

# Residence Surplus to a Farming Operation

## Revision of a CFFO Policy Statement

### 1 What we have said in our statement about the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act

1.1 We do not support the severing of residences surplus to a farming operation in prime or secondary agricultural areas.

#### Reasons:

- It is one more severance in most circumstances.
- There is a risk that the remaining parcel will again have a residence built on it in most circumstances.
- Each severed house will cast an "urban" shadow around it. As the nature and makeup of our rural neighbours changes in the years to come, this shadow will grow and restrict our use of the land for agriculture.

### 2 Proposed Modification

2.1 CFFO supports the severing of residences surplus to a farming operation under unique circumstances and with specific guarantees:

- Guarantees that the remaining farmland parcel will have no opportunity to have a house built on it.
- Guarantees that the existence of the severed house will have no negative impacts on the farming activities and on the use of the farm buildings on the remaining farmland parcel.
- A local agricultural advisory committee is convinced that severing houses surplus to a farming operation is more important to the ongoing farming activities in their municipality than the negative impacts of a severed house on those farming activities; and
- The remaining farmland parcel is as big as possible.

2.2 CFFO supports a number of tools for guaranteeing that the remaining farmland parcel will have no opportunity to have a house built on it.

- If the property is adjacent to another property owned by the same owner, the two properties are put on one deed; or
- An easement prohibiting the building of a house is put on the remaining farmland parcel and the easement is placed in the control of a not-for-profit and non-political agency such as the Ontario Farmland Trust.

2.3 CFFO supports a number of tools to guarantee that the existence of the severed house will have no negative impacts on the farming activities and on the use of the farm buildings on the remaining farmland parcel (all to apply):

- The zoning on the severed house not be changed. It must remain zoned agricultural.
- Minimum Distance Separation Formula I must apply to the house.
- A disclosure statement about the possible discomfort or inconvenience of normal farming practices on the remaining farmland parcel be placed as an easement on the title of the severed house.

### **Reasons against the Modification**

- Once severed from the farmland the property will cast an urban shadow.
- Tearing down old farm houses is a good idea in some cases. Cities are always tearing down to make room for new uses. This is no different.
- The house can be moved to a new site – preferably in town.
- Severed, the house has a much bigger urban footprint.
- Severed, the house also creates MDS issues for the remaining farmland parcel. Many farm buildings will not be allowed.
- The new owners of the severed house are very likely to be exurbanites seeking a bucolic countryside experience and thus create tensions for the farming practices for the surrounding farmers.
- This house will be located in the midst of farming enterprises.
- Some of the severances are sought because the buyer has paid too much for the land.

### **Reasons for the Modification**

- Farming across the province is very varied. One policy is not the best for all areas. The impact of a severed house on farming depends on the area of the province.
- In parts of the province farm size has become quite small for full-time family operations with today's technology. Severing surplus houses will enable the assembling of parcels into a viable farm enterprise. (eg. Niagara Peninsula fruitlands)
- When a house is surplus to the needs of the owner, we should not force them to keep the facility.
- Many farmers who have kept the ownership of the surplus house(s) and rented them out have had bad experiences.
- Tenant rights in Ontario are quite strong, making rental arrangements quite unattractive.
- Being able to sell the severed house makes the purchase price of additional land more reasonable.
- There are many examples of surplus house being rented and falling into disrepair. Eventually they are torn down leading to the depopulation of our countryside.
- Being able to buy a surplus house may be a good alternative for retiring farmers who will not be restricted from severing retirement lots from their own farms. (hopefully)
- Severances in some locations keep barns smaller.
- In some areas there are already so many houses that one more makes very little difference.

*Adopted September 22, 2004  
Provincial Council  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario*