

THE NIAGARA DISTRICT COUNCIL OF WOMEN

Presentation to the Niagara Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee
re: PDS 17-2022 Niagara Official Plan Recommendation Report for Adoption

By Gracia Janes NDCW Immediate Past president June 15th, 2022

The Niagara District Council of Women reiterates our concerns with the proposed new Regional Niagara Official Plan, that we raised in several Regional public consultations, subsequent oral and written presentations to this committee, and at the Region's Official Public meeting under the Planning Act.

As noted in our initial brief, the Niagara District Council of Women for many years has been supportive of protecting this very special place in Canada, as it is part of the Carolinian zone, has the best and most productive fruit lands in Canada, as well as wonderfully productive prime farmlands, and, of course, the many attributes of the Niagara Escarpment. Niagara is favored also by its potential to better withstand rapidly changing and increased weather events and produce healthy food close to urban markets. Our farm lands also are strong employment and tourism related economic drivers. Therefore we must place far more emphasis on farmland and natural heritage area protections now and in the years to come.

We would add to this, that there is an urgency for every land use planning body in Canada, to help reduce our carbon foot prints and increase our carbon storage potential.

With these issues at the top of our mind NDCW strongly urges Councillors to:

* accept the Provincial Population target of 654,000 residents, and if the population increases more than expected, accommodate it within urban boundaries such as Port Colborne and Thorold, where this current Official plan's land use /population/employment formula has de-allocated immediate and early population, and thus housing calculations, from Port Colborne and Thorold, to the proposed urban expansion areas on prime farmland and natural areas in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and West Lincoln.

* retain, as recommended by Niagara Falls Planners, the current urban boundary in Niagara Falls, and thus the potential for a review of the Niagara Falls climatically favoured tender fruit lands and an expansion of the Greenbelt there.

*accept the Niagara Falls plan for intensification and improved transit which better serves much needed affordable housing, rather than the market-based urban sprawl, which, as housing advocates have noted, suits the high-end homes.

- * reduce the population projection for West Lincoln to a reasonable amount; protect the prime farmlands and karst formations there; and only expand the urban boundary, if necessary through a five year review and Municipal and Regional official plan amendment.

- * plan for more housing and employment land development in Welland, Thorold and Port Colborne if needed.

To conclude, we again urge the Planning and Economic Development Committee to consider amending this proposed official plan so that it more strongly protects our prime farmlands, natural heritage lands and climatically favoured fruit lands. We are of the opinion, that when presented with a Regional plan having the original Provincial population target, plus a very decent intensification goal, the Province will consider such a progressive plan favorably.