5	0
Glen Williams	9	30	72	0	0
Kilbride	9	0	40	0	2
Lowville	7	0	5	1	2
Moffat	3	1	7	1	2
Mount Nemo	6	0	69	2	0
Norval	27	1	37	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: 2013 Employment Survey and the Rural Survey conducted in 2013

### Conclusions based on Rural Profile

Based on the information gathered through the 2013 Employment Survey and rural survey conducted in 2013 as part of this project, there were 117 businesses and community based organizations in the hamlets and an additional 48 businesses whose clientele are driven from a greater distance. Full time employment is estimated to be at least 407 individuals. Only 9 of the organizations (5.5 percent) identified were related to agriculture and only 8 of the businesses were identified as home-based businesses. These numbers are conservative as it was not always possible to obtain detailed information for each of the businesses identified, particularly home based businesses. There are also very few exclusive agricultural support businesses identified in the rural area. These primarily consisted of a feed mill which has multiple locations, laboratory and large animal veterinary services as well as agricultural organizations that provide benefits to their members. This is not surprising considering that the farm sector has consolidated and as a result the number of clientele seeking these services has declined.

The rural area also hosts a blend of businesses, some of which are agriculturally related and others that are not.

What is remarkable is the diversity of the local economy in the hamlets and rural areas. Many such as farms, garden centres, horse racing, ranches and veterinarians retain strong linkages with agriculture. At the same time, the rural areas serve as home to a number of businesses that could equally well be found in larger urban centres, for example, professional services such as dentists, accounting, lawyers, massage therapists and real estate. The results from the survey of businesses in the hamlets provide further insights into the nature of these businesses.

- There is limited information available to reliably identify businesses in the rural areas, hamlets and rural clusters particularly home based businesses that do not have signage;
- Given the information available, the Regional Employment Survey, in combination with the rural hamlet survey that was conducted specifically for the report, provided the best approach to learning about businesses in each area;
- Home based businesses in the rural areas that were identified through cross referencing information included but were not limited to landscape contractors, health/wellness related businesses, contractors (electrical, roofing, mechanical, construction, excavation), chimney/furnace services, sawmilling and furniture builders, computer consultants and horse riding stables;
- Only 5.5 percent of businesses in the hamlets were agriculture related businesses;
- There are various levels of vibrancy in the hamlets;
- Rural businesses struggle to get access to state of the art technology and high speed internet. This is a deterrent to business development in the rural area.



## Chapter 4

# The Consultation Process







## 4. Consultation Results

Data and statistics provided in the previous chapter have assisted in the development of a profile for what is occurring in the agricultural sector as well as in the rural areas. It provides a high level overview and trend analysis that is important in crafting an effective strategy. Public consultation also plays a critical role in enhancing our knowledge about operational challenges and opportunities that exist and serves to augment our understanding of the agricultural and rural sectors.

### 4.1 The Consultation Process

Consultation is key to understanding the specific needs and interests of the rural community. As noted in Chapter 1, efforts were made to conduct broad ranging consultations. Steps that were taken included:

- Interviews personally conducted with farmer producing a range of commodities;
- An online questionnaire for farmers to complete;
- Interactive sessions with the Working Group and Advisory Committee;
- Meeting with representatives of major commodity groups;
- Survey of businesses in nine Regional hamlets, community organizations and rural businesses; and
- Consultation session with the Citizen's Advisory Panel established specifically to provide input to the RAS.

Input received from these consultations is summarized in this chapter.

Copies of the rural and agricultural questionnaires that were administered as part of the consultation process are included as **Appendix 1** to this report. Detailed summaries of the input received are contained in **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**.

### 4.2 Summary

The input received was wide ranging and comprehensive. It is summarized here as issues and opportunities identified from the process. This input will be critical to informing the strategy and ensuring it is tailored to the specific needs of the Region.

### 4.2.1. Summary – Consultation – Agriculture

In order to assure the continued existence of a strong, vibrant and sustainable agricultural sector, there are two key areas that need to be examined:



There were common themes that resonated with the various groups engaged in the consultation process. Comments arising from the consultations are identified by origin as follows:

- A – Agricultural Questionnaire
- C – Citizen’s Panel
- R – Rural Survey
- ADV – Advisory Group Committee

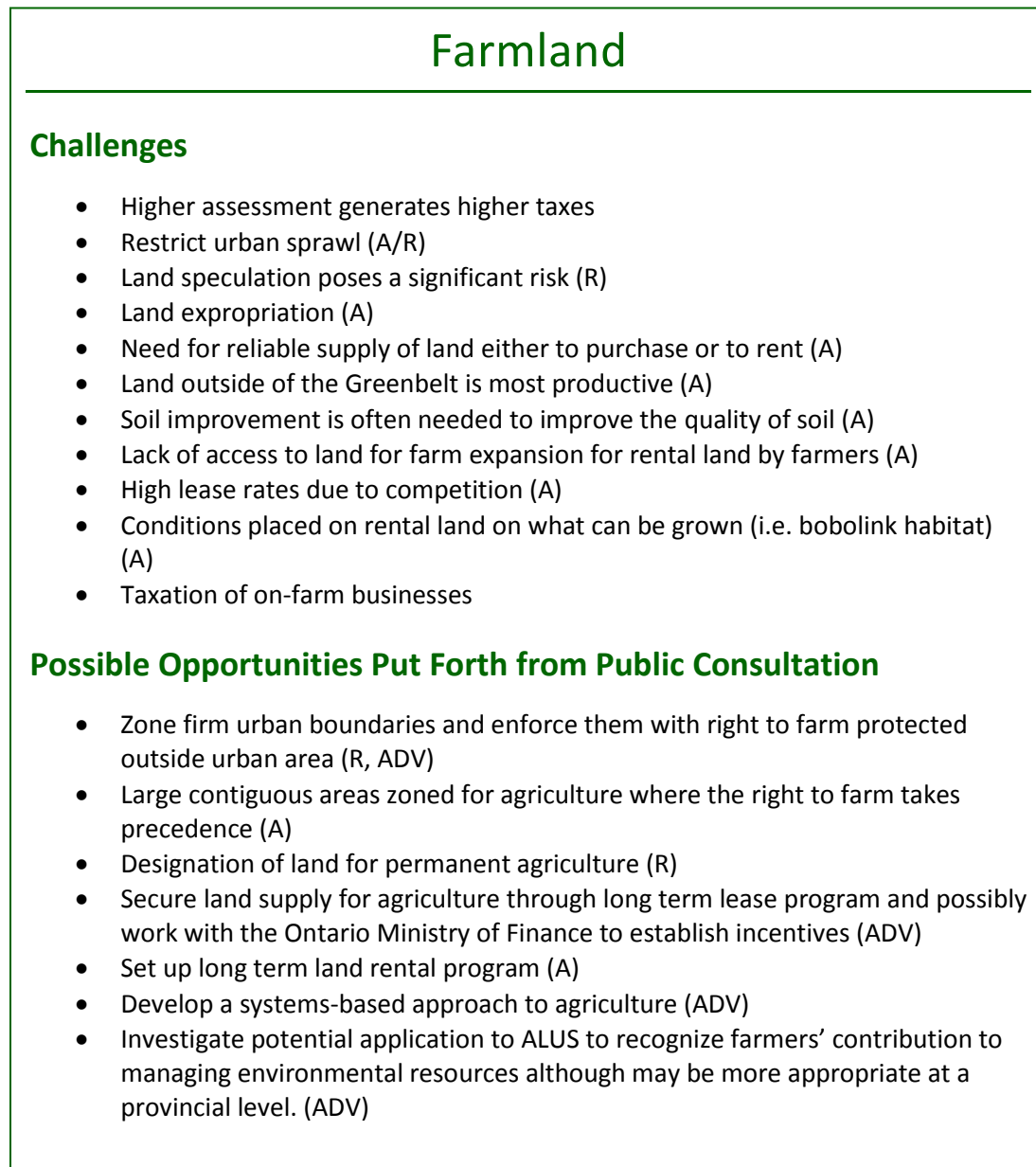
\* **NOTE: these letters are used in all tables in this section:**

Farm viability in particular was separated into a number of topic areas as outlined below:

- Conflicts
- Education
- Financial
- Government/Regulation/Legislation
- Infrastructure
- Labour
- Marketing and Promotion
- Succession and Attraction

A similar breakdown was provided with respect to rural issues in hamlets and rural clusters, and rural areas. These comments are provided in a summary format in themed topics.

**Figure 4.1**



**Figure 4.2**

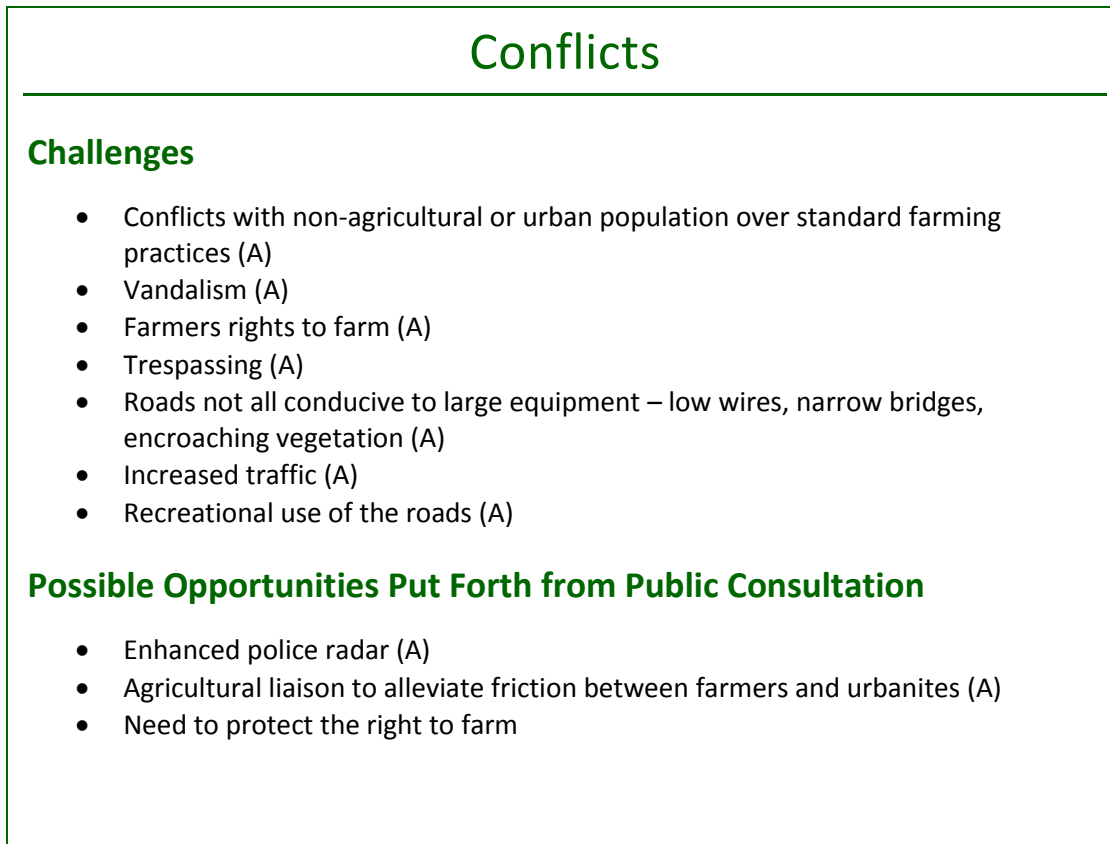


Figure 4.3

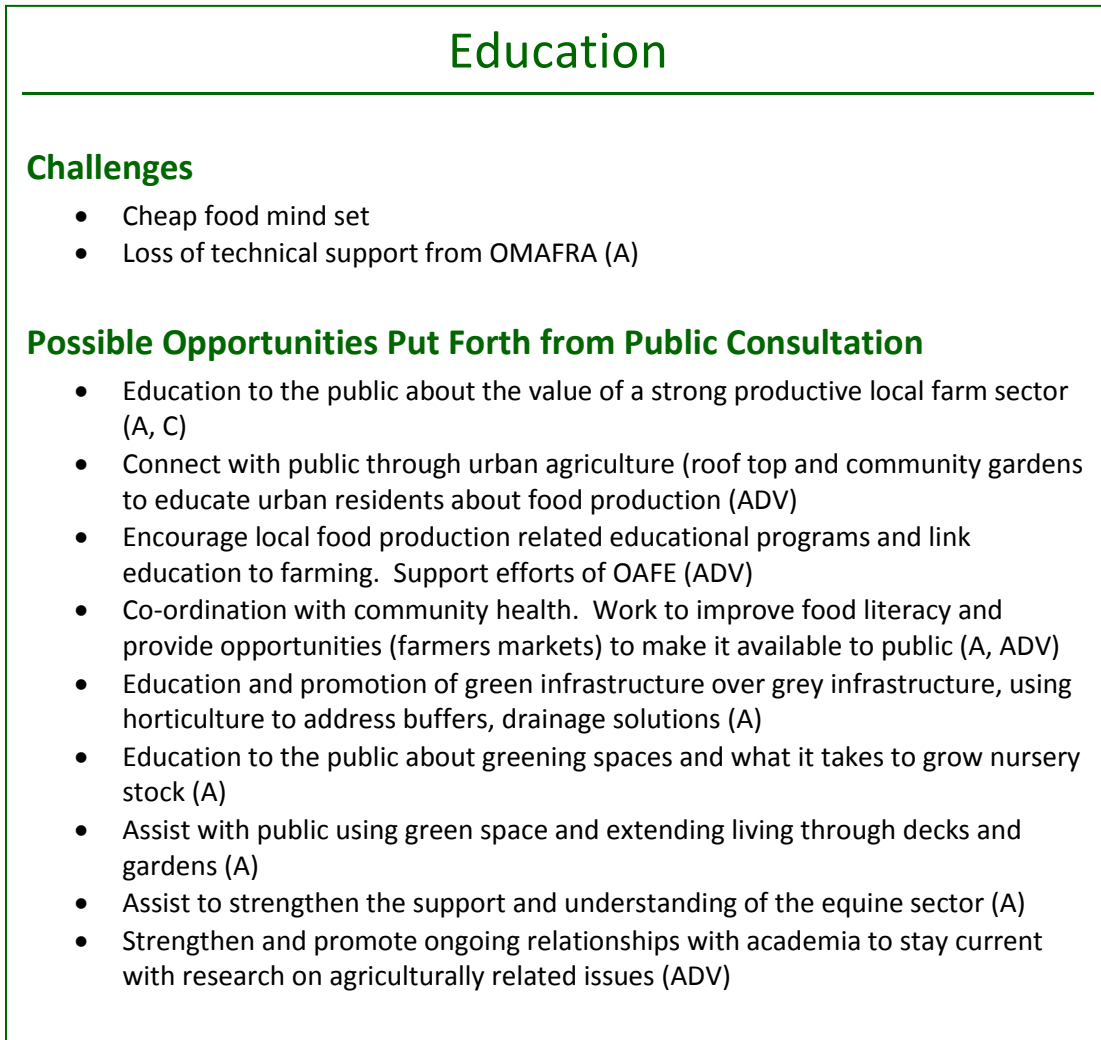


Figure 4.4

## Financial

### Challenges

- Returns are not there for agriculture to support land prices and many farmers need off farm income to be able to farm. Cost of farming in Halton is higher because of cost of land, access to services, development fees, taxes, etc. (A, R)
- Long term stability is required to invest in improvements such as tile drainage/soil improvement (A)
- Farm assets are often needed to fund retirement (A)
- Erosion of farm community
- MPAC ( significant increases in property tax assessments) (A)
- Increased costs for horse operations due to the ending of the slots at racetracks program (A)

### Possible Opportunities Put Forth from Public Consultation

- Create certainty that the ability to farm, expand and adjust as required, is key to maintaining agriculture (C)
- Assistance with business plans. Some businesses such as nursery benefit from being close to the urban population (A)
- Promotion of specific types of agricultural production such as high value crops, ethnic crops, specialty horticultural crops as these markets are flourishing. Accommodate in appropriate places (A, ADV)
- Assist direct farm sales (A)
- Promote local food programs to support local food (ADV)
- Drive innovation. Halton farmers appear to be open to new technology (A)
- Monitor what is being grown in Halton and provide assistance in cultivating crops that respond to changing demands. This is a complex issues perhaps best left to OMAF, AAFC or producer groups (ADV)
- Link with a knowledgeable mentor with extensive farming background as returns are enhanced (A)
- Co-ordination and support of the value chain. Facilitate partnerships between producers and other parts of the food chain. Support the efforts of other agencies that are tackling this. (R, ADV)
- Support value added production, food processing and agri-tourism opportunities (A, R, C, ADV)
- Collaborate with OEF to extend offerings of educational, mentorship and other training programs and strengthen the equestrian industry (A, R)
- Tile drainage program run by municipalities (A)
- Larger maximum sizes for farm retail outlet buildings without zoning variance or major application activity (A)
- Support renewable energy programs (A)

