

Results of Request to Premier Doug Ford and 11 Cabinet Ministers for Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Ontario's Farmland Inventory and Food Security

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1. Report Objectives

Many thousands of publications over the last five decades in the learned literature, academic literature (theses, dissertations), research institute reports, municipal, regional, provincial, and federal government documents, professional literature, technical literature, public interest literature and vested interest literature, as well as broadcast media (radio, television, and print) and digital channel reports, identify actions that could, should, and must be taken by the provincial government to protect and preserve Ontario's agricultural land inventory, and class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland in particular.

Regrettably, it has proven extremely difficult to the point of being impossible to obtain details describing when, where, why, and how on-the-ground or in-the-ground actions have been taken, with what effect, to protect and preserve Ontario's inventories of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland. (1)

Several years prior to, and in recent months subsequent to Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, receiving royal assent on June 5, 2025, the Information Research Board (IRB) published reports which explore the gap between what citizens, the media, opposition parties, researchers, and others want to know about the state of Ontario's inventory of agricultural land classes 1 through to class 7, and the credibility of what they are told about the state of the farmland inventory in publicly available statements by Premier Ford and selected Cabinet Ministers.

IRB productions which contain links and references to more links and references that examine the gap between what citizens need to know about the farmland inventory and what they are told by the premier and cabinet ministers in public statements include:

- [Research Update on How Combining Universal Law of Location, Game Theory, and GIS Could Contribute to More Informed Land Use Decisions](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Municipal Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Agricultural Land Inventory](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Ontario Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Farmland Inventory](#)
- [Universal Law of Location Supported by GIS as a Best Practice Element in Land Use Planning and Transportation Planning Decision Systems](#)

Those reports present multiple evidence-related motivations for this report, but it is the term “protect” in the title of Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, which is the primary trigger word for trying yet again to close the gap between what citizens, the media, opposition politicians, and other interests want to know about Ontario's farmland inventory and what they are told by the premier and cabinet ministers in public statements.

As for the phrase, “unleashing our economy”, it warrants discussion in the search for insights into the political reasons for the premier and cabinet ministers not informing citizens, opposition politicians, the media, and other interests about evidence of action taken to protect Ontario's farmland inventory which has been a significant component of Ontario's economy for more than 150 years. **(2)**

And it also warrants discussion because the phrase “unleashing the economy” is the same phrase used by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in 2025 in what has turned out to be a disastrously erroneous forecast about how Trump initiatives, including the tariff fiasco and the so-called ‘Big, Beautiful Bill’, would stimulate the U.S. economy. **(3)**

It appears that Bessent had no substantive grounds to support his position, and it remains to be seen whether and how Bill 5 unleashes Ontario' economy in general and the agricultural sector and Ontario's food security situation in particular. **(4)**

2. Meaning and Implications of the Term “Protect”

It is widely perceived by citizens that politicians are elected to serve the interests of citizens, so it logically follows that terms used in Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act* are terms which are chosen to represent the interests of current and future Ontario citizens, and not the interests of the governing party or other vested interests.

The meaning attached to the term “protect” therefore, is fairly represented by synonyms which are derived from a variety of literatures in which publications call on the Ontario provincial government to take actions necessary to protect Ontario's inventory of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland so that the respective acreages are sufficient to meet the needs of the people and enterprises of Ontario wherever and whenever they arise. **(5)**

Content analysis searches of references in such fields as agribusiness, agricultural land inventory, agriculture labour force, climate change impacts, crop diversity, farmland inventory, fertilizer supplies, food diversity, food security, food self-sufficiency, and water supplies produced the list of terms in Table 1 which are frequently used in calls for needed provincial government action to address concerns regarding the condition of Ontario's farmland inventory at the local to province-wide levels in the current, immediate and long terms.

