

NIAGARA'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR AND ACCESS TO UNTREATED WATER FOR IRRIGATION

WHEREAS agriculture plays a crucial role in Niagara's economy, contributing over \$1.4 billion to the Regional GDP;

WHEREAS the Province of Ontario has identified agricultural lands in Niagara through the Greenbelt Plan, Growth Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan with a vision to protect against their loss and support their viability;

WHEREAS Niagara farms play an important role in ensuring Ontario's food security;

WHEREAS Niagara farms also produce value add products which contribute to increased jobs and tax revenues;

WHEREAS climate change has resulted in more frequent cycles of drought-like conditions;

WHEREAS the Niagara Irrigation Committee, a working group of the Agricultural Policy and Action Committee, has determined growers are willing to invest in a more sustainable system for access to untreated water for irrigation;

WHEREAS agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation is supported by Provincial and Regional policies;

WHEREAS a system that relies on gravity is the most economical way to provide that water;

WHEREAS certain reservoirs and channels that are in the control of the Ontario Power Generation Corp (OPG) have been determined to meet the criteria of a gravity fed system;

WHEREAS the Irrigation Committee has met with the OPG at the staff level and was told there was no interest in entering into an agreement with growers for access to their infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the Agricultural Policy and Action Committee endorsed this initiative at its meeting held on April 23, 2021.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to request the Minister of Energy initiate a meeting with the Senior VP of Renewable Generation & Energy Markets at OPG, Mayor Sendzik, Irrigation Committee Chair Bill Schenck, and Agricultural Policy and Action Committee Chair Albert Witteveen to discuss the role of OPG power generation in developing an agriculture irrigation system for Niagara; and

2. That Regional Council **REQUEST** that staff support be provided to assist the Irrigation Committee in developing a Niagara Region Irrigation Water Utility Board.