Figure 4.5

## Government/Legislation/Regulation

### Challenges

- Over regulation (A, R)
- Lack of co-ordination between rural community, urban community and industry (R)
- Urban rules seem to apply to rural land (i.e. parking 3 hour limit, sign by-laws) (A)
- Careful discernment of land use designation in the Regional Official Plan prior to its approval (R)
- As the number of farms decrease, the responsibility for giving input on various committees falls on the same individuals (A)
- Local policies should not be more restrictive than provincial policies (A)

### Possible Opportunities Put Forth from Public Consultation

- Intergovernmental cooperation (R, ADV)
- Encourage cooperation between rural and urban planners (R)
- Need to reduce and co-ordinate regulation (A)
- Streamline rules and regulations while decreasing costs, reduce red tape, co-ordinate regulation while promoting innovation (A, R)
- One window approach to create efficiencies and reduce costs and to expedite turn-around times (A, R, C)
- Develop an agricultural system and build policies to support (A, ADV)
- Enforce strong planning controls to protect land and the right to farm that supports land use patterns supportive of agriculture (i.e. large contiguous linked areas with designated farm routes) (A)
- Permit new forms of agriculture with more flexibility (A)
- Gear policies to managing the entire value chain as part of a systems approach (C)
- Exercise strong planning controls to protect the land and the right to farm (A)
- Ensure that Regional planning and environmental policy is balanced, does not constrict the agricultural sector. Implement supportive and co-ordinated planning and environmental policies (A,R, ADV)
- Support and co-ordinate planning and environmental policy (R)
- Decrease development charges to attract investment or renew infrastructure (A)
- Cut red tape associated with agricultural distribution, transportation and storage facilities (C)
- Support for secondary on-farm business, cottage industries and rural support services are strong (A,C)
- Eliminate D/C's for distribution, transportation and storage facilities related to agriculture (C)
- Eliminate development charges on-farm commercial uses of 500 m<sup>2</sup>
- Allow surplus farm dwelling severances (A)
- Zoning to allow businesses that are not strictly agriculture (i.e. landscaping) (R)
- Proper zoning of land to preserve land for agriculture (R)
- Allow zoning to incorporate farms and green space between municipalities (R)
- Continued communication and consultation with the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture (A)
- Municipalities should consider food miles as an indicator in developing policy (systems approach) (ADV)

Figure 4.6

## Infrastructure

### Challenges

- Erosion of rural community (A)
- Need to accommodate drying and storage of grains as farm operations grow (A)
- Accessing parts for combines/tractors/equipment as infrastructure has left (A)
- Loss of many local support services such as seed, fertilizer, farm equipment mechanics, feed, equipment dealers, storage facilities, custom work, veterinarians, horticultural supply companies, greenhouse suppliers, tack stores, blacksmiths, insurance companies, fencing companies (A)
- Lack of abattoirs (A)
- Diminishing water supply (A)
- Road salt contamination (A)

### Possible Opportunities Put Forth from Public Consultation

- Asset mapping required to understand where support services are located and to identify opportunities as well as gaps. This is currently being done by the GHFFA and is part of a systems approach (ADV)
- Support the integrity of the rural community (A,C)
- Enable farm support businesses on-farm (R)
- Identify farm services which would be of most benefit to farmers and facilitate establishment. This can lead to customer order businesses that can access support services to produce product (A, ADV)
- Portable abattoirs (A)
- Develop a database where farmers can get agricultural parts and repair (A)
- Continued financial support for projects that assist with food distribution and food storage. Investigate storage and preservation options for managing local food. Need to clarify what distribution, transportation and storage is meant by farmers and by rural representatives (A, ADV)
- Development of local food hubs and support establishment as being done in Guelph (A, ADV)
- Encourage recovery of waste energy and utilizing alternative sources of energy. Alternative energy could be part of a sustainability policy (C)
- Three phase power, natural gas, high speed internet were identified as ways to reduce costs for business owners (A, R, C)
- Water management or access to untreated water geared towards agriculture as a reliable water source (A, C)
- Preplanning on effective strategies to reduce salt impact on the roads (A)



**Figure 4.7**

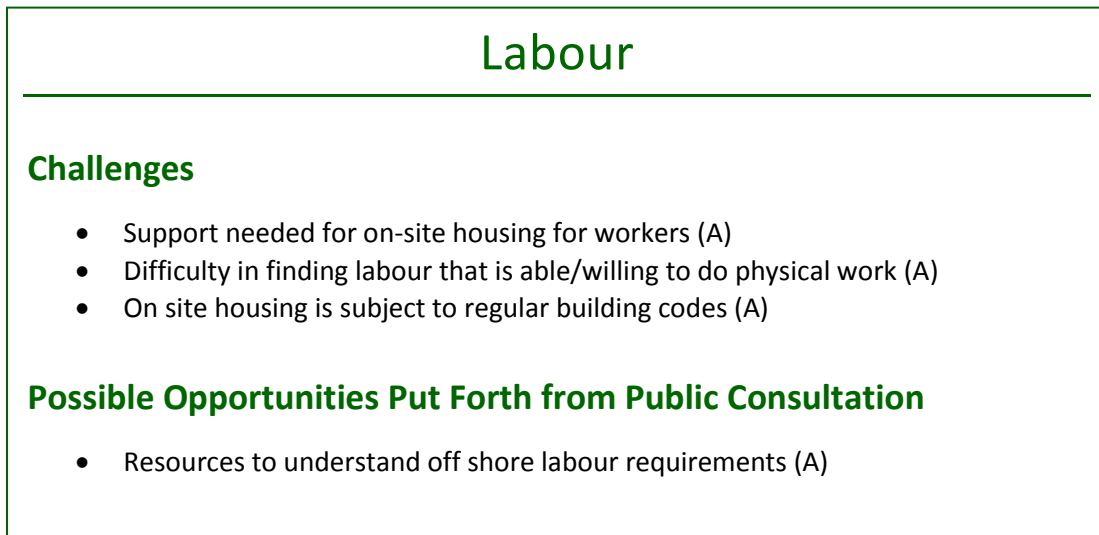


Figure 4.8

## Succession and Attraction of New/Young Farmers

### Challenges

- Aging farmers or lack of young farmers (A)
- Capital investment required for entry to farming is extensive (A)
- Succession is an issue with some farmers however many existing operators have already dealt with succession issues (A)

### Possible Opportunities Put Forth from Public Consultation

- Education about career opportunities in agri-food or agribusiness (A)
- Promote government grants, bursaries, incentives available for those looking to take over the family farm or for future farmers (R)
- Provide programs to assist with farm succession or to introduce new operators (R)
- Develop programs to encourage people who want to start an agricultural or agricultural related business (C)
- Review potential for Regional Farm Start program with public agencies. Investigate model at McVean farm in Brampton or Earth to Table farm in Caledon – perhaps a partnership with Halton Region Conservation Authorities (ADV)
- Consider farm condo's as a way to allow access to lands for new farmers – review Waterloo or Colorado examples (ADV)
- Investigate potential to establish targeted incubator programs (ADV)
- Assist new entrants by focusing on niche markets (A)
- Small plot agriculture could be an entry point but must generate sufficient profit (A)
- Potential for small lot agriculture should be linked to existing supply of rural lots. Identify opportunities and integrate into systems approach. Work with Landscape Ontario and The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance (TOGA) to connect with growers (ADV)
- Support and co-ordinate planning of small plots targeting a return of investment (i.e. high value crops) (C)

Figure 4.9

## Marketing and Promotion

### Challenges

- Lack of co-ordination
- Lack of accurate inventory of existing and developing businesses, and maintaining inventory

### Possible Opportunities Put Forth from Public Consultation

- Assist in the promotion of local food and agriculture and celebrate farming (A, R)
- Inform government of economic contribution of rural businesses (C)
- Drive economic development and tourism (A)
- Support agri-tourism initiatives and strategies to drive economic development (A, R)
- Assist in linking farm operations with local consumers (A)
- Market rural products like we support the wine region with tour buses, field trips and corporate ventures (C)
- Local recipes in stores (C)
- Find ways to increase local foods in grocery stores (i.e. in store demo's, but there are issues around food safety and traceability) (C)
- Expansion of the "Simply Local" program (A)
- Expand on-line presence and offer marketing and advertising opportunities (R)
- Assist with local signage (R)
- Have local schools, hospitals and government offices buy Halton program (C)
- Have more community markets for local farmers to bring produce (C)
- Provide funding for programming to start up more farmers markets in hamlets/villages as a revitalization initiative (C)
- Get corporations to support rural areas, they get tax benefits for supporting other sectors like the film industry, why not agriculture (C)
- Enhance the equine profile in Halton (A)
- Leverage the fact that top equestrian talent across multiple disciplines and most talented equine veterinarians and clinics are located in Halton (A)
- Collaborative opportunity with the Ontario Equestrian Federation to introduce educational, mentorship, coaching and other programming to horse operations (A)
- Market Mohawk raceway as a local food and tourism destination (R)
- Include horticulture in Regional promotions (A)
- Halton Region has the ability to host "gold" equestrian events (same category as Pan Am games) and there are few in the province (A)
- Buy local procurement programs for horticulture (A)
- Develop educational programs to rural landowners to encourage planting of tree's, windbreaks, etc., while improving the habitat for birds (A)
- Weekend farmer workshops
- Recover food for reuse (C)