Table 1. A Selection of Terms Used to Describe Concerns About the Viability of Ontario's Farmland Inventory, and Actions by the Ontario Provincial Government to Ensure the Temporal and Spatial Viability of Ontario's Farmland Inventory*

A. Green designates terms used in statements about actions by the provincial government needed to achieve temporal and spatial viability of Ontario farmland.

assure; care for; conserve; defend; discipline; diversity; ensure; guarantee; guard; independence; maintain; oversight; preserve; prioritize; protect; retain; safeguard; secure; self-sufficient; shelter; shield; sustainable; vigilance

B. Red designates terms used in statements about concerns regarding the temporal and spatial viability of Ontario farmland.

abandon; abuse; careless; convenient, damage; degrade; dependent; destroy; destructive; deteriorate; diminish; endanger; exhaust; expedient, fail; harm; imperil, injure; lose; misuse; neglect; reckless; risky; short-sighted; threaten; weaken

*Terms are presented in alphabetical order.

As noted above, previous communications to Premier Ford, various ministers, and provincial staff failed to yield insights into actions taken by the provincial government regarding the temporal and spatial viability of Ontario's farmland inventory.

However, the language of Bill 5 spawns a premise which is cause for trying yet again to close the gap between what the public wants to know and what it is told about the state of Ontario's agricultural land inventory.

That is, because Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, contains the term "**protect**" in the title, it is a reasonable expectation that Premier Ford and cabinet ministers whose decisions affect Ontario farmland will readily and comprehensively respond to several questions regarding actions taken to protect Ontario's farmland inventory. (6)

3. Meaning and Implications of the Phrase "By Unleashing the Economy"

Ontario's economy consists of a wide variety of production, distribution, and consumption elements, including those involving the agricultural sector.

The significance of the agricultural sector to Ontario's economy and, hence, the significance of the province's agricultural land inventory upon which the sector is based, include operations of almost 50,000 farms, and contributions of more than \$50 billion annually to Ontario's GDP, support of close to 900,000 jobs, production of more than 200 different commodities, and provision of more than 50 % of the food consumed within the province. (7)

At a general level, searches have not revealed any provincial government materials of an operational nature as to how, when, or where Bill 5 is designed to unleash the agriculture and agri-food sector of Ontario's economy. (8)

Further, when it comes to unbundling the agriculture and agri-food sector, searches have not identified documents describing how, when, or where Bill 5 is designed to financially, economically, socially, technologically, or otherwise assist in sustainably unleashing components of the agriculture and agri-food sector such as livestock and dairy, poultry and eggs, pigs, sheep, and goats, field and cash crops, fruits and vegetables, and greenhouse, nursery and floriculture. (9)

As noted above, numerous communications to Premier Ford, various ministers, and provincial staff failed to yield insights into actions taken by the provincial government regarding the temporal and spatial viability and sustainability of Ontario's farmland inventory.

We hasten to emphasize that the term "sustainably" is used in the two above paragraphs to emphasize the concern that selling off farmland is a terrible price to pay for short-term political gain.

The premise underlying this report, to return to the public right to know principle of open government, is that because Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, contains the phrase "*by unleashing our economy*" in the title, it is a reasonable expectation that "*by unleashing our economy*" means in no uncertain terms that communications to Premier Ford and cabinet ministers will yield timely, direct, and comprehensive responses to several questions regarding actions taken and intended to protect Ontario's farmland inventory. (10)

4. Basis of Questions for Premier Doug Ford and Ministers Whose Agencies Affect Ontario's Farmland Inventory

Publications by entities such as farm organizations, academics, research institutes, broadcast media, and IRB have posed and continue to pose a multitude of questions, and produce materials leading to more questions about how, when, and where the provincial government is protecting the agricultural land inventory as a necessary step in "unleashing" the agriculture and agri-food element of Ontario's economy but without imperilling the sustainability of the agricultural land inventory.

