

April 19, 2024

Pelham Greenhouse Growers Presentation to the Niagara Agricultural Policy & Action Committee

Mr Chair and Committee Members

I am before you today representing the interests of the Pelham Greenhouse Growers Group (PGGG) as they relate to the Town of Pelham Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law provisions affecting greenhouses.

PGGG is very concerned that Pelham fails to recognize the importance of agriculture in the Niagara economy generally and to support the success of the greenhouse industry more specifically.

PGGG consists of (number) growers active in horticultural, landscape, fruit and vegetable crops. John Langendoen, Louis Damm, Jan VanZanten and Jason Weirenga provide leadership to this group.

The specific concern of PGGG are Pelham's restrictions on lot coverage for greenhouses. The Town's Official Plan (2014) and Zoning By-law (2022) limit lot coverage to a maximum of 30%.

PGGG has appeared before Pelham Council on three separate occasions (June 2023, October 2023 and January 2024) requesting consideration of amendments to the planning documents. On each occasion, PGGG has voiced concern that Pelham's policies frustrate the objectives and are inconsistent with those of the Province and Region.

Provincial and Regional policies consistently state,

...all types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected...

While the direction from the Province is clear, the Town's current policies severely restrict the size and intensity of an agricultural use and consequently frustrate the development and improvement of agricultural lands for production.

Do Pelham's Policies Recognize The Importance Of The Greenhouse Industry In Niagara?

As documented in the Niagara Agricultural Profile (ED 10-2023) submitted to and considered by your Committee on September 29, 2023, the agriculture sector in Niagara provides a substantial economic impact. In 2021, agriculture contributed \$1.71 billion to regional GDP. The top agriculture industries by GDP impact included greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture comprising 49% of total.

Greenhouse operations are second to none in,

- farm type in terms of revenue \$492 million.
- average farm revenue \$2,343,026,
- GDP impact \$827,542,210 (48.5%),
- employer 11,678,

Do Pelham's Policies Support The Greenhouse Industry?

- The current Official Plan ignores that greenhouses are agricultural operations in terms of tradition and by definition at the Provincial, Regional and Municipal level.
- The PPS, Greenbelt Plan, Agricultural Guidelines and Regional Official Plan promote agricultural operations of all sizes and intensities.
- An owner could amend the Zoning By-law Amendment but that requires a costly public consultation process for a use that is already permitted and for which there is no basis for regulating in this manner.
- The Official Plan does not impose lot coverage restrictions on any other agricultural crop.
- Pelham's policies create an uneven playing field
 - Within Pelham – restricting the use of lands to 30% forces greenhouse growers to compete with farmers that are able to use the whole of their lands for other agricultural crops, placing them at an economic disadvantage in purchasing lands.
 - Adjacent municipalities are more flexible in caps on coverage (West Lincoln - 70%, Lincoln and St Catharines – no restriction).

What Is Our Next Step?

Having our requests rebuffed in Pelham, PGGG has initiated an appeal with the Normal Farm Practices Board. Initial screening has been completed by Ministry Staff to explore opportunities for mediation and PGGG has been authorized to pursue an appeal.

What Is Our Request?

PGGG respectfully requests that your Committee issue a resolution in support our appeal to the Normal Farm Practices Board.

To this end, the following motion is suggested:

THAT the Pelham Greenhouse Growers Group presentation respecting Pelham's restrictive greenhouse policies, dated April 4, 2024, BE RECEIVED.

AND FURTHER THAT the Niagara Agricultural Policy & Action Committee supports the Pelham Greenhouse Growers Group appeal to the Normal Farm Practices Board recognizing the harmful effect of said policies on the prosperity of agriculture within the Region.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

John Langendoen

Louis Damm

Jan VanZanten

Jason Weirenga