## 4.2.2. Summary – Consultation – Rural Hamlets, Rural Clusters and Rural Areas Outside of Hamlets and Rural Clusters

Figure 4.10

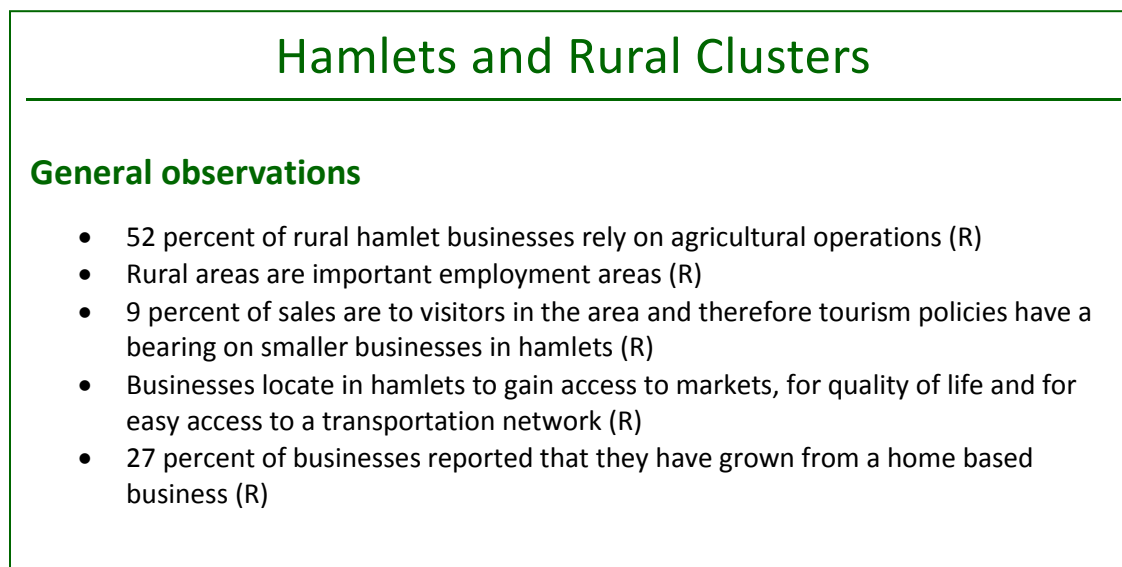


Figure 4.11

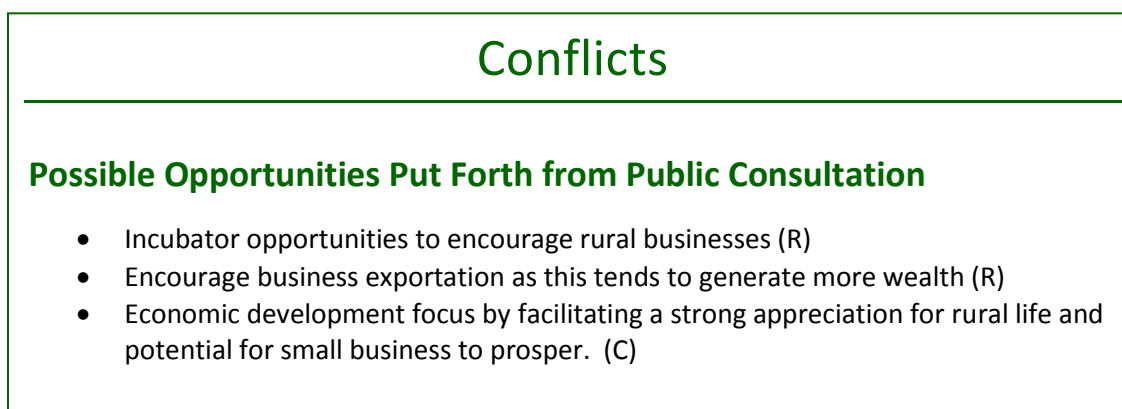


Figure 4.12

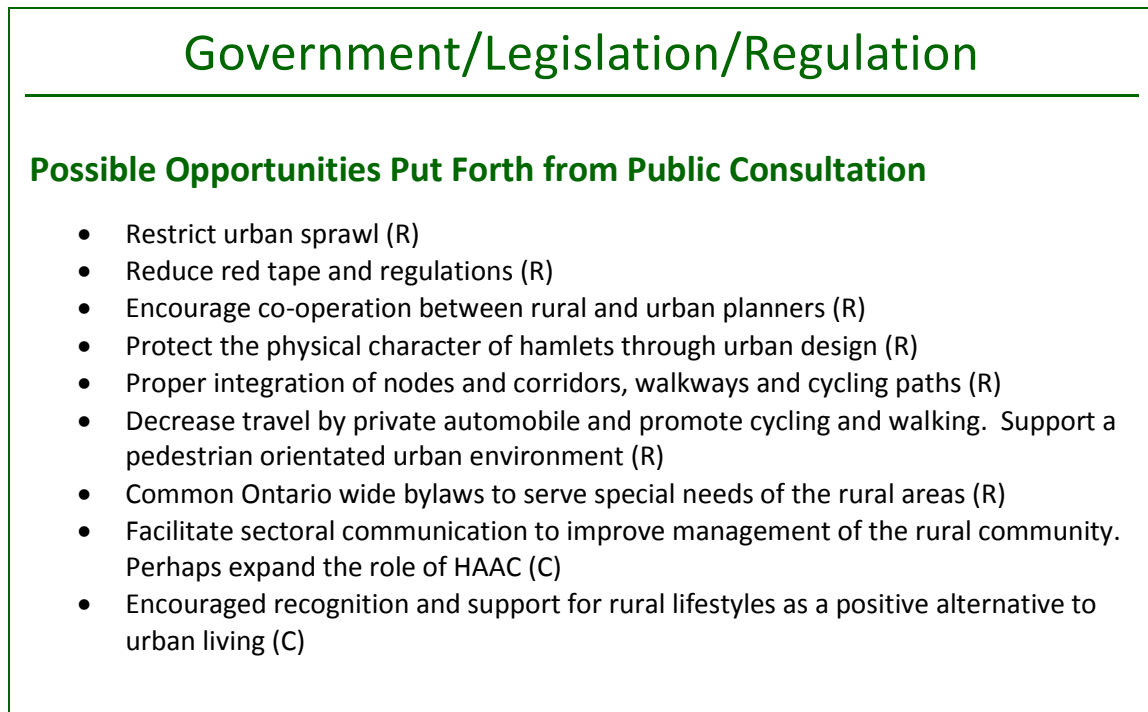


Figure 4.13

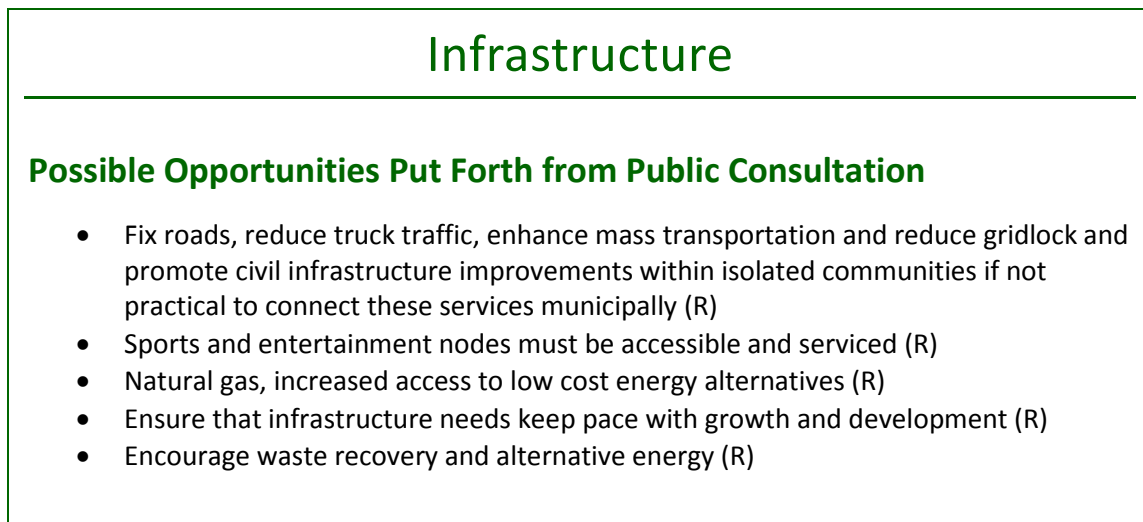


Figure 4.14



Figure 4.15

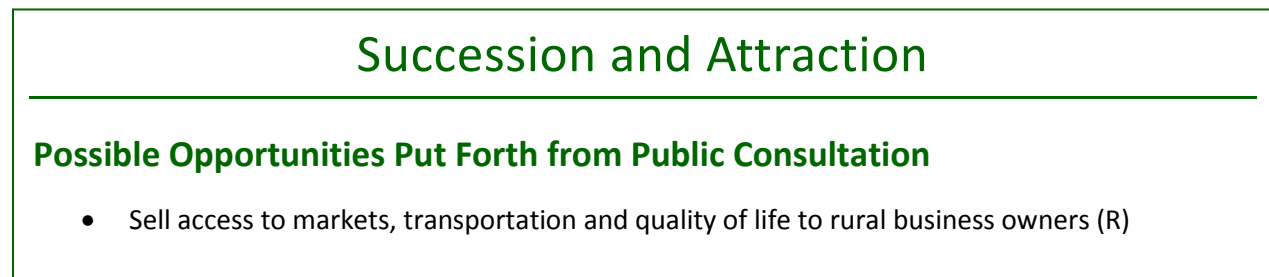


Figure 4.16

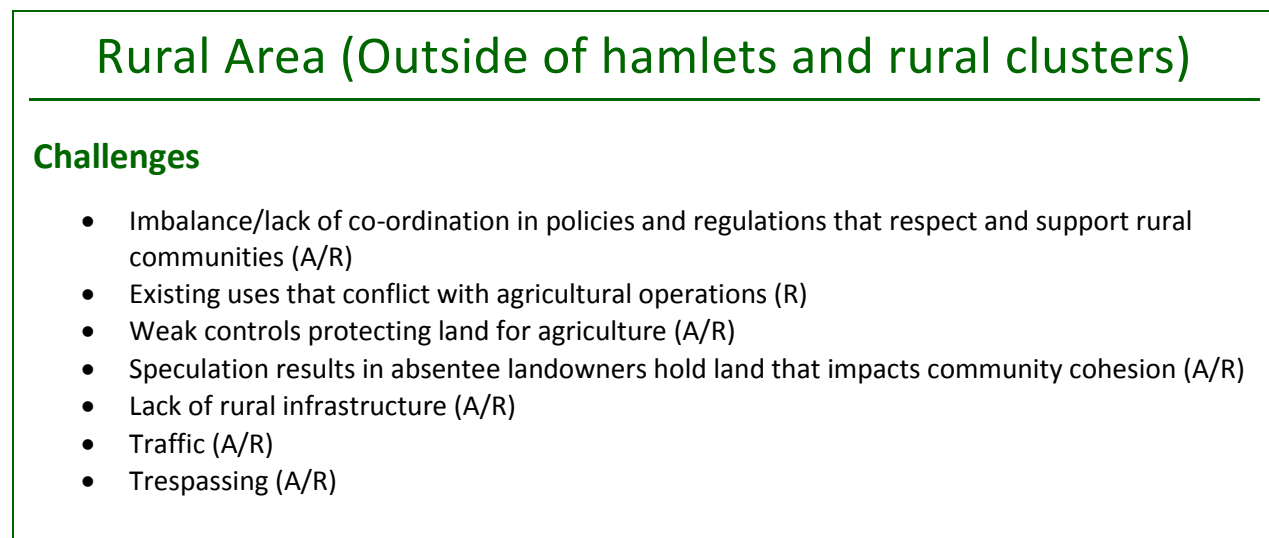


Figure 4.17

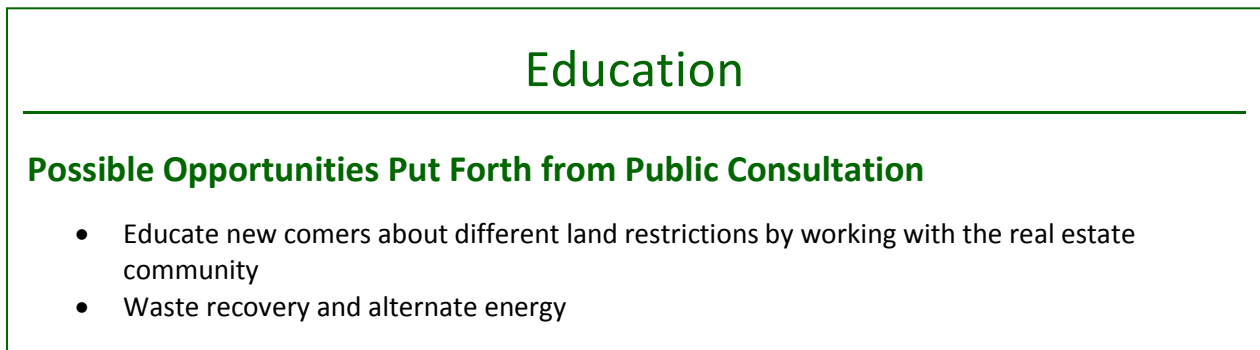


Figure 4.18

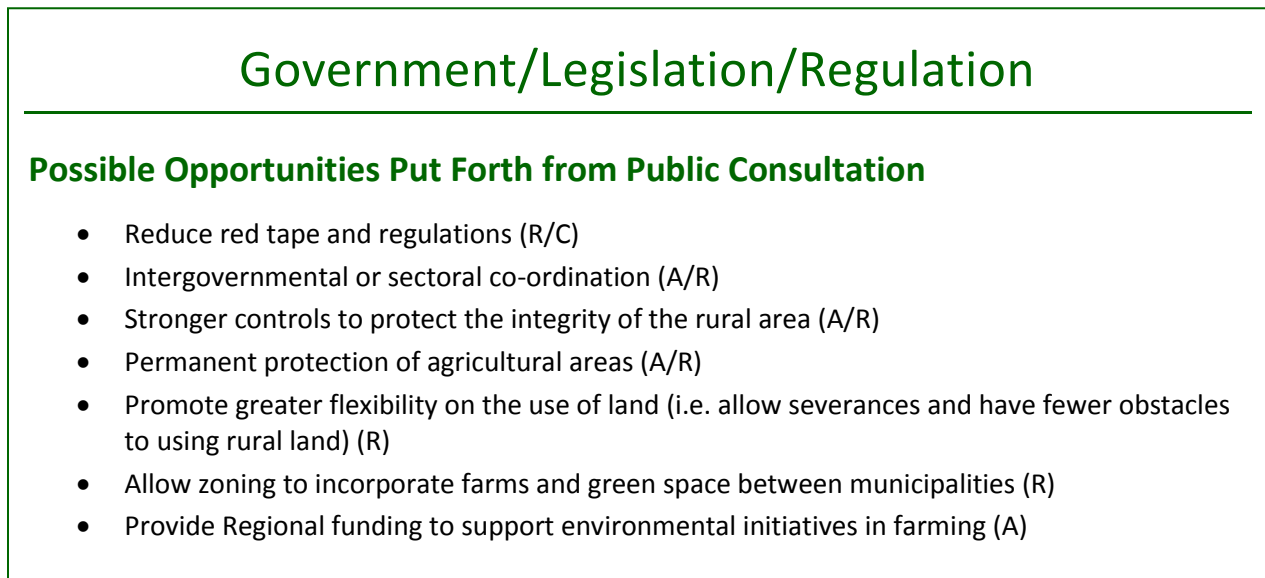


Figure 4.19

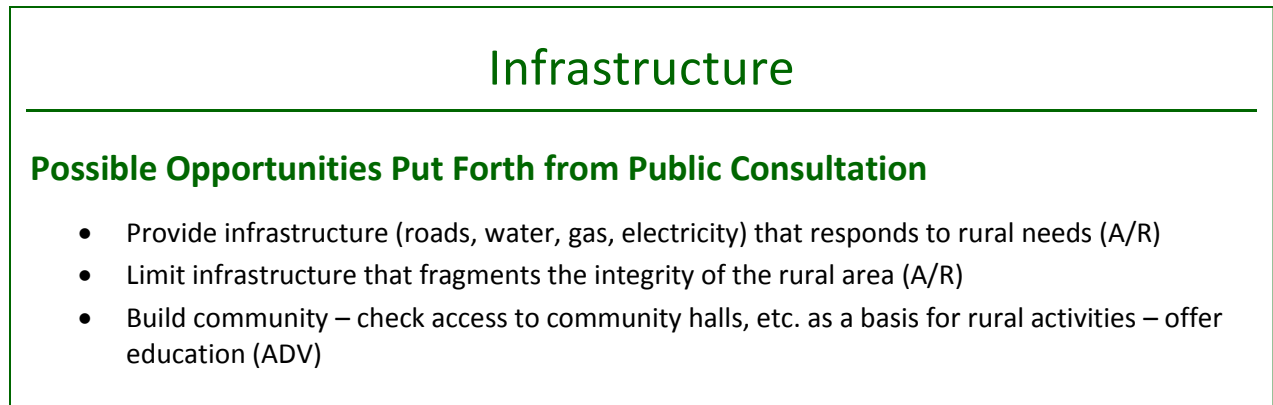
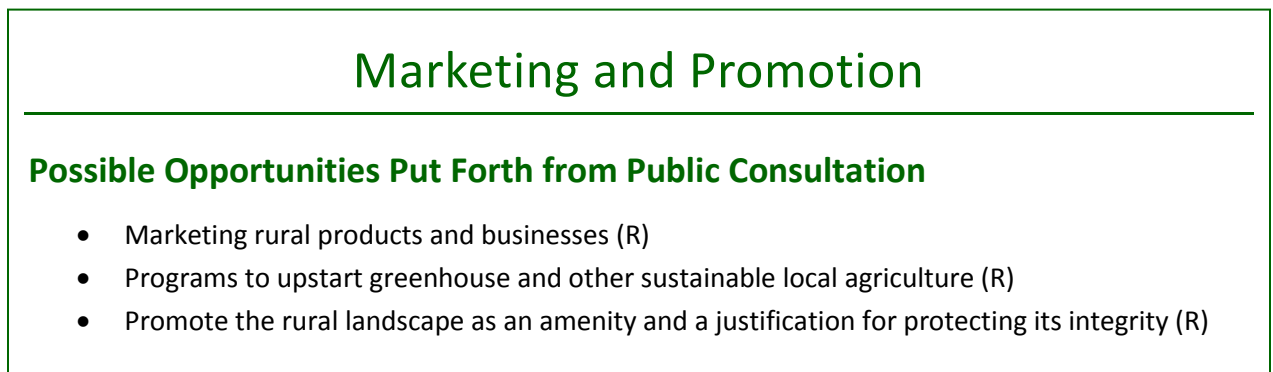


Figure 4.20





## Chapter 5

# Policies, Programs and Plans





## 5 Policies, Programs and Plans

### 5.1 Introduction

In developing a strategy to support and foster a thriving Regional rural and agricultural economy, Halton will be building on its long history of implementing supportive rural policies, working within the provincial policy framework and drawing on proven best practices from around the world.

In this section, the context within which the strategy must work is assessed and potential partnerships with related initiatives are explored to establish the parameters which could drive an effective strategy.

### 5.2 Provincial Policy

In addition to their own rules and regulations, all municipalities are subject to the laws and policies of the federal and provincial governments. While it would not be realistic to discuss all applicable legislation here, it is important in establishing the RAS to understand the major pieces that have implications not just for rural and agricultural areas but for the communities within those areas.



#### 5.2.1 The Planning Act

**The Planning Act**<sup>1</sup> identifies “the protection of the agricultural resources of the Province” (...) “orderly development of safe and healthy communities” and “appropriate location of growth and development”<sup>2</sup> as matters of provincial interest and authorizes the Minister to issue policy statements on these matters. In 2014, the Province issued an updated **Provincial Policy Statement** which addresses the protection of agricultural resources and the management of rural lands. Decisions by municipalities must be consistent with these policies.

### PLANNING ACT

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario, Planning Act R.S.O. 1990, c.P13 as amended.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Section 2, pg. 7-8



## 5.2.2 The Provincial Policy Statement 2014

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act, provides direction on the management of the Province's agricultural and rural resources. The policies address the management of rural areas and emphasize that development must be compatible with the rural landscape, protect locally important agricultural and resource uses and promote recreational tourism and economic opportunities.

The PPS defines prime agricultural land and areas in Sections 1.1.3.8, 1.1.4.1 and 2.3<sup>3</sup>, and directs that these lands shall be protected for agricultural uses unless the land is required for expansion of a settlement area. The other two land uses in the rural area that must be protected under the PPS are natural heritage features and areas as well as aggregate resources. The Regional Official Plan (strikes a balance to manage the relationship between agriculture, aggregate and the natural heritage system).

A revised PPS was released in April 2014 and strengthens the provincial commitment to supporting agriculture and agriculture-related uses. The revised policies provide opportunities to expand on-farm and farm-related uses in the rural area. It contains policies that contemplate limited on-farm diversified uses in the rural area. These policies postdate the development of the Regional Official Plan and provide additional opportunities for expanding rural economic activities which should be noted in the RAS for consideration in the forthcoming review of the Regional Official Plan.

Guidelines regarding the revised PPS were starting to be released for comment at the time this report was released. These guidelines are designed to provide greater clarity around definitions such as value retention, value-added and on-farm diversified use and examples to illustrate potential application of the policies.

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<sup>3</sup> Ontario, Provincial Policy Statement 2005, Section 1.1.3.9 and 1.1.4.1, pg. 6 and Section 2.3, pg. 17.

### 5.2.3 Provincial Plans

In addition to being subject to the Provincial Policy Statement, Halton Region is subject to three provincial plans:

- The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- The Greenbelt Plan; and
- The Niagara Escarpment Plan.

The relevant policies in this plan are noted briefly in this section.

It is important to note that each of these plans (and the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan) will be under review in 2015. This will be the province's opportunity to revise the plans to address any concerns or issues that have arisen since the plans were implemented. When these plans were being implemented in the initial round, a great deal of attention was paid to establishing urban boundaries, designating employment lands and promoting urban intensification. There is an indication that this review will include a greater focus on the management of rural resources. As part of the RAS, Halton should ensure there is significant input regarding the specific challenges the Region is facing in protecting and promoting the sustainability of its rural and agricultural areas.

#### 5.2.3.1 The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Growth Plan) implements additional policies to manage growth and land use for implementation by the Regions and municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan policies pertaining to the rural and agricultural areas are similar to those in the PPS. These policies impose similar requirements for the protection of agricultural land (Section 2.2.8)<sup>4</sup> and support for the rural economy (Section 2.2.9)<sup>5</sup>.

Section 4.2.2<sup>6</sup> requires provincial participation in the identification of prime agricultural areas and specialty crop lands. The prime agricultural areas in Halton were confirmed as part of the preparation of the Regional Official Plan and have been reviewed and endorsed by the province.

The Growth Plan goes beyond the PPS in supporting agriculture by encouraging municipalities to develop farm infrastructure and solicit input on agriculturally related decisions from the farm community. Halton has implemented this direction by appointing and working with a Halton Region Agricultural Advisory Committee that reviews and provides input on agriculturally related issues.

Under the Growth Plan each municipality is required to establish firm urban boundaries within which growth will occur. These boundaries are based on growth projections to 2031. As part of this exercise, employment lands are to be identified. Areas outside the urban boundary are

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<sup>4</sup> Ontario, "Places to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" 2006. Section 2.2.8, pg. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Section 2.2.9, pg. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Section 4.2.2 pg. 31.

protected for rural development, natural heritage, agricultural and aggregate resource management. In The Regional Official Plan, the Region established firm urban boundaries, identified employment areas, designated aggregate resource areas, recognized the Natural Heritage System and confirmed the extent and location of the rural and agricultural areas.