As specified by the Information Research Board name, our primary interest is in research and applied research in particular, so our focus is on obtaining answers to questions which assist us and other researchers, as well as citizens, politicians, members of broadcast media, and various interest groups analyse responses by provincial government politicians and civil servants about matters such as those presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A Short List of Topics Underlying Questions to Premier Ford and Ministers Regarding Action Taken to Protect and Preserve Ontario's Inventory of Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 Farmland

- AI forecasts based on such techniques cross-lagged correlation analysis of land use change patterns
- Application of Delphi techniques to assigning land use prioritization
- Climate change impact measurement, assessment, and mediation
- Food affordability, food availability, food supply security, food supply self-sufficiency, food supply sustainability
- GIS applications to dynamically monitor land use change
- Highest and best land use analysis
- Land class substitutability
- Land class upgrade spatial index
- Land use change detection
- Land use change trend analysis
- Mapping land use change conversion rates
- Mapping land use change conversion volumes
- Remote monitoring of land use change
- Resource depletion analytics to identify significance of loss of agricultural land by class
- Risk analysis applications in agribusiness supply chain decisions
- Sensitivity analysis applied to evaluating land use change from agricultural to non-agricultural uses
- Soil-at-risk assessment indexes for agricultural land classes 1-7
- Zero-sum applications to assist land use allocation decisions

As noted above, previous IRB publications on agricultural land and references cited in those publications contain hundreds of topics that yield questions which warrant being brought to the attention of Premier Ford and cabinet ministers for answers.

However, after examining multiple productions published by a variety of sources, the topics in Table 2 appear sufficient to provide a robust basis for “zeroing in” on a limited number of core questions designed to obtain needed details about government actions taken to protect and preserve Ontario’s inventory of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland.

Finally, searches to find background publications containing topics that were considered during the production of Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, were unsuccessful. It was hoped that if they could not be found by searches of government documents, that any background reports produced leading up to Bill 5 would be identified via communications to the premier and 11 ministers asking about evidence of action taken to protect Ontario’s farmland inventory.

5. Questions for First Pilot Study on Search for Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Ontario’s Farmland Inventory

Given the critical importance of farmland classes 1, 2, and 3 to such matters as Ontario’s short-term and long-term food security, provincial fiscal stability, agribusiness financial investments and robustness, and personal cost of living, it was anticipated that responses to the questions asked would produce records that could be used to answer or contribute to answering such fundamental questions as:

1. How many acres of class 1 farmland have been converted to non-farm uses annually 1950-2025, where have the conversions occurred, and for what purposes?
2. How many acres of class 2 farmland have been converted to non-farm uses annually 1950-2025, where have the conversions occurred, and for what purposes?
3. How many acres of class 3 farmland have been converted to non-farm uses annually 1950-2025, where have the conversions occurred, and for what purposes?

The communication to Premier Doug Ford asks for the following links to documents which would provide inputs to a master pilot study report on designing a framework to hold provincial and municipal politicians to the highest levels of accountability, and transparency regarding the current and future state of Ontario’s agricultural land inventory:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.
3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.

4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

The second set of communications were sent to Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs.

Their agencies have direct responsibility for the fate of Ontario's inventory of class 1, class 2, class 3, class 4, class 5, class 6, and class 7 agricultural land, and classes 1-3 in particular for the purposes of this report.

As a result, they are the primary sources for records about numbers and locations of acres of each class of land in Ontario's agricultural land inventory, rates of change in numbers and locations of acreages, and the methods, techniques, and tools used for such tasks as monitoring, measuring, analysing, and forecasting volumes and rates of change of acreages, as well as tracking conversions of land from agricultural to non-agricultural uses.

The communications to Minister Jones and Minister Thompson ask for the following links to documents which would provide inputs to a master pilot study report on designing a framework to hold provincial and municipal politicians to the highest levels of accountability, accountability, and transparency regarding the current and future fate of Ontario's agricultural land inventory and food security.

1. The number of acres of class 1 farmland that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 1 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.
2. The number of acres of class 2 farmland that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 2 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.
3. The number of acres of class 3 farmland that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 3 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.

The third set of communications were sent to:

- Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources

- Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines
- Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth
- Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation
- Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure

These ministers are responsible for agencies which directly or indirectly convert land used for agriculture to non-agricultural uses.

As a result, they are the primary sources for records about numbers and locations of acres of each class of land in Ontario's agricultural land inventory which are converted to non-agricultural uses, rates of change in numbers and locations of conversions, and the methods, techniques, and tools used for such tasks as monitoring, measuring, analysing, and forecasting volumes and rates of change of acreages, as well as tracking conversions of land used for agriculture to non-agricultural uses.

