



For Immediate Release

Farm Organizations, Nature Conservancy Groups Protest MZOs Open Letter Warns Farmland, Drinking Water and Natural Areas at Risk.

Guelph, ON (March 2, 2021) — Across southern Ontario, prime farmland and vital greenspace have been zoned for development through Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs). MZOs enable the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to expedite zoning decisions that contradict already established municipal land use plans.

Several farm organizations and nature conservancy groups in Ontario have joined forces in an open letter asking Minister Steve Clark to reverse the current practice of issuing MZOs to expedite development on farmland and natural areas. Ontario Nature, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union–Ontario, Ontario Farmland Trust and Environmental Defence share concerns about the long-term threat that MZOs pose to Ontario's economy and environment.

Farmland is the foundation of Ontario's agri-food sector, which employs more than 860,000 people and contributes over \$47 billion to the province's GDP. But farmland, once paved, is lost forever. It must be protected through informed land use planning. MZOs that take prime farmland out of production will lead to the loss of agriculture-related businesses and jeopardize the province's food security.

MZOs also jeopardize water quality and the health of our watersheds. As greenspace and farmland are paved over, increased flooding and erosion carry sediments and contaminants directly into river systems.

Good land use planning requires local input to carefully balance the needs of the environment, the economy and the community. Expedited MZO approvals eliminate democratic efforts to protect a community's long-term resources. It is critical that the government do its utmost to protect our farmland and natural areas by reversing the current practice of issuing MZOs to expedite development.

Ontario Nature is a charitable conservation organization that protects wild species and wild spaces across Ontario through conservation, education and public engagement.

The **Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO)** is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario who are called to the vocation of farming. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

The **National Farmers Union–Ontario (NFU–O)** is an Accredited Farm Organization whose members work together to advocate for policies that maintain small and medium sized family farms as the primary food-producers in Canada. The NFU-O believes agriculture should be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

The **Ontario Farmland Trust** has a province-wide mandate to protect farmland and associated ecological lands, through direct land securement, policy development, and education. OFT's conservation efforts bring together farmers, landowners, governments, and other partners to establish legally binding farmland easement agreements that protect farmland and natural habitat in perpetuity.

Environmental Defence Canada is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.

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