### **5.2.3.2 The Greenbelt Plan**

The Greenbelt Plan contains specific policies (Section 3.1)<sup>7</sup> addressing management of prime agricultural areas, specialty crop areas and rural areas within the Protected Countryside. It encourages external connections to prime agricultural resources and the agri-food system beyond the boundaries of the Greenbelt.

The policies which must be addressed in Official Plans include protection of agricultural land. In doing so, the policies must recognize the relationship between agriculture, aggregates and natural heritage and provide direction on its management. The policies on external connections recognize the need to integrate agriculture in the Greenbelt with agriculture in adjacent areas. The Greenbelt Plan also acknowledges that in addition to protecting land, a rural support system is required for agriculture to thrive. In creating policies for agricultural land, the Region must conform to the policies of the Greenbelt Plan.

The Region has achieved this in its Official Plan and created a systems approach that balances the various features that characterize the rural area.

### **5.2.3.3 The Niagara Escarpment Plan**

The Niagara Escarpment Plan<sup>8</sup> (NEP) first implemented in 1985 applies to a significant portion of the rural lands in Halton. Policies from the NEP have been incorporated in Regional Official Plans on an ongoing basis. The NEP is quite progressive in its management of value-added uses on farms and incorporates policies to allow certain types of rural businesses while protecting agricultural lands. Not only must Halton conform to the requirements of the NEP, the Region can benefit from the lessons learned by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) in developing and implementing policies to balance protection of resources with fostering of a healthy rural community.

## **5.2.4 Regional Policy Framework**

### **5.2.4.1 Regional Planning Policy**

Halton has always supported and protected its agricultural resources through Official Plan policies. The update of the Regional Official Plan to bring it into conformity with the Growth Plan and the

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<sup>7</sup> Ontario, "Greenbelt Plan" 2005, Section 3.1 pg. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Niagara Escarpment Commission, The Niagara Escarpment Plan (2005), updated November 2013.

Greenbelt Plan, maintained the Regional commitment to implementing supportive agricultural and rural policies. Policies are included to:

- Preserve the agricultural land base for long term use of agriculture;
- Prevent fragmentation of the agricultural land base;
- Permit a full range of agricultural and agricultural-related and secondary uses in prime agricultural areas;
- Require local municipalities to designate prime agricultural areas and protect them with supportive policies;
- Manage growth and development in hamlets and established rural clusters;
- Maintain a permanently secure, economically viable agricultural industry;
- Preserve the open-space character and landscape of the Regions' non-urban areas;
- Permit an appropriate range of rural based businesses;
- Support locally grown and produced agriculture products;
- Promote adequate, stable incomes for farmers;
- Encourage farmers to follow conservation and sustainable farming practices;
- Support farmers and their right to farm;
- Prohibit non-farm uses in agricultural areas; and
- Regulate lot creation in the rural area.

As part of the finalization of the Regional Official Plan, the Region worked with the agricultural community to further enhance the agricultural policies and recognize agriculture as part of a Regional rural system.

The Region has an active Agricultural Advisory Committee that provides advice on agricultural issues to Regional Council and staff dedicated to managing and facilitating appropriate rural development.

In compliance with policies in the ROP, the Region has implemented a series of guidelines to address agricultural issues. These guidelines which address; "On-Farm Businesses", "Livestock Facilities" and "Agricultural Impact Assessments" are designed to support existing agricultural operations and create circumstances that foster long-term economic viability.

The Region's Official Plan has provided definitions, stated objectives and provided policies to support hamlets and rural clusters throughout the Region. According to the Official Plan, area specific plans such as secondary plans are to be prepared by the local municipalities for settlement areas such as the hamlets and must be in conformity to Local and Regional Official Plans. Non-farm uses may be permitted in the hamlets. Farmers markets may be established in hamlets.

New lots may be created in *Hamlets* or *Rural Clusters* provided that they conform to the *policies* of the Regional Plan and *policies* in Local Official Plans and, in the case of *Hamlets*, to an approved Area-Specific Plan.

With the 2014 update of the PPS, the opportunities for permitted uses in Ontario's prime agricultural areas has been expanded. Although Halton did establish innovative and supportive policies for on-farm businesses in its most recent Official Plan update, the revised provincial policies provide additional opportunity to further expand these policies. As part of the next Official Plan review there should be a focus on exploring ways to expand the farm support business network while protecting the integrity of the agricultural and rural areas. Additional opportunities for innovative rural and agricultural policies may result from the review of the three provincial plans.

#### **5.2.4.2 Local Planning Policy**

Halton is comprised of four local municipalities, the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville and the City of Burlington. With the exception of Oakville, agriculture plays a significant role in each of these municipalities and is supported by various strategies, policies and programs.

Each local municipality has an Official Plan that conforms to the Regional Official Plan. The local plans provide a more detailed framework for managing local land use. These local policies are implemented through zoning by-laws that are under local control. For the RAS to be successful there must be support and cooperation from the local municipalities and the strategy must respect jurisdictional responsibilities and local initiatives. To facilitate cooperation, staff from the local municipalities participated in the Advisory Committee working on the RAS.

#### **5.2.5 Summary**

The framework of planning policies summarized in this section does place limits on the tools available to the Region in developing and implementing a RAS. However, it also creates opportunities to support and foster rural and agricultural areas. Innovative approaches to implementing policy must be an integral part of the RAS to take advantage of the opportunities specific to Halton.

The 2014 update of the Provincial Policy Statement provided some additional opportunities to support agricultural and rural land uses. The scheduled review of the three provincial plans (the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan) provides a significant opportunity to strengthen provincial support for rural and agricultural areas and ensure policies are in place that will assist Halton specifically.



## 5.3 Relevant Legislation and Regulations

In addition to the planning policies outlined above, rural land owners and farmers are subject to numerous other acts and regulations. The main issue with this bundle of rules is that they are implemented by a variety of agencies, at different levels of jurisdiction who often do not communicate effectively.

### 5.3.1 Provincial and Federal Legislation and Regulation

Examples of provincial legislation that can have an impact on rural property owners include:

- Conservation Authorities Act
- Species at Risk Act
- Ontario Water Resources Act
- The Clean Water Act
- Environmental Protection Act
- Agricultural Employees Protection Act
- Nutrient Management Act
- The Drainage Act
- Fisheries Act
- Pesticides Act

While the importance of managing and protecting the environment for the public good is indisputable, the cumulative impact of dealing with a broad range of rules and regulations, implemented by separate agencies with no single point of contact, can be expensive and time consuming for farmers and rural residents.

Often there are separate agencies responsible for enforcing the legislation adding another layer of bureaucracy. In some instances, specifically with Conservation Authorities, jurisdictions are geographical and there is more than one agency in the Region. When these agencies apply rules differently in different areas, it is frustrating for land owners.

The fact that rural residents, specifically farmers, are stewards of large tracts of land, means that the property they farm can cross several jurisdictions. This makes the implications of applying these regulations more frustrating, time consuming, onerous and expensive. Considering that farm size is generally increasing in Halton Region and across the province, this means this problem is likely to be amplified until it is dealt with.

In addition to regulatory legislation, there is legislation that supports agriculture. Examples include:

- Weeds Control Act;
- Tile Drainage Act;
- The Farming and Food Protection Act; and most recently
- The Local Food Act.

There is no question that this legislation is helpful and it does confirm a provincial commitment to agricultural and rural areas. However, as with the regulatory legislation referenced above, accessing the rights under these various acts can be frustrating and time consuming. Lack of co-ordination by implementing agencies means application is disjointed and the onus and expense of utilizing this supportive legislation must often be assumed by farmers.

One of the newest pieces of legislation to address food production is Bill 36, *The Local Food Act*. Introduced by the Ontario Government in March 2013 the purposes of the Act are to:

- *foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems in Ontario,*
- *help increase awareness of local food in Ontario, and*
- *develop new markets for local food.*<sup>9</sup>

The Local Food Act will also:

- Help increase access to local food, improve food literacy in respect of local food, and encourage increased use of local food, by requiring the Minister to establish aspirational local food goals and targets in consultation with organizations that have an interest.
- Proclaim a Local Food Week that will take place annually, beginning the first Monday in June.

Bill 36 also amended the Taxation Act, 2007 to create a non-refundable tax credit of 25 percent for farmers who donate their agricultural products to eligible community food programs such as food banks. It was offered for the first time in 2014.

The Local Food Fund was also introduced in 2013 to further support growth in the agri-food industry. To date there have been 5 intakes representing 112 projects and a provincial commitment of more than \$16.6 Million to projects.

### **5.3.2 Municipal By-laws and Regulation**

At the municipal level both Regional and local, there are many regulations, administered by different departments that can impact rural land owners. Examples of these regulations include:

- Development charges;
- Roads standards;
- Site plan control;
- Animal control (including controls on farm animals);
- Building permitting;
- Business licensing;
- Firearms control;
- Property standards;

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/localfood.htm>

- Signage;
- Site alteration; and
- Weed control.

Not only does the number and variety of regulations complicate the process of making a living in the rural area, often the rules are geared towards urban residents with little consideration of how they will impact the rural area.

### 5.3.3 Summary

The issues created for rural land owners, specifically farmers, by the number, range and diversity of by-laws and regulations that are in effect are well documented. Strategies for supporting agricultural and rural business operators inevitably identify this as a problem that should be addressed. The challenge for Halton will be to address this issue in the RAS in a fair and equitable manner while maintaining necessary controls.

The existing strategies documented in this report are all focused on supporting and promoting agriculture and rural endeavors. The key in developing the RAS will be to build on these existing strategies, avoid duplication of effort and coordinate actions to maximize effectiveness.

## 5.4 Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Plan

In August 2009, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, in partnership with the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC), of which Halton is a member, hosted a facilitated session with relevant government representatives and stakeholder organizations to discuss the co-ordination of agricultural sustainability issues in the Golden Horseshoe. As the attendees shared mandates related to the sustainability of agriculture, it became apparent that they were addressing similar challenges and investing in similar projects. During their discussion, representatives from agricultural jurisdictions around the Golden Horseshoe including Halton, discussed the various gaps and potential solutions for agricultural sustainability. They agreed that a strategy and action plan was needed for the whole of the Golden Horseshoe including the geographic area of the Holland Marsh. With the establishment of the Greenbelt it was agreed that the timing was opportune to establish a progressive strategy to enhance and promote the agricultural and agri-food businesses cluster in the Golden Horseshoe.

The result of this discussion was the joining forces of the GTA AAC (which included the Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York, and the City of Toronto), Region of Niagara, City of Hamilton and Friends of the Greenbelt to develop the **Golden Horseshoe Agricultural and Agri-Food Strategy: Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2021**" (the Action Plan) to support the food and farming sector in the Golden Horseshoe. The plan which was formally launched in February 2012, focused on specific goals to:

- maintain the land base for agriculture and create the circumstances that support profitable, sustainable farming in the Golden Horseshoe;

- create a positive environment for investors;
- seed new enterprises through commercialization and incubation;
- attract global enterprises as their preferred investment destination;
- raise public awareness about the contribution of the food and farming cluster to health;
- increase access to locally grown food, promoting a consumer culture of quality over price and celebrating Regional product;
- use the experience and connections of the Golden Horseshoe’s diverse population to open markets for food and farming products in countries with rapid economic and population growth; and
- build first class infrastructure to service the food and farming cluster.<sup>10</sup>

Working from the knowledge that the Golden Horseshoe is home to:

- a combination of rich soil, abundant fresh water and a moderate climate;
- a well-established food and beverage manufacturing sector, linked to the food and beverage processing cluster;
- a concentration of food retail and food service businesses driven by entrepreneurs;
- access to abundant skilled labour; and
- multi-modal transportation systems.<sup>11</sup>

The partners supporting the plan established a vision for food and farming in the Golden Horseshoe.

*The Golden Horseshoe is globally renowned as a vibrant food and farming cluster, characterized by profitable farming operations, a thriving hub of food processing, food retail and service businesses, extensive research capacity, innovative technology, and a wide range of healthy and safe products.*<sup>12</sup>

To achieve this vision by 2021 the Action Plan focuses on five key opportunities supported by a range of strategies and actions to address the challenges and achieve the vision.

- A. **Grow the Cluster** so it becomes the leading food and farming cluster in the world, renowned for healthy and safe food products.
- B. **Link Food, Farming and Health:** Educate current and future consumers about the importance of locally-sourced food and farming products for enhancing their health and well-being.

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<sup>10</sup> Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy, Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021, January 2012, pg. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pg. 7.

- C. **Foster Innovation:** Encourage and support innovation to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the Golden Horseshoe food and farming cluster.
- D. **Enable the Cluster:** Align policy tools and their application to enable food and farming businesses to be increasingly competitive and profitable.
- E. **Cultivate New Approaches:** Pilot new approaches to support food and farming in the Golden Horseshoe.<sup>13</sup>

Halton was an active partner throughout the process of developing the Action Plan, viewing it as an opportunity to support and grow the food and farming sector in the Region. In February 2012, Regional Council endorsed the **Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021**, and supported the formation of a Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance with the Regions of Durham, Niagara, Peel, York, the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto, the Ontario Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Golden Horseshoe Federations of Agriculture. In endorsing the **Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021**, Regional Council noted that a key action identified in the Regional Action Plan was development of a comprehensive Regional RAS.

In 2014, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance undertook a number of initiatives including:

- **Agriculture and Agri-Food Economic Profile for the Golden Horseshoe**  
This report summarizes information from the 2011 Census to provide an overview of agriculture across the Golden Horseshoe as well as individual analysis to identify trends over time. Economic, soil, environmental and cultural elements are discussed.
- **Infographic – “Agriculture By the Numbers in the Golden Horseshoe”**  
A one page infographic was developed to summarize the importance of agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe which is home to over 6,000 farms located on approximately 1 million acres of farmland and generating gross farm receipts of \$1.7 Billion.
- **Queen’s Park Day**  
The Agriculture and Agri-Food Economic Profile was launched at Queen’s Park on Nov 4, 2014. Food stations representing each Region in the Golden Horseshoe showcased the great bounty of what is grown. Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance members were on hand to speak with MPPs and reiterate the importance of agriculture.
- **Asset Mapping Project**  
An asset mapping tool is being developed to standardize information collected across the Golden Horseshoe. Asset mapping is a critical step in understanding the numerous food assets that exist in the GH as well as identifying gaps in order to ensure a robust and vibrant agriculture and food system. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food has supported this initiative as there is no existing model that is able to systematically assemble a picture of the agriculture and food system in the Golden Horseshoe. This approach can be used as model for collection of information across other geographic areas in the province.
- **Fall workshop for planners, building officials and Conservation Authorities.**

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<sup>13</sup> Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy, Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021, January 2012, pg. 7.

- Assembling public health staff across the GH to share ideas and resources around local food promotion and food waste.

The development of a Halton based RAS is the focus of this study. In developing the RAS, linking it to and ensuring it coordinates with the **Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021** not only implements the direction of Regional Council, it will allow co-ordination of actions to avoid duplication and foster co-ordination. Knowing that area-wide actions are being implemented will allow Halton to focus on supporting actions of specific benefit to Halton farmers and rural residents.

## **5.5 Existing Strategies Applicable in Halton**

### **5.5.1 Economic Development Actions**

In addition to the RAS, there are other actions already being taken by the Region to support a healthy rural community. In November 2013, the Halton Agri-tourism Action Plan was endorsed by Council (LPS 85-13). Its implementation, which intersects with and can potentially support the Rural Agricultural Strategy through possible initiatives, is outlined below.