The communications to Minister Fedeli, Minister Flack, Minister Harris, Minister Lecce, Minister McCarthy, Minister Pirie, Minister Sarkaria, Minister Smith, and Minister Surma ask for the following links to documents which would provide inputs to a master pilot study report on designing a framework to hold provincial and municipal politicians to the highest levels of accountability, accountability, and transparency regarding the current and future state of Ontario's agricultural land inventory:

For each of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026:

1. The number of acres of class 1 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
2. The number of acres of class 2 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
3. The number of acres of class 3 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.

Sections 7, 8, and 9 present the email communications to Premier Doug Ford, Ministers Jones and Thompson, and Ministers Fedeli, Flack, Harris, Lecce, McCarthy, Pirie, Sarkaria, Smith, and Surma, respectively.

Before presenting those communications to the premier and ministers, a selection of images is presented in section 6 to graphically illustrate what it means for the premier and ministers to protect agricultural land by keeping it agricultural land, and for the premier and ministers to destroy agricultural land by converting it to non-agricultural uses.

6. Using Images to Illustrate What It Means to Protect or Destroy Agricultural Lands

Photographs in Exhibits 1 and 2 illustrate the consequences of ministers who act to serve their respective mandates by protecting and preserving agricultural land, or, alternatively, by converting agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Exhibit 1. Before and After Images of Agricultural Land that Is Protected from Conversion to Other Uses

Alfalfa

Before



After



Apple Orchard

Before



After



Barley

Before



After



Canola

Before



After



Cattle

Before



After



Corn

Before



After



Oats

Before



After



Potatoes

Before



After



Rye

Before



After



Soybeans

Before



After



Tomatoes

Before



After



Wheat

Before



After



Exhibit 7. Before and After Images of Agricultural Land that Is NOT Protected from Conversion to Other Uses

Alfalfa

Before



After



Apple Orchard

Before



After



Barley

Before



After



Canola

Before



After



Cattle

Before



After



Corn

Before



After



Oats

Before



After



Potatoes

Before



After



Rye

Before



After



Soybeans

Before



After



Tomatoes

Before



After



Wheat

Before



After



Over the past two years we have encountered productions containing before and after graphics which demonstrate actions taken to protect and preserve agricultural land. In the event these productions are by ministries of the Government of Ontario, we welcome them being brought to our attention so that they can be acknowledged in this report.

7. Communication to Premier Doug Ford re “Protect Ontario”: Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security

In the interests of transparency and accountability at present and in future, while also negating any need for anyone to pursue the wasteful and frequently futile FOI route, all communications to Premier Ford are included in section 7.

Further, communications to Mr. Ford are repeated in subsequent sections to ensure that the record of which ministers knew about the communications to Mr. Ford is complete. As the reader may appreciate, this approach precludes ministers credibly pleading ignorance as an excuse for failing to act on behalf of citizens.

From: wellar.barry@gmail.com <wellar.barry@gmail.com>

Sent: May 31, 2026 4:38 PM

To: 'Premier of Ontario | Premier ministre de l'Ontario' <Premier@ontario.ca>

Cc: trevor.jones@pc.ola.org; lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org; vic.fedeli@pc.ola.org; rob.flack@pc.ola.org; mike.harris@pc.ola.org; stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org; todd.mccarthy@pc.ola.org; george.pirie@pc.ola.org; prabmeet.sarkaria@pc.ola.org; graydon.smith@pc.ola.org; 'Marit Stiles' <marit.stiles@ontariondp.ca>; JVanthof-QP@ndp.on.ca; jfraser.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org; tylerwatt.mpp.co@ola.org; mike.harris@pc.ola.org; mschreiner@ola.org; 'George A. Neville' <george.neville@ncf.ca>;

'douglasarnold douglasarnold' <douglasarnold@sympatico.ca>; 'le hibou' <ottawaowl2@yahoo.ca>; wellar.barry@gmail.com; 'Village Media' <help@villagemedia.ca>; 'Steve Larocque' <speaker.steve@northernontario.ca>; 'Gordon Brock' <gordon.e.brock@gmail.com>; 'George Lefebvre' <shasonje@gmail.com>; 'Martin Straathof' <martin@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca>; 'Nicole Feriancek' <nferiancek@postmedia.com>; office@nfnuontario.ca

Subject: "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

Dear Premier Ford.