Recommendation from Agri-tourism Action Plan	Details (in Action Plan)	Potential Supporting Initiative in Rural Agricultural Strategy
<b>1. Facilitate Direct Procurement Partnerships (DPPs) between Farmers and Chefs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- workshops</li> <li>- networking events</li> <li>- web-based tools</li> <li>- regional food hub distribution model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support this recommendation</li> <li>- endorse feasibility study for food hub distribution model</li> <li>- develop a Terms of Reference for said feasibility study</li> <li>- explore desirability of ‘Grown in Halton’ brand to facilitate these DPPs</li> </ul>
<b>2. Facilitate / promote a series of educational seminars, workshops and toolkits for agri-tourism stakeholders</b>	<p>Focus upon 4 areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>general tourism value-chain workshops</i></li> <li>2) <i>equestrian sector</i></li> <li>3) <i>farmer-specific workshops</i></li> <li>4) <i>restaurant and accommodation-specific workshops</i></li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support this recommendation</li> <li>- develop educational campaign and support materials so that every farmer in Halton is aware of agri-tourism opportunities – particularly with respect to farm business strategy and succession planning</li> </ul>
<b>3. Lead or facilitate the development, execution and promotion of five new experiences leverage existing Regional assets and market-ready businesses to establish Halton as an agri- and food tourism destination</b>	<p>Focus upon 5 new or expanded experiences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>Taste Halton event</i></li> <li>2) <i>Pumpkin Trail</i></li> <li>3) <i>picnic destination product development</i></li> <li>4) <i>4-season destination product development and packaging</i></li> <li>5) <i>equestrian product development and packaging</i></li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support this recommendation</li> <li>- ensure all farmers and agri-tourism operators in Region are aware of the events</li> <li>- provide support for each event and seek input from advisory groups comprised of local farmers and those in the agri-tourism business</li> </ul>
<b>4. Enhance existing products to increase their relevance and appeal to agri-and food tourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhance the ‘Simply Local’ program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support this recommendation</li> <li>- explore potential to promote Halton Region as the ‘GTA’s farm weekend getaway location</li> </ul>

In addition to these initiatives, other potential recommendations in the Agri-tourism Action Plan that could be considered for incorporation in the Rural Agricultural Strategy to support agri-tourism are:

1. **Encourage more farm accommodation:** explore ways and means to encourage farm operators in the Region to create farm accommodation: promote opportunity; remove regulatory constraints where these exist; help create operator's association; and help create brand identity.
2. **Workforce development:** encourage youth in Halton Region to explore careers in the tourism industry – particularly agricultural tourism – facilitate match between employers and youth; work through schools to promote opportunities in tourism overall and agri-tourism specifically.
3. **Encourage investment in agricultural tourism:** profile the size and growth of agri-tourism in the Region and use this information to promote further investment in the sector; this could be on two fronts: 1) investment from within (possible as part of a farm succession planning strategy) and 2) from outside the Region (promoting investment / purchase opportunities available).

### 5.5.2 Halton Food Council

The Halton Food Council was established in 2008 with a goal to increase awareness of food systems, issues and opportunities in Halton. The Council developed a Food Charter which was endorsed by Regional Council in December 2011 and by all four local municipalities in April 2013.

***The Halton Food Council envisions a Halton where:***

- ***all residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food;***
- ***there is a fair and sustainable food system (e.g. local foods are available and promoted, local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported, urban agriculture is encouraged, and food has been produced and distributed in an environmentally acceptable way);***
- ***food is an important part of our heritage and culture.***

The goal of the Halton Food Charter is to increase awareness of food systems issues and opportunities in Halton Region and communicate with a common voice to promote action.

Since its inception, the Halton Food Council has conducted a community food assessment and recently commissioned a study of proactive policy to support community gardening.



### 5.5.3 Summary

The existing regional strategies documented in this section are all focused on supporting and promoting agriculture and rural endeavors. The key in developing the RAS will be to build on these existing strategies, avoid duplication of effort and coordinate actions to maximize effectiveness.

### 5.6 Local Municipal Initiatives

The chart on the following pages provides an overview of several policy initiatives which address and affect agriculture and the rural areas for each local municipality in Halton Region. Not surprisingly, Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills the municipalities with largest rural areas, have the most developed policies. Agriculture and rural lands are not a focus in Oakville.

Policies and initiatives have been pulled from a variety of sources including web sites, summaries of economic development activities, official plans and sustainability plans. Generally, where agriculture is addressed, the municipality has policies emphasizing its importance as a key economic sector and contributor to the unique character of each municipality.

#### Lower Tier Municipalities and Agricultural Policy

Municipality	Policy Document, Report or Information Source	Position Respecting Agriculture or Rural Development
City of Burlington	<i>Securing Our Prosperity – Employment Lands Operational Report</i> , 2012	'Preservation of the rural area' mentioned as a development principle.
	<i>City of Burlington Cultural Action Plan</i> , 2013	No mention of 'agriculture' other than as an industry sector in profile information.  Some discussion that the City still has some pockets of 'rural character', but that this is fading – no strategic action associated with this finding.
	<i>Burlington, Our Future – Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014</i> , 2011	No mention of 'agriculture'.  Principle articulated to 'protect rural communities from urban development' and to 'maintain the rural-urban boundary'.
	<i>Burlington Sustainable Development Committee</i>	Objectives include protection of the environment, integration of natural features and green space, reforestation, balanced development.
	<i>Burlington Official Plan, 2012 update</i>	Land use policies for rural areas, giving priority to preservation of rural lands, rural character, priority of farming, self-sustaining development.  Non-agricultural development to occur in rural settlement areas.

Municipality	Policy Document, Report or Information Source	Position Respecting Agriculture or Rural Development
		Policies for home occupations and cottage industries.
Town of Halton Hills	Web site	No link to separate ‘agriculture’ or ‘rural development’ section – several links to municipal documents and Council minutes dealing with ‘agriculture’.
	<i>Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy, 2013</i>	<p>Rural character of community mentioned in Vision statement.</p> <p>Rural assets of municipality seen as key defining character; maintaining this seen as fundamentally important to community.</p> <p>Balance between urban and rural communities is fundamental principle of plan.</p>
	<i>Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan, 2013</i>	<p>Rural lifestyle seen as key cultural asset.</p> <p>Rural landscapes and hamlets seen as culturally important to preserve and celebrate.</p> <p>Preservation of agricultural landscape seen as key.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpretation and development of agricultural themes recommended as part of cultural plan.</li> </ul>
	<i>Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan, 2013</i>	<p>‘Protect and Enhance Our Agriculture’ is Strategic Direction F (of A to I); strategic objectives here are:</p> <p><i>F.1 To support and promote the agricultural industry as an integral part of the Town economy.</i></p> <p><i>F.2 To support and promote agricultural land uses and other compatible rural business activities.</i></p> <p><i>F.3 To recognize and promote the role agricultural lands play in managing growth and defining community structure.</i></p> <p>Part of corporate mission is to plan for a vibrant urban and rural community.</p> <p>Preservation of the rural character of the municipality outlines as a key goal of the community (includes hamlets and rural settlement areas).</p>

Municipality	Policy Document, Report or Information Source	Position Respecting Agriculture or Rural Development
		<p>'Enhancement' of hamlets and rural settlement areas indicated as important policy area; key initiatives to be endorsed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- signage program for hamlets and rural settlement areas</li> </ul> <p>agri-tourism strategy.</p>
	<p><b>Office of Sustainability – Imagine Halton Hills, Community Sustainability Strategy, 2013</b></p>	<p>Vision focuses on retaining viable agriculture and small town feel.</p> <p>Goal is to develop a vibrant food and agriculture sector. Specific goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Raise community awareness of the importance of viable local food production.</i></li> <li>• <i>Protect and enhance the long-term viability of prime agricultural lands.</i></li> <li>• <i>Facilitate the growth of a thriving local food production, processing, distribution and retailing sector (e.g. agri-food, horticultural, greenhouses).</i></li> <li>• <i>Facilitate the viability of non-food agriculture such as horticulture and equine operations.</i></li> <li>• <i>Expand opportunities for food production in urban areas.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Encourage strong provincial policies to support “near-urban” agriculture and horticulture operations.</i></p>
<p><b>Town of Milton</b></p>	<p><b>Destiny Milton 2 – Shaping Our Future, Economic Development Service Area Plan, 2007</b></p>	<p>Strategy #4 of plan is to 'Sustain the Rural/Agricultural and Tourism Sectors'; contains a number of initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>support for agri-tourism</i></li> <li>- <i>support local food produce</i></li> <li>- <i>encourage niche farming</i></li> <li>- <i>provide local agricultural community with assistance in dealing with local government.</i></li> </ul> <p>Also actions to facilitate other strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>encourage the development of home-based</i></li> </ul>

Municipality	Policy Document, Report or Information Source	Position Respecting Agriculture or Rural Development
		<p><i>businesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>encourage public transit access to rural areas</i></li> </ul> <p><i>encourage appropriate economic activities in rural areas that support the values and character of the rural system.</i></p>
	<p><b><i>Milton Official Plan, 1997, office consolidation 2008</i></b></p>	<p>Plan addresses Rural System and Greenlands System Uses, Niagara Escarpment Area, Rural Areas, Agricultural Area, Hamlet Areas.</p> <p>Strategy is to foster the health of agriculture and to provide for appropriate rural area and agricultural uses.</p> <p>Town recognizes key role of agriculture in the community.</p>
	<p><b><i>Perennial Milton: A Sustainable Outlook, under development</i></b></p>	<p>The plan will focus on the areas of economy, society and the environment. It will integrate fiscal responsibility, social equity and environmental conservation into the decision-making process.</p> <p>Will be an Amendment to Official Plan.</p> <p>Council has adopted Region’s Sustainable Halton Plan.</p>
<p><b>Town of Oakville</b></p>	<p><b><i>Official Plan Livable Oakville, 2009</i></b></p>	<p>Sections address Sustainability, Natural Areas and Open Space.</p> <p>No section on agriculture</p>
	<p><b><i>Local Community Sustainability Plan, under development</i></b></p>	<p>Focus on environment, green energy, water sustainability and climate.</p>

### 5.6.1 Summary

To be effective, local municipalities must support implementation of the RAS. This review of local initiatives confirms that with the exception of Oakville, agriculture is noted as a factor in the community. However with the exception of Halton Hills, it is not seen as a priority by local municipalities. A compelling case supporting the importance of and benefits from supporting the RAS must be made if it is to be successful.

In addition to the above, there are also a number of local bylaws and regulations which can affect farmers and rural landowners.

## 5.7 Summary

As this summary has confirmed, the context within which the RAS must be developed is broad and supportive. Developing a strategy that builds on and expands existing initiatives and encourages strong partnerships with local municipalities and related agencies including the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance will expand enhance the effectiveness of the RAS.



## Chapter 6

# Best Practices







## 6 Best Practices

### 6.1 Introduction

As global awareness about the importance of maintaining strong and vibrant rural communities and supporting local agriculture grows, there is an increasing focus on developing and implementing strategies to support rural communities. In moving forward with the RAS, there are lessons that can be learned from programs implemented elsewhere in Canada and the world to protect and manage agricultural land. This section provides a brief overview of a selection of best practices that could inform the RAS.

To effectively manage an agricultural resource, the scan confirmed that the approaches fall into two categories; protection of the land base and support for agricultural services and programs. Protection of the land base is policy based and most effectively implemented at the provincial or state level with supportive policies at the Regional and local level. The support programs tend to be economic development initiatives implemented by a mix of local and provincial / state agencies.

In completing this scan of innovative rural and agricultural policies and programs, it became apparent Halton has already implemented many innovative actions to support agriculture. Therefore only policies that will strengthen steps already being taken by the Region or programs that represent something that Halton may not have fully explored are noted in this section.

### 6.2 Best Practices

In presenting this overview, it is acknowledged that there are many examples of best practices beyond those presented here. The ones chosen for inclusion in this report are ones that are relevant to Halton because of geography or similarity in circumstances. Also included are some initiatives that have been in place for a period of time that can be evaluated to determine if and how they have been effective. It should be noted that the available tools can be generally categorized as policy based or program based.

Halton is part of Greater Toronto Area (GTA), one of the fastest growing urban Regions in Canada; between 2006 and 2011 the population of the GTA increased by 5.1%<sup>1</sup>. This rapid growth has forced land values up and resulted in an ongoing decline in the agricultural land base as cities expand to accommodate growth. Uncertainty about the future of agriculture in this rapidly expanding Region has resulted in the erosion of both the agricultural community and the service infrastructure required to support it. Faced with an uncertain future, farmers are reluctant to invest in their operations. Halton must address this uncertainty to secure the long term future for agriculture in the Region. Given this, the scan of best practices focused on programs that have been implemented in areas experiencing pressures similar to what is occurring in Halton, so the lessons learned are relevant. Summaries of the referenced programs and other programs that were scanned are contained in **Appendices 6 and 7** to this report.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada Census 2011 (does not include the population of Oshawa)

### 6.2.1 Innovative Planning Policy

In looking for innovative planning policy, it is important to review policies that are developed within a legislative framework that is consistent with the Ontario model. For example, many innovative American approaches incorporate the concept of the transfer of or compensation for development rights. This is a principle which is not consistent with fundamental principles of the Ontario planning system and therefore difficult to implement in Halton. Given this, some of the more innovative programs currently operating in the United States have not been included in this overview.

The scan done of innovative policies that could be helpful in developing the RAS focused on policies associated with the following jurisdictions:

- British Columbia, specifically for Metro Vancouver and Richmond and policies related to the BC Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR);
- Ontario, specifically the Regions of Waterloo and Niagara and the Niagara Escarpment Plan area;
- Quebec Commission de Protection du territoire agricole du Quebec (CPTAQ); and,
- United States, State of Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC).

The lessons learned from these jurisdictions which may be applicable in Halton are summarized below. Key policies are highlighted.

Innovative Planning Policies
<b>Focus: Policy Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impose and enforce a permanent urban/rural boundary.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and maintain an effective buffer along the urban boundary on urban lands to maintain separation between urban and agricultural land uses.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a cohesive, contiguous permanent agricultural area.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement different policies for agricultural uses in proximity to urban boundaries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit all conflicting uses (specifically non-farm residential uses) within the agricultural area while allowing appropriate farm support services.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the need for rural based infrastructure that supports agricultural operations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a systems approach to land use planning that recognizes and supports agriculture as an integral part of a healthy community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize the commitment to food production and strike an appropriate balance for managing environmental and agricultural resources.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow flexibility to accommodate changing and evolving farming practices, and appropriate on-farm and farm-related uses.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strike a balance of flexibility and control.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce the importance of supporting a thriving, sustainable rural community generally and</li> </ul>

Innovative Planning Policies
<b>Focus: Policy Based</b>
specifically for the subject municipality and emphasize the contribution of rural and agricultural activities to a thriving regional economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address agriculture as an economic factor not just a land use.</li> <li>• Manage agricultural land as a non-renewable resource.</li> </ul>
Foundation of Effective Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize and enforce permanent protection of agricultural land.</li> <li>• Geared specifically to protecting agricultural land.</li> <li>• Backed by a strong provincial commitment to agriculture.</li> <li>• Supported by strong provincial agencies to assist in monitoring and protecting agricultural resources.</li> <li>• Policies at all levels are co-ordinated to work together to reduce the regulatory burden for farmers while protecting resources.</li> <li>• Protects the right to farm as an integral element of the policies.</li> <li>• Combines planning policy with economic tools to promote and support agriculture.</li> <li>• Integrates financial benefits to support profitable agriculture.</li> <li>• Accepts premise that maintaining a safe and accessible local food supply is essential to sustaining a healthy community.</li> <li>• Addresses the need for farm-related uses.</li> <li>• Balances the requirements associated with competing land uses.</li> <li>• Supported by comprehensive national and Regional policies acknowledging importance of food and farming.</li> <li>• Respect the mandate of different jurisdictions, protection works as a partnership.</li> <li>• Alternative mechanisms available for securing agricultural land.</li> <li>• Financial incentives support policies.</li> </ul>
Lessons to Be Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC municipalities have generally been ahead of Ontario municipalities in developing and implementing strategic plans to support agriculture. The plans and records of implementation are helpful in gauging what works and what challenges have arisen. Retaining control at the provincial level with a strong commitment to land preservation is essential to maintain the integrity of the Agricultural Land Reserve. Edge planning is key to ensuring the conditions exist to support successful farm operations.</li> <li>• Niagara has the advantage of having “specialty crop lands” within its boundaries which are subject to more rigorous provincial policies. This has allowed more flexibility in developing policies to support production on these lands. Niagara has used this flexibility to implement policies and programs specifically designed to support the type of agriculture that</li> </ul>

## Innovative Planning Policies

### Focus: Policy Based

characterizes the Region. Examples of this include a municipally based irrigation system in Niagara-on-the-Lake and innovative policies for on farm support businesses.

- The Niagara Escarpment Plan provides a good example of flexible planning geared to protecting a physical resource. With recent changes to the PPS, there is potential to consider applying a similar approach to a designed rural area.
- Waterloo has to the extent possible within the provincial policy framework, implemented a firm “Countryside Line” to create certainty and stability in the rural area. Using natural features to establish the line has helped enforce permanence.
- Presence of the Mennonite community in Waterloo, while creating some planning challenges, has contributed to the health of the rural community and informed the process of effective rural planning.
- In Quebec, the Act to Preserve Agricultural Land (LPTAA) passed in 1978, imposed agricultural zoning over approximately 63,500 square kilometers. The LPTAA is managed provincially by a Commission and has been effective in preserving the land base. Over time starting in 1988, some responsibilities for regulating non-agricultural land use activities in the preserve were transferred to municipalities. However, the province continued to enforce strong control over retaining the agriculture land base. This partnership approach appears to be effective in preserving the agricultural land base.
- The approach used in Oregon could have applicability in Ontario. It is based on the state requiring the establishment of an urban growth boundary based on approved population projections. This urban boundary is bordered by an urban reserve to accommodate an additional 20 years of urban growth. The urban reserve lands can only be developed if need is substantiated by the municipality to the satisfaction of the state as part of a comprehensive planning exercise. In the interim, there is no land division permitted in the urban reserve, uses are restricted to agricultural uses and agricultural tax rates apply. Beyond the urban reserve is the rural reserve which cannot go into the urban reserve for 50 years. The rural reserve is further divided into “agricultural land” and “high value agricultural land” based on soils and potential for irrigation. High value lands receive the highest level of protection. Land division and non-farm residential uses are prohibited. Adherence to this policy by local municipalities is strictly enforced at the state level.
- Despite the variety of controls, all jurisdictions continue to struggle to preserve agricultural land in the face of urban growth. The most effective controls are those which create certainty for the farming sector by establishing firm urban boundaries and placing strict controls on rural land. Typically these policies are implemented by senior levels of government over sustained periods and supported by relevant, effective programming with a focus on financial sustainability.

### 6.2.2 The Agricultural System

Halton's planning vision specifically lays out a vision where the future landscape will always consist of three principle categories of land uses in large measures;

- Settlement areas with identifiable communities
- A rural countryside where agriculture is the preferred and predominant activity,
- A natural heritage system that is integrated within settlement areas and the rural countryside, to preserve and enhance the biological diversity and ecological functions of Halton.

The land uses are considered to be complimentary.

The Natural Heritage System is a systems based approach to protecting and enhancing natural features and functions across the province. It is based on four key principles which includes;

- Maintaining biological diversity
- Avoiding habitat fragmentation
- Promotion of corridors and linkages
- Maintaining water balance that sustains ecosystems

The development of a similar systems approach has been suggested for agriculture. The concept of an agricultural system appears in the Greenbelt Plan (2005). It speaks to the agricultural system being made up of specialty crop, prime agricultural and rural areas. It also identifies the agricultural system as providing a continuous and permanent land base to support long-term agricultural production and economic activity. In addition, there is acknowledgement that the farms within the agriculture system also contain natural heritage and hydrologic features. The stewardship of the land has provided both agricultural and environmental protection and therefore these systems are not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary. The notion of an "agricultural system" however, does not appear in the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement.

In fact it is interesting to compare the provincial approach to agricultural systems as compared to the natural heritage system. Jason Thorne, in the Ontario Planning Journal (2014, Volume 29(1)), noted that:

*"In considering how effective provincial policy has been in protecting various land use interests, it is informative to compare the treatment of agricultural lands with the treatment of natural heritage areas. Provincial policy requires the proactive identification of natural heritage systems so that the most important areas can be protected, and their ecological functions maintained, for example. A similar systems-based planning approach is not, however, mandated for agricultural areas, and the fragmentation of agricultural lands continues."*

As a municipality, Halton's Regional Official Plan takes the first step in making reference to an agricultural system and an agricultural area. It states a similar goal as outlined above "to maintain a

*permanently secure, economically viable agricultural industry and to preserve the open-space character and landscape of Halton’s non-urbanized areas”.*<sup>2</sup> The areas of the agricultural system consist of two components: lands designated as Agricultural Area and those parts of the Region’s Natural Heritage System outside the key features or where the only key feature is a significant earth science area of natural and scientific interest.

Dr. Wayne Caldwell<sup>3</sup> addresses the concept of an agricultural system and its components in a paper released by the Greenbelt Foundation in May 2015. It provided insights into the elements that are part of an agricultural system and that planners need to consider in developing policies to manage the resource. As noted above, Halton in its Official Plan, has taken positive steps in introducing the systems concept into its policy framework. However to effectively move forward with a systems approach, provincial policies supporting a systems approach to managing agricultural land, need to be strengthened. In the meantime, Halton should start to identify the essential components of the Regional system and protect them. Key to this will be addressing the critical infrastructure required to support agriculture and ensure it is place.

### 6.2.3 Supporting the Agricultural Community

The focus in this review was on best practices for supporting existing rural and agricultural activities in proximity to expanding urban areas. The scan done of innovative policies that could be helpful in developing the RAS, focused on policies associated with the following jurisdictions:

- British Columbia, specifically Metro Vancouver ;
- Britain, specifically London;
- Australia, the Sydney Region; and,
- United States, specifically New York and North Carolina.

The lessons learned from these jurisdictions that may be applicable in Halton are summarized below.

<b>Supporting The Agricultural Community</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish strong connections between farmers and consumers to better define and meet critical goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote industry co-ordination.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on a broad range of holistic goals which address reinvigorating rural economies, promoting job growth, and increasing access to healthy food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinate actions of all levels of government.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Official Plan, Part III-Land Stewardship Policies, Land Use Designations, Agricultural System and Agricultural Area.

<sup>3</sup> W. J. Caldwell, The Agriculture System • Greenbelt Foundation May, 2015

Supporting The Agricultural Community
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect the contribution of local accessible food production with healthy and sustainable lifestyles.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed by dedicated staff which understands modern agriculture.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a variety of programs geared to a diversity of farm types and sizes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster a vibrant agricultural business sector through programs focused on research, outreach, information transfer, marketing, business planning and adoption of new technologies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage innovation and creativity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the link between stewardship of the environment and sound agricultural practices.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on urban agriculture as an educational tool to raise awareness about food production.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve farmers as an integral part of developing and implementing strategies and identifying needed support infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept and support agriculture as a permanent, evolving land use.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement comprehensive strategies that define, link and support all aspects of a healthy rural community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish partnerships between planning, economic development, public health and social agencies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support rural and agriculturally based infrastructure programs to address needs for irrigation, energy, marketing, storage and packing facilities, efficient transportation services, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of senior levels of government as an integral part of program delivery.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to a provincial strategy which in turn links to national policies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on farmer led programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong, clear commitment to agricultural sustainability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs are managed by dedicated staff, knowledgeable about rural and agricultural issues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive plans that draw on public support and promote the importance of production as a basis for a successful strategy, <i>“Our plan begins where our food begins – on farms, in community gardens, and atop roofs across the five boroughs and throughout the region. To meet the needs of our growing population and achieve a more secure food system for the future, we must support our Regional farmers and reconnect New Yorkers to their food. Our plan is to facilitate urban-rural linkages to help farmers bring their food to city markets”</i>.<sup>4</sup> (New York City)</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> New York City Council “Food Works A vision to Improve NYC’s Food System”, 2010, pg. 10.

<b>Supporting The Agricultural Community</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Lessons to Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful programs consistently focus on a limited number of pragmatic, achievable, results oriented actions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs focused on supporting profitability are most effective.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe and the UK are ahead of North America in understanding the importance of national food security.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. communities take a more holistic approach to strategies and have access to more flexible tools to address issues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinated, inclusive strategies that are locally based and actively involve residents representing all components of the rural community are most effective.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of incentives is key.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful programs respond to local circumstances</li> </ul>

### Value-Added

The focus in this review was on best practices for supporting value-added agriculture which entails changing a raw agricultural product through packaging, processing, cooling, drying, extracting or other method to obtain a higher market value.

<b>Value-Added</b>
<b>Focus: Policy and Programs Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling policies.</li> <li>• Encourage innovation.</li> <li>• Additional demand for local products and the ability to extend local offerings.</li> <li>• Assisting and providing resources for the local entrepreneur.</li> <li>• Creates new employment in rural areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives have been used particularly in the United States to drive innovation.</li> <li>• Value-added centres or small business incubators can help foster interest and development of value added products.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons To Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful programs provide education and support necessary to develop or produce value added products.</li> </ul>



## Local Agricultural Products Including Local Food

Although the term “local food” is the one most commonly used, it should be broadened to “local agricultural products” to incorporate all agricultural offerings in Halton. One of the largest commodity groups is nursery, a sector that does not produce food but products that enhance the quality of life for residents. The equine sector, although not producing food, offers many products and programs enjoyed by the public. Therefore in this section, the term “local food” should be replaced with “local agricultural products”.

For encouraging consumption of local product, best practices range across a broad spectrum of actions designed to address all types of operations; from small scale farm gate sales to farmers markets to food hubs linking farms and local businesses (retail and food service) to contracts with large multinational operations.

<b>Local Agricultural Products (Local Food)</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centrally co-ordinated with public sector involvement to address gaps in the value chain.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear definition of “local” that is comprehensive enough to cover a range of agricultural products.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pragmatic solutions to managing supply issues (seasonality, availability, facilities, linkages between producers and their market).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient network for producing, managing and marketing local agricultural products.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public and institutional commitment to using local agricultural products.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of programs designed to address different scales of operations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connected to agri-tourism and recreational programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An effective champion who supports the local movement over a period of time.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for new businesses as they become established and commercialized.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links to public health and education agencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A culture that values and promotes local food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership of diverse stakeholders working on common and achievable goals to market local agricultural products.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained commitment to local food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure supply.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies and programs that provide opportunities for new businesses to be established.</li> </ul>

<b>Local Agricultural Products (Local Food)</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Lessons to Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a culture of “buy local” requires sustained effort.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination is key to establishing and maintaining the partnerships required to sustain a “buy local” program.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility is required to adapt to changing circumstances and capitalize on emerging opportunities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing education of the public about how agriculture works, what products are available and the benefits of buying them is essential.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A public champion with the resources to build and support the system and to sustain an ongoing commitment to it is key to success.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central co-ordination of the value chain is important to ensure all of the required elements for sustainability are present.</li> </ul>

Essential for developing a strong local food system is infrastructure which supports new agri-food businesses and links producers to consumers. Increasingly, public agencies are implementing programs to identify local producers and provide them with opportunities to market their product. This can occur through farm gate “buy local” programs such as the Halton “Simply Local” program; through farmers markets which currently operate in Acton, Aldershot, Burlington, Georgetown, and Oakville or through newly emerging initiatives such as food hubs and agri-food business incubators. Characteristics of these new initiatives are outlined below. Examples of relevant programs are contained in **Appendix 6**.

### **Local Food Distribution/Food Hubs**

<b>Local Food Distribution/Food Hubs</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the local area.</li> <li>• Have an educational component to inform the public about the benefits of supporting local production.</li> <li>• Scale of operation based on local needs.</li> <li>• Supported by local food charter defining terms of reference.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed in response to local circumstances and products.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons to Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food hubs manage the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution and marketing of</li> </ul>

local food. Their main focus is to manage supply chain logistics by supporting producers. Currently, the Ontario Food Terminal located in Toronto is the closest thing to a Regional food hub but plans are in the works to establish facilities in Durham Region and Eastern Ontario. Other more locally based food hubs are being established. Examples can be found in Oxford County, Sudbury and Ottawa.

### **Agri-Tourism**

The focus in this review was on best practices for supporting the agri-tourism sector through examination of successful policies and programs in other jurisdictions. The scan done of innovative approaches that could be helpful in developing the RAS, focused on policies associated with the following jurisdictions:

- British Columbia, specifically the British Columbia Agri-tourism Alliance (BCATA);
- New Jersey;
- State of New York and the Cornell Farming Alternatives Program;
- Georgia Agri-tourism Program;
- North Dakota State University; and,
- Government of Victoria, AU.

Agri-Tourism
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
Themes of Effective Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliance of all sectors involved in the agri-tourism industry (attractions such as farms, wineries and breweries, equestrian activities, garden centres, etc.); festivals and events; support services (e.g. B&amp;Bs, restaurants, specialty food stores, etc.).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logical ‘systems’ approach taken to development of agri-tourism strategy, where all components of the industry, from production to consumption, are involved.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal organizations and alliances are key agencies in both the planning of strategy (in concert with government agencies and organizations) and delivery of activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of the economic impact (current and potential) of the industry is undertaken to demonstrate both the current impact of the sector as well as the potential for growth.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to awareness-building and education, some other programs offer financial support to operators to stay in agriculture.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-tourism is promoted in some jurisdictions as a means to reinforce and maintain the agricultural community – primarily, it is a tourism initiative to maintain the rural ‘look and feel’ of the countryside as a tourism asset (e.g. Italy).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing / branding of a Region as an agricultural destination offering ‘agricultural experiences’ is very important.</li> </ul>
Foundation of Effective Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation is a key theme: working effectively with all sectors in the agricultural ‘system’ to develop a workable and sustainable strategy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance from higher levels of government is often essential (e.g. training, marketing, legislation to enable certain land uses).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking an economic impact assessment of the size of the industry can be an effective tool to demonstrate to policy-makers that the sector is of a significant size and is thus worthy of attention.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of on-line resources for potential operators in the field has been a key tool in some instances (e.g. North Dakota).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a ‘code of conduct’ for operators in the industry is also a means of ensuring quality control as well as binding operators in the business into an organization with common philosophy and expectations.</li> </ul>
Lessons to be learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All demonstrate the ‘systems approach’ – the various components of the sector working cooperatively together through a dedicated agri-tourism organization.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a positive and compelling brand identity that builds upon the agricultural history of the area is critically important.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment with and support from provincial and state government tourism agencies and their objectives helps ensure success.</li> </ul>

#### 6.2.4 Farm Succession

Farm succession is an issue that can be considered on two levels: as a specific issue related to the intergenerational transfer of farm properties; and as a general issue related to the ability of new operators to get into the business of farming.

The specific issue of dealing with individual properties was the focus of the interviews conducted with Halton farmers, the results of which are summarized in [Section 4](#) and [Appendix 3](#). Generally on a farm by farm basis, many operators have dealt with succession, often with the support of the “Growing Forward” program. Additional support is needed on the broader issues related to the future of farming in Halton. For there to be a future for agriculture, land must be available at an affordable price, there must be opportunities for new operators to enter the sector and there must be farm support infrastructure in place.

The review of best practices related to farm succession was divided into those related to intergenerational succession and into general succession to a new generation of farmers.

Succession is a complicated issue to address and the best practices related to it focus on different aspects of the challenge. There are programs designed to:

- introduce new operators to farming;
- provide access to land to experienced farmers;
- preserve farmland in perpetuity.

Those reviewed as part of this review included:

- Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) programs;
- Farm Start;
- Parks Canada’s urban park project; and
- Ontario Farmland Trust programs

A summary of other examples of “Farm Start” like programs and summaries of the referenced strategies are contained in [Appendix 7](#) to this report.

The focus of the various programs referenced above varies. Farm Start and aspects of TRCA’s programs are focused on education, incubation and introducing new operators to agriculture. The Ontario Farmland Trust program is focused on protecting the agricultural land base. Parks Canada’s program to establish the Rouge National Urban Park and TRCA’s approach to accommodating agriculture on the lands they manage in the Rouge Valley, combine educating the public about agriculture, preserving farmland and allowing area farmers access to additional resources.

## Intergenerational Succession

Intergenerational Succession
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate on existing blocks of public land typically acquired for purposes other than securing agricultural land (i.e. conservation authority land.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered through partnerships.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured programs based on clearly articulated goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong educational component.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered by knowledgeable, committed resource personnel.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation limited to defined time periods to ensure optimum access for all.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on food production.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate on small plots of land.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed agency with available land base.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources to provide experienced staff to teach and guide participants.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure source of funding.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from a senior level of government.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons to Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TRCA has been a leader in promoting the premise that agriculture is an appropriate use on public land.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TRCA programs are multi-faceted, they teach the public about agriculture, provide opportunities for new operators to get involved in and learn about agriculture and provide experienced farmers access to additional land.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although it just celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Ontario Farm Land Trust is still in its infancy. It took time and commitment to set up the legal framework to accommodate easements. Now this is in place and functioning efficiently the focus can shift to increasing the amount of land being protected and to providing access to this land for new and established farmers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As Canadian society shifts from a rural-based to an urban-based population, it will be critical to educate the population about agriculture, its importance for sustainability and the opportunities associated with it. Public agencies are taking up this challenge through inclusion of agriculture in public parks, allowing the use of public land for agricultural programs and facilitating urban agriculture.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion of agriculture as a use in the Rouge Park sets a new model for recognizing the importance of farming not only in providing food and agricultural products but as part of the cultural landscape and as a contributor to the public interest.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the value of land in Halton, finding alternative ways to provide access to land for agricultural production may be key to its survival as a permanent part of the Regional landscape. To address this, new models of farm operation such as those summarized in <b>Appendix 7</b> should be considered.</li> </ul>

## General Succession and Attracting New Farmers

<b>General Succession – Attracting New Farmers</b>	
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>	
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial issues adequately addressed.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility taken by family members to discuss and resolve issues.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside assistance focused on business planning, accounting and legal advice.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready access to additional land to expand the operation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility in responding to changing markets.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong connection to the land and to the surrounding rural community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to services.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on long range business planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism regarding future for farming in the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong intergenerational commitment to the farm.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to grow the business.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong business management skills.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of a cohesive rural community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial stability.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons to Be Learned</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make a long term commitment to an agricultural operation there must be certainty about the ability to operate profitably over the long-term.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operators value a vibrant, cohesive rural community that supports farming operations.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial issues – assurance of adequate retirement resources for the older generation and profitability for the younger generation is essential.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with business planning is important.</li> </ul>

### 6.2.5 Health/Education/Food Literacy

Over the last few decades public health agencies have increasingly been active in promoting the link between healthy eating, access to food and good health. The Toronto Food Policy Council has been a leader in promoting the importance of local food since the 1990's and public health agencies are hearing the message. In conducting the scan of best practices, it became apparent that Halton Public Health is also a leader in advocating the importance of securing and retaining access to local food. As part of its mandate, it facilitated the creation of the Halton Food Council, (discussed in the previous section) which is promoting collaboration on ensuring access to "*adequate affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food*". To do this, the Council emphasize that it is important that "*local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported*". Around the world health agencies are promoting healthy sustainable food production as a way of improving lives.

The scan of best practices did confirm that Canadian agencies are leaders in this area. Other countries where there are an increasing number of programs focused on the link between local food supplies and health are found in the United States and Europe.

<b>Health/Education/Food Literacy</b>
<b>Focus: Mix of Program and Policy</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide urban residents with understanding, appreciation and support for sustainable local food system.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect urban consumers with producers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong educational component focused on schools and early childhood programs for mothers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team approach with public health officials working with other agencies to understand and address health issues related to food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote realistic local food procurement policies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage access to fresh local food for urban residents through a variety of mechanisms including: farmers markets, co-operatives, direct community food boxes, and partnerships with food banks.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of how the food production process works.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible policies that respect food cycles and seasonality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed knowledgeable health workers able to carry out programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong partnerships that include the agricultural sector.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from a parent agency.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources to implement and sustain programs over the long term.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons To Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating the promotion of locally grown food into public health programs in Ontario is relatively new and efforts have been somewhat inconsistent and disjointed. Working with public health to develop clear realistic goals is required for planners and community organizations to provide focus and ensure programs are attaining the desired and appropriate goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking of food and health is a positive development and one that can benefit all concerned. Producers increase their market, consumers develop a better understanding of what is available locally, the importance of local food production is promoted, access to fresh product improves and the establishment of good eating habits results in a healthier population.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The best programs are based on partnerships between producers, health agencies and end users where there is open communication to ensure all the needs of all participants are understood and addressed. Participation by farmers is critical to success.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lot of misinformation regarding food production. Education based on an accurate understanding of agriculture is key to ensure the public understands the facts about local food.</li> </ul>



## 6.2.6 Urban Agriculture

According to Bill 36, the Ontario Local Food Act, passed in 2013, the term “*local food*” refers to:

*“(a) food produced or harvested in Ontario, including forest or freshwater food, and  
(b) subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario;<sup>5</sup>”*

“*Urban agriculture*” as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs is:

*“(…) food production in urban areas, whether it is for personal consumption, commercial sale, education or therapy. It can take a variety of forms, including:*

- *gardening and livestock raised in backyards;*
- *container gardening on balconies or rooftops;*
- *community gardening and city allotments.”*

Local food production and its sustainability in Halton should be a major focus of the RAS.

Urban agriculture should be part of this discussion as it builds on the common interest that all residents in the Region have in maintaining viable local food production. Encouraging urban agriculture will build public understanding of and links to food production in the rural area.

There are a myriad of laudable goals associated with local food production and urban agriculture; sustainability, accessibility, sufficiency, quality. What is lacking is co-ordination in strategies to maximize local food production and link it efficiently to processors and consumers. In order to assess best practices in supporting local food production, work done in Ontario was the most helpful, specifically a study done by the Metcalfe Foundation “**Food Connects Us All**”<sup>6</sup> which addressed the lack of co-ordination in the food system that leads to inefficiencies. The other report that was of interest “**Best Practices in Local Food**”<sup>7</sup> was produced by Deloitte on behalf of the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network.

For urban agriculture many of the best practices identified came from American cities, Seattle, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

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<sup>5</sup> Ontario, Local Food Act 2013, Bill 36, Section 2.

<sup>6</sup> Metcalfe Foundation “Food Connects Us All: Sustainable Local Food in Southern Ontario”, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Deloitte, “Best Practices in Local Food, A Guide for Municipalities” in association with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network. 2013.

<b>Urban Agriculture</b>
<b>Focus: Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prominent public spaces (including roof tops and land around government facilities such as airports) cultivated for food production.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public funding used to leverage private funding.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff resources to co-ordinate agriculturally related activities in urban areas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages between rural and urban food production.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of opportunities to sell product (markets, mobile stands, community food baskets, local retail outlets, cooperatives).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to local food and connections to local growers by local chefs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive strategy addressing production, processing, marketing, distribution and retail.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established Food Council which works with the Agricultural community to develop and implement a pragmatic food charter.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive planning regulations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political commitment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong public awareness of and commitment to local food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective promotion of local food.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple, accessible options for accessing local food.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons to be learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a successful urban agricultural program takes time and commitment. It represents a change in the way of doing things and change requires adjustments.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination between all partners is required for local food production to be successful. At present there is still a great deal of disconnect in the system which is costly and inefficient.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking production, processing and retail is key to successful local food programs. If consumers demand local product, success will be achievable.</li> </ul>

### 6.2.7 Hamlet Revitalization

The focus in this review was on best practices for supporting revitalization of the nine hamlets across Halton Region through examination of policies in other successful jurisdictions. The hamlets include Brookville, Campbellville, Glen Williams, Kilbride, Lowville, Moffat, Mount Nemo, and Norval. The scan undertaken of innovative approaches that could be helpful in developing the RAS, focused on policies associated with the following jurisdictions:

- Individual small-town and hamlet revitalization strategies in specific municipalities (Ancram, NY; Clayton, NY; Orleans, NY; Lyme, NY; South Bruce, ON; and others);
- Prince Edward Island’s Rural Action Plan.

<b>Hamlet Revitalization</b>
<b>Focus: Policy Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamlets recognized as a vital part of the supply chain for the agricultural industry as they provide nearby services that are necessary to the industry (e.g. machine shop and repair services, veterinary services, etc.).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamlets are attractive for regional development because they offer entrepreneurs low cost premises and (often) available facilities in which to start and grow a business.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and build on the vital role that hamlets play in contributing to the rural and agricultural “look and feel” of a community that supports tourism and promotes the rural quality of life to potential residents.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues related to infrastructure and maintenance issues: safety of street intersections; quality of streets and sidewalks; buildings’ state of repair are addressed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective and attractive signage.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal policies that differentiate hamlets from larger settlements and urban areas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear boundaries between the hamlet and surrounding rural land uses.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a balance between flexibility and enforcing necessary regulatory requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating a hamlet as a complete entity through co-ordinated policy rather than as piecemeal property-by-property approach is a more effective strategy (e.g. encourage local investment through Community Improvement Plans for rural areas, Heritage Conservation Districts, upgrading services, etc.).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-municipal cooperation in the development of a hamlet revitalization strategy can be an effective means of implementing positive change (e.g. the Towns of Clayton, Orleans and Lyme in New York State; possibility [for the Region of Halton] of creating upper- and lower-tier joint municipal CIP for hamlet improvement).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reinforcement of identity for certain hamlets through signage, branding, marketing, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hamlet revitalization policy is consistent with the Region’s agri-tourism policy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hamlet revitalization policy is co-ordinated with the Region’s transportation policy in order to reduce traffic and promote infrastructure improvements in selected hamlets.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons To Be Learned</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An unstated issue in the review of the best practices, but one that seeps through the analysis</li> </ul>

<b>Hamlet Revitalization</b>
<b>Focus: Policy Based</b>
on all fronts, is the loss of identity of small hamlet areas as they become swallowed up by urban development or municipal amalgamation which forces them to become part of a larger entity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinated, inclusive strategies that are locally based and actively involve residents representing the hamlet are most effective.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamlet vitality is often strongly linked to the economic health of a few businesses that dominate the hamlet's economic base and thus will be affected (in some cases) by economic factors beyond the municipality's or Region's control (e.g., exchange rates, economic restructuring, provincial policy affecting the horse racing industry, etc.).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will be important to work cooperatively with large employers such as Woodbine Entertainment Group, given its importance to the Region's and the hamlets' economic vitality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability of the hamlets to accommodate a wide variety of businesses and organization types in a small geographic area, and local residents' ability to live with this strange mix of uses and quirks is a strength and a key to the hamlets' ongoing vitality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diversity of uses that characterize some small rural settlements represent a lifestyle choice to the artists, independents and iconoclasts who are less comfortable in a more traditional "urban" or "suburban" environment.</li> </ul>

### 6.2.8 Business Incubators

<b>Business Incubators</b>
<b>Focus – Program Based</b>
<b>Themes of Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the local area.</li> <li>• Bundles services together in one place.</li> <li>• Co-ordinated through a public agency providing access to resources for new businesses.</li> <li>• Focusing on helping new businesses get established.</li> </ul>
<b>Foundation for Effective Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinated by a public agency with sufficient resources.</li> <li>• Provide support programs to maximize potential for success.</li> <li>• Designed in response to local circumstances and products.</li> <li>• Access limited to new businesses that are given time to become established and then must move out.</li> </ul>

### Lessons to be Learned

- Establishing and sustaining new businesses associated with agri-food production, processing and distribution can be challenging. Providing support during the initial stages of business development is key to building strong sustainable operations. This is being done through food incubators where new businesses can access space and resources to help them get established and grow.
- These are evolving concepts so there must be flexibility to allow adjustments as lessons are learned.

### 6.3 Summary - Lessons to be Learned

There are many lessons to be learned from practices being implemented by others around the world. The most successful strategies are ones that focus on clearly defined actions specifically tailored to the needs of region in which they apply. Successful programs are broadly defined to address all aspects of food and farming. Partnerships between urban based local food groups and rural producers are critical to success. Urban residents and rural residents must understand their differences, their common interests and the benefits that will accrue from working as a team to support food and farming and the rural community.

Policies for supporting rural development and agricultural production on lands surrounding metropolitan areas in Canada and around the world are focused at several levels but share certain strategic objectives. Most commonly, goals focus on linkages to local agricultural products, availability of healthy food for everyone, and agricultural sustainability based on the criteria of being environmentally sound and profitable. The importance of supporting agricultural production and associated rural businesses is understood and the mechanisms to do so are in place.

Without exception, agricultural policies that support achieving these goals include keeping farmland in farming (firm urban-rural borders, farm trusts, designated agricultural areas/nodes, etc.), and supporting farm profitability where land values may surpass production value. Less apparent, but of great importance, is the need for flexibility in regulation to allow innovative and emerging agricultural practices the opportunity to become established and to grow. Strong, established rural communities that incorporate an agriculture service sector provide stability for primary production.

Regardless of the approach, to be effective, programs or practices need to have strong and sustained support from all levels of government. Agencies must work as partners to sustain all of the elements required for a viable and productive agricultural sector to thrive.

In scanning practices around the world, it became clear the Halton is a leader in implementing innovative and progressive actions to support its rural community. However despite this, the sector continues to decline. Now is the time to learn from best practices and develop a strong, co-ordinated strategy to reverse this decline.



## Chapter 7

# Findings







## 7. Findings

### 7.1 Analysis of Findings

In order to focus on the key findings that would provide the most effective basis for the RAS, a “SWOT” analysis was conducted of the preliminary findings outlined in the previous section.

A **SWOT analysis** is a structured planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with a sector. Separate SWOT analyses were conducted for the agricultural / rural area and the rural settlements and hamlets. The key findings from the “SWOT” are summarized in the following sections.



The analysis of the key findings confirms that developing an effective RAS for the rural community in Halton will be complex. The range of actions that could be implemented is broad. To be effective the RAS must focus on the key actions that the Region can effectively undertake. The SWOT analysis will assist in selecting and prioritizing these actions and ensuring that those which will be most effective in sustaining a healthy rural community are implemented. Applying this analysis to determining what these actions should be is the focus of developing the **Rural Agricultural Strategy**.

### 7.1.1 Agricultural / Rural SWOT

The following summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is applicable to the rural lands in Halton. This area incorporates the land area designated as Agricultural Area and Regional Natural Heritage System in the Regional Official Plan.

## *Strengths*

1. An established agricultural sector with a core group committed to farming.
2. Existing community of farmers with an accumulated reservoir of knowledge, skills to draw on and an interest in continuing to farm in Halton.
3. The majority of the rural area both in and outside of the Greenbelt is prime agricultural land and can produce a wide diversity of crops.
4. Climate is moderate with warmer winters than most parts of Ontario and Canada allowing more temperate crops to thrive.
5. Major transportation corridors in close proximity with access to large urban and international markets.
6. Close to major markets and urban consumers — both domestic and export.
7. The Greenbelt legislation has provided for stability and a measure of control over planning variables that enables more orderly and predictable growth and development in the Greenbelt area.
8. Strong Regional support for a permanent agricultural community.
9. Access to water and other services.
10. Diverse commodity profile with focus on greenhouse, nursery, equine, cash crops, poultry and mushroom.
11. Long term planning policies recognizing and supporting agriculture.

## Weaknesses

1. Ongoing decline in amount of land under production.
2. Aging farm population.
3. Rising operating costs, variable returns.
4. Livestock production has become increasingly regulated which is pushing livestock production to less populated rural areas.
5. Layers of regulatory controls increases complexity, cost and length of time to obtain approvals and decreases certainty about securing permissions. (e.g., Halton Region Conservation Authority; Niagara Escarpment Commission; Provincial Ministries; Region of Halton, local municipalities.)
6. Uncertainty about the future for farming in the Region discourages investment in long term farming operations.
7. Competition for the agricultural land base both amongst farmers and between farmers and non-farmers.
8. The cost of land makes acquisition for farm purposes uneconomical.
9. Conflicts between agricultural users of the land and urban-oriented residents.
10. Farm operations composed of multiple, often dispersed parcels leading to inefficiencies in production and sub-optimal use of resources constrained by lot size restrictions.
11. Greenbelt designation does not cover the most productive agricultural land in Halton.
12. Non-agricultural uses becoming increasingly dominant in rural and agricultural areas.
13. Barriers to expanding on-farm businesses associated with planning regulations and tax implications.

## Opportunities

1. Close proximity to specialized agricultural services (e.g. cluster of greenhouse research and support facilities in Hamilton and Niagara).
2. Access to services required for greenhouse, nursery, mushroom, vegetable and fruit operations (water, electricity, transportation corridors).
3. Existing food processing cluster that can be expanded and linked to existing agricultural production.
4. Supportive Regional government with programs to assist farmers logistically and financially.
5. Recently revised Provincial Policy Statement allowing expanded on-farm use and farm-related uses.
6. Diverse ethno-demographic, resulting in demand for new crops and new products which supports opportunities for more diversity; niche crops and new varieties adapted to growing on smaller parcels of land.
7. Willingness on part of Regional and local governments to expedite the approvals process — a facilitator position to work with business to deal with approval processes.
8. Potential to co-ordinate Halton based economic development programs and provide incentives to attract commercial and industrial farm-related development and support expansion of existing operation.
9. Potential for innovative agricultural production which can be made more competitive by (a) intensification (more greenhouse production systems on lesser quality land); and (b) innovation (e.g., support introduction of new varieties that resonate with consumers while providing higher returns to the growers).
10. Access to key inputs and resources (e.g. water for agricultural applications like irrigation) and opportunity to leverage existing infrastructure assets.
11. Continuing focus on value-added agriculture, where it is scaled appropriately, by allowing for on-farm enterprises including ones that engage the public directly.
12. Acknowledging and building on ecological goods and services that are provided by agriculture.
13. Facilitating use of smaller properties to encourage niche operations highly specialized for specific emerging markets.
14. Innovative policies supporting nursery and landscaping businesses.
15. Reuse of farm buildings with architectural value that are part of the rural landscape but no longer needed as part of farming operation.
16. Work with Health Unit to promote healthy living and access to fresh, local food.
17. Link urban residents with rural residents through education and programs.
18. Co-ordinated review of the four provincial plans, three of which impact Halton (GB, GPGGH, and NEP) used to strengthen policies to support agriculture.
19. Finalization of the Regional Official Plan should allow effectiveness of new policies to be demonstrated.
20. Review of ROP scheduled—use opportunity to continue to implement innovative and permissive policies to support agriculture.
21. Leverage Local Food Act and government commitments to supporting local food production.

## *Threats*

1. Sense of pessimism about the future of agriculture in the Region.
2. Decline in sense of community amongst agricultural and rural residents.
3. Loss of farm services and infrastructure.
4. Lack of public understanding of farm practices and rural environments.
5. Traffic congestion combined with property fragmentation makes farming large areas challenging.
6. Cost for younger farmers (even those with long term connections in Halton) to get into and continue farming in Region.
7. Complex and costly approvals process for farm-related development.
8. Lack of access to clean water for agriculturally related purposes.
9. Negative impacts of urban related servicing (i.e. road salt, urban road standards).
10. Lack of future workers with the interest, experience or technical skills to support the increasingly high tech needs of agriculture.
11. Shortage of agricultural workers knowledgeable about and willing to work in all areas of the sector.
12. Growth drives high land values with associated tax implications rendering area unaffordable for agricultural production.
13. Fragmentation resulting in presence of small parcels which are developed for non-farm uses (often residential) and increasing conflicts with agricultural and rural practices.
14. Public perception of rural area as recreational space leads to conflicts (trespass, use of rural roads as recreational trails).
15. Cost of rental land for farming.
16. Competition for rental land.
17. Increasing interference in type of production permitted on rental land often due to environmental controls (e.g. Species at Risk legislation).
18. Short term rental agreements results in deteriorating agricultural resource.
19. Uncertain future in the rural area outside the Greenbelt.
20. Cost of operation versus returns.
21. Erosion of rights created by increase in regulation.
22. Declining number of farmers to serve on boards and committees (Halton Federation, HACC) and represent farmers' interests.
23. Property tax system that links land value (assessment) to tax and drives up costs.
24. Impact of government actions (i.e. consequences of decision re: racing sector on equine sector).
25. Restrictive / limiting land use regulations.

### 7.1.2 Hamlets and Rural Settlements SWOT

This summary is applicable to the hamlets and rural clusters designated in the Regional Official Plan which are compact rural communities comprised of residential uses and small scale industrial, commercial and institutional uses. These communities have traditionally provided services to the surrounding agricultural area and are an integral part of the Regional rural fabric.

## *Strengths*

1. Appeal of small community and rural lifestyle (less dense, quiet life, community involvement, etc.).
2. Less expensive housing, taxes, lifestyle than urban areas.
3. Friendly small community – know one’s neighbours, residents help each other.
4. Convenient access to larger centres and services.
5. Access to nature and rural recreation.
6. Helps protect prime agricultural areas by providing a location for those seeking a rural lifestyle within a designated area.
7. Unique hamlet character, mix of development, road patterns, landscape, open space.
8. Walkable central business areas.
9. Independent businesses.
10. Inexpensive parking.
11. Quality of life.
12. Inexpensive rent for business.

## *Weaknesses*

1. Lack of information about businesses in rural area.
2. Lack of many services typical of urban areas (shopping, etc.).
3. High reliance on private transportation, lack of transit.
4. Infrequent inter-city transportation.
5. Water quality in some communities (lack of sewer, public water).
6. Businesses may struggle – require destination clients or larger populations to make ends meet.
7. Challenge to move there for diverse population groups.
8. Poor internet, cell service in some areas (4G).
9. Certain businesses lack easy access to service, repairs.
10. Lack of choice for business.
11. Transportation access (limited entrances or main road bypasses business.)
12. Uneven store hours (owner operated).
13. Difficult to attract investors.
14. Absentee landlords in business (gets run down).
15. Upper story vacancies common.
16. Outmigration of younger demographic.
17. Lower incomes generally than urban areas.
18. Lower post-secondary completion rates.
19. Investment decisions made outside the community.
21. Hamlets below the radar from a policy perspective.
22. Fewer cultural entertainment opportunities.

## *Opportunities*

1. Improved IT and telecommunications support working from home and home based businesses which can attract professionals and creative class.
2. Strengthen farm and non-farm support businesses where possible.
3. Establishment of Regional- based food cluster – link businesses to local production.
3. SOHO (small office/home office) business creation and support.
4. Low environmental impact businesses (web business – e.g., Etsy.com, etc.).
5. Various planning tools – CIPs, Site plan control, heritage designations, etc. can enhance communities.
6. Economic development tools to promote businesses.
7. Establish/support community centres, hubs, markets, etc.
8. Retirement communities.
9. Promote hamlet character.
10. Invest in public spaces and amenities to create walkable streetscapes.
11. Buy local program.
12. Support agriculture service business.
13. Conversions of historic buildings.
14. Better linkages to lower tier and Regional initiatives (e.g., agri-tourism).
15. Take measures that are tourist-friendly such as more bike lanes, better rural roads, more waterfront trail access, more promotion of and access to natural amenities.

## *Threats*

1. Difficulty getting financing for rural small businesses.
2. Continued long-term decline of rural economy if no reinvestment.
3. Fragmented, ad hoc development.
4. Lack of public services (health related, educational).



## 7.2 Moving Forward

The research documented in this background report confirms that Halton has been progressive in the steps it has, and continues to take, in supporting and sustaining the Regional agri-food sector. Despite this, research confirms that the area of farmland has been steadily declining since 1981, and over the past two census periods (2001 -2006, 2006-2011), gross farm receipts generated in the Region declined. The connections between primary producers and other parts of the value chain, while present, are not well developed.

Indications are that the broader agri-food sector is thriving in the Region and the demand for local agricultural products is growing. With increasing awareness of the importance of food security, there is increasing urgency to find new and innovate approaches to managing the agri-food sector as a whole and ensuring that all components of it are supported. The questions are, what are these innovative approaches and which would be most effective in strengthening the agri-food sector in Halton? This report has attempted to address these questions in the Halton context. In this section some thoughts are shared regarding the key step associated with each of the best practices identified in **Chapter 6** that could be incorporated in the RAS.

### 7.2.1 Enact Innovative Planning Policy

The scan done of jurisdictions where agriculture is flourishing confirms that there are a series of factors typically in place supporting this success. One of these is a policy regime supported by senior levels of government that firmly establishes the concept of a **permanent agricultural area**. This is a model in place in Quebec and British Columbia, where agricultural land preserves are created and protected by the province. The Greenbelt Plan could be considered as a step in this direction but it lacks a specific focus on agriculture.

As input to the co-ordinated plan review currently underway in Ontario such an approach could be proposed by the Region. It could be implemented through changes to the GPGGH, GBP and NEP. Specifically focusing on creating agricultural preserves would have the advantage of providing a stronger level of control over the agricultural resource but depending on how the implementation occurred, could have the disadvantage of taking control away from the Region.

As an alternative approach, as part of the upcoming Regional official plan review, policies could be implemented to establish **permanent agricultural areas**. Changes to the PPS in 2014 set up a process whereby this could be done.

In Ontario, the PPS establishes a hierarchy of protection for the agricultural resource which ranges from the highest level of protection to the lowest level of protection as follows:

- Specialty crop areas designated using guidelines developed by the province;
- Prime agricultural areas defined generally as areas comprised largely of Class 1, 2 and 3 soils (and refined through the implementation of a LEAR analysis); and
- Prime agricultural land.

Following provincial evaluation procedures, the Region undertook a LEAR as part of the background work to the Official Plan which established prime agricultural areas in the Region. These now form the base of the Regional Agricultural system.

In 2014 when the PPS was reviewed, the province changed the direction regarding the identification of prime agricultural areas and specialty crop lands from having to be done using provincial “evaluation procedures” to a requirement to follow provincial “guidelines”. This has softened the criteria for identifying specialty crop lands and could be investigated by the Region as a mechanism for assigning a higher level of protection to agricultural areas using criteria specific to the Halton context.

The provincial guidelines that are to be produced should assist municipalities in identifying a broader and more diverse range of specialty crop areas based on an expanded range of criteria. Halton should consider working with the agricultural community to apply these guidelines and establish **permanent agricultural areas**.

Creation of the **permanent agricultural areas** should incorporate the establishment of firm boundaries defined by applying the principles of edge planning to buffer and define the agricultural areas. Waterloo Region employed an approach using significant natural features and constraint areas to establish permanent boundaries for agricultural areas and was successful in permanently securing approximately 75% of the boundary between urban areas (including future expansion areas) and rural areas where agriculture and agri-food activities take precedence. The resulting effect is secure agricultural areas where active, evolving agricultural operations extend right to the boundary, secure in the knowledge that there is long term protection for their operations.

### 7.2.2 Establish a Regional Agricultural System

The concept of agricultural systems is one which is gaining traction as an effective tool for managing agricultural resources. The GBP contains the following definition:

*The Agricultural System is made up of specialty crop areas, prime agricultural areas and rural areas. The Agricultural System includes expansive areas where prime agricultural and specialty crop lands predominate and active agricultural and related activities are ongoing.*

This is a very narrow definition of an agricultural system and one that as the statistics quoted in this report confirm, is not sustaining the sector. The definition should be broadened to include all of the elements that sustain a profitable agricultural community and link it to the agri-food value chain. Much as the definition of the Regional natural heritage system was broadened to include corridors, linkages and peripheral areas integral to the health of the NHS; a definition of a Regional agricultural system should be developed to include corridors to link the system internally, incorporate an appropriate bundle of services and agricultural infrastructure to support financial viability, include related development to support operations, build linkages to other parts of the value chain and address edge

planning to provide adequate buffers through to protect it. Once defined the system should be incorporated into Regional policies.

As part of the upcoming ROP review, consideration could be given to defining the Halton agricultural system implementing policies to identify, establish, support and protect it. The agricultural community must be an integral part of this process.

### 7.2.3 Support the Agricultural Community

Research conducted for this report confirms that there are certain key areas where actions could be taken to help sustain the agri-food sector.

To be successful, farmers must have access to infrastructure to support their operations. This infrastructure ranges from seed and fertilizer companies, farm implement dealers, veterinarians, three phase power, irrigation, accessible roads to move farm equipment, etc. In Halton, the farm community is indicating that this infrastructure is disappearing. Using the results of the asset mapping exercise currently being undertaken by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, infrastructure needs should be assessed and addressed as part of the strategy.

#### Value-Added

Value-Added operations expand primary operations and link them to the broader agri-food value chain. The Region has always acknowledged the importance of these businesses. As part of the implementation of the Regional Official Plan, the Region prepared progressive guidelines providing extensive direction on how on-farm uses should be managed to maintain the balance between primary production and value-added businesses.

In response to the update of the value-added policies in the 2014 PPS, the Province has released draft guidelines outlining how permitted uses in prime agricultural areas including value-added uses, should be addressed. These draft guidelines are helpful in explaining provincial thinking on how these uses should be managed to support agri-food businesses. Generally they establish a good balance between protecting the agricultural land base and allowing uses associated with and supportive of agriculture and the agri-food sector. As part of the RAS, the Region should review its policies in conjunction with these guidelines and **update the Regional guidelines**.

There is however one issue of concern with respect to the draft provincial guidelines, and the PPS policies they relate to. Section 2.3.6.1 of the PPS permits non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas under specific circumstances. While the conditions for allowing non-agricultural uses are quite specific, the reality is this type of policy opens the door to uses that can negatively impact an agricultural area. There are already a number of them in Halton. Allowing more, albeit under specific circumstances, will further fragment the integrity of the agricultural areas. In the upcoming review of the ROP, consideration should be given to exercising the right for municipalities to be more stringent

than provincial policies and remove this permission. By carefully defining the types of uses that are appropriate in an agricultural system and limiting uses accordingly, the integrity of the agri-food system will be strengthened.

Finally as part of establishing an agricultural system, Regional policies should broaden permissions to allow agriculturally related and valued-added businesses in that system on existing vacant lots with insufficient area for agricultural production. These permissions should be based on a rigorous assessment of what will add value to and support the agricultural system and permitted uses controlled accordingly. By identifying the types of uses required to support and enhance the value of agricultural production, broadening out the circumstances under which these uses can be developed and encouraging them through economic development programs, the integrity of the agricultural system can be strengthened.

### **Local Food Distribution/Food Hubs**

In conjunction with establishing an agricultural system, there should be a related policy addressing agri-food business clusters. Designating agriculturally based industrial clusters where businesses that are part of the agricultural value chain can locate in proximity to primary production but not on prime agricultural land, will strengthen the value chain. Policies addressing access and servicing can be used to enhance the function of the cluster. Economic development policies and local improvement plans can be used as incentives to seed them. As part of such a cluster, the potential to develop a local agri-food distribution center should be addressed.

As noted previously agri-food distribution hubs manage the aggregation, storage processing, distribution and marketing of local agri-food products. The best known food hub is the Toronto Food Terminal but others are being developed and planned in other regions of the province. Encouraging one in Halton is logical given its proximity to the transportation routes, a huge urban market and the international border.

### **Agri-Tourism**

Agri-tourism is a growing tourist market opportunity for which Halton has a tangible advantage due to the current infrastructure of operations. Agri-tourism operations provide a fundamental role in linking the public to agriculture. Managing this use in compliance with guidelines to manage the relationships between agri-tourism and other components of the agri-food sector, is key. In 2013 an agri-tourism strategy was completed for Halton. The recommendations in that strategy should be integrated into the RAS.

#### **7.2.4 Farm Succession**

As noted previously in this report, succession issues can be categorized as intergenerational within a family, generally from farmer to farmer, or as attraction of new farmers to the business. Under all of

these categories the main challenges in Halton to ongoing succession are the cost of the land and the uncertainty about the long-term prospects for farming in Halton.

The primary response to dealing with this problem is to **create certainty** that agriculture will be the long-term use for contiguous areas of land. This will allow for certainty in investment and may stabilize prices. Implementation of a tightly controlled, permanent agricultural system where farming is given precedence will assist with this issue.

Public lands, appropriately located, could be integral to the strength of the Regional agricultural system. These lands can define boundaries and be made available for agriculture uses. Establishing a **Regional inventory of lands** that could be made available to established farmers or as the base for farm start programs to give new farmers a start in the sector should be a focus of the RAS. In implementing this program, partnerships with other public agencies (Conservation Authorities, Ontario Power Corporation, Ontario Parks, and local government) and farm focused organization such as the Ontario Farmland Trust should be negotiated.

### 7.2.5 Health/Education/Food Literacy

Promotion of healthy living and food literacy and linking these goals to agriculture requires strong partnership with health and educational agencies. These agencies are starting to acknowledge the links between healthy living and access to and understanding of a visible local agri-food sector. Understanding that a successful RAS will be broadly based drawing in support from different Regional agencies, partnerships should be established to **deliver integrated public health and educational programs focused on agri-food** and targeted to each agency's client base.

### 7.2.6 Urban Agriculture

One of the most important components of urban agriculture or encouraging people to grow agri-food products, is to make sure the space and circumstances are available for this to occur and to teach citizens how it is done. Halton could lead by example by integrating the growing of agri-food products into its parks program and making public space available for community gardens. The RAS should encourage coordination of Regional and local parks programs to accommodate and expand opportunities to encourage urban agriculture. Regional efforts **to promote agri-food production as an appropriate use of public lands** will increase public awareness of and interest in agri-food.

### 7.2.7 Hamlet Revitalization

Hamlets and rural settlements are an integral part of a rural community. Not only should these communities function as service centres, they should strengthen the social fabric of a community. The review conducted for this report confirmed that this function has largely been lost in most existing hamlets and rural settlements. As part of the update of the ROP, in addressing the principle of a

comprehensive Regional agricultural system, the important role of hamlets and rural settlements must be emphasized and policies to revitalize them enacted. **Hamlets established as agri-food service hubs** for the agricultural system will strength and support the entire Regional rural community.

### 7.2.8 Business Incubators

Many agri-food businesses are small scale businesses facing challenges in commercializing and marketing their products. Even if they overcome these challenges and are successful in creating market demand, they often face issues responding to that demand. Given that the agri-food cluster is one of, if not the leading economic cluster in the Golden Horseshoe, there is tremendous economic benefit to be gained from nurturing these fledgling businesses. As noted previously, this nurturing is often done through the establishment of business incubators. Existing incubators, scanned as part of the research for this report, are typically sponsored by economic development agencies or educational institutions, specifically community colleges. There are active programs in the Region to encourage programs linking educational institutions and business development. As part of the RAS, priority should be given to working with existing Regional post-secondary educational institution and economic development agencies to define the parameters for and **establish a business incubator focused on agri-food businesses**.

### 7.3 Summary

This report underscores the range and complexity of the agri-food sector generally and in Halton specifically. Supporting and strengthening this sector is a huge task that involves many players. Halton must determine how it can most effectively support the sector using the resources and powers available to it. What are the key tasks that will be most effective in achieving goal of sustaining a strong, secure Regional agri-food sector? This question will be addressed through the development of the RAS based on the findings of this report.