Re: "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

I again call to your attention my concerns about the failure over the past 50+ years of Ontario provincial governments to adequately protect the province's inventory of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland.

The following productions are among those included and/or referenced in recent communications to you and/or ministers of agriculture, food, and agribusiness, rural affairs, and other ministries.

- [Research Update on How Combining Universal Law of Location, Game Theory, and GIS Could Contribute to More Informed Land Use Decisions](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Municipal Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Agricultural Land Inventory](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Ontario Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Farmland Inventory](#)

And, most recently, a letter to the editor under the title, **Supply of quality land is 'on seriously shaky ground'**, was published in the Temiskaming Speaker. It is included here in the interests of context, convenience, and completeness.

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Temiskaming Speaker

Page 5a

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Supply of quality land is 'on seriously shaky ground'

Dear editor,

Thank you for the supplement, Agriculture - Plant, Grow, Harvest, Repeat in the Speaker of May 20. The supplement paints a very positive picture about the contribution of Northeastern Ontario to the province's agricultural industry, and the state of food security across the province.

However, research by the Information Research Board, as well as other research bodies, confirms that Ontario's supply of agricultural land classes one, two, and three is on seriously shaky ground to put it mildly.

Based on what we can ascertain from open records, over the past five decades Ontario governments have been rezoning more than 100,000 acres of high-quality farmland to non-agricultural uses every year, and once the topsoil has been stripped, concrete has been poured, asphalt has been laid down, toxic waste has been dumped, etc., that farmland is gone for many generations if not forever.

Further, based on non-replies by Premier Doug Ford and Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Affairs, and Agribusiness to numerous inquiries about the size and quality of Ontario's agricultural land inventory, it appears fair to say that there is a cone of silence over the politicians and public servants who should be informing Ontario residents in a timely and comprehensive manner about decisions by the provincial and municipal governments that affect Ontario's supply of farmland and the food security of present and future residents.

Our finding is that citizens must take immediate action to ensure that all governments in this province give the highest priority to protecting and preserving farmland classes one, two, and three, and take steps to upgrade other classes wherever circumstances are favourable.

I believe that in order to achieve that needed change, citizens, opposition parties, and the media MUST insist upon having full, easy, timely, and direct online access to all pertinent records so that corrective actions can be taken to ensure the highest and best use of agricultural land, a limited resource that deserves our utmost respect.

Dr. Barry Wellar (formerly of Latchford), Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa, President, Information Research Board, Registered Professional Planner (Ontario-Lifetime), Member, Order of Canada

Premier Ford, in the event any production is found to contain a factual error of omission or commission, I welcome receipt at the earliest moment of specifics regarding the error, and the link to the corrective document or record.

This approach is consistent with Information Research Board (IRB) obligations with respect to the principles of transparency and accountability.

A report by the IRB is in progress, and I seek your assistance in ensuring that I do not misrepresent your position, that of officials, or records.

On the matter of evidence of action taken during the first and second terms of your government to protect Ontario farmland and food security, this can most effectively and efficiently be achieved by providing:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.
3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

I note in closing that in my experience it should require less more than ten minutes to produce the links to the requested productions since the request involves existing records and does not seek information nor does it involve the derivation or creation of information.

Premier Ford, I look forward to receiving the requested response and materials within ten business days to enable production of the research report by the end of June 2026.

As you will no doubt appreciate, the apparent daily loss of more than 300 acres of prime farmland is widely seen as a critically important and urgent matter, and the Information Research Board is duty-bound to seek provincial and municipal legislative, policy, program, and planning changes as appropriate at the earliest moment.

Thank you.

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M.
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa

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Nepean, ON K2H 6T4
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<https://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

8. Communication to Ministers Jones and Thompson re Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Farmland and Food Security

In the interests of transparency and accountability at present and in future, while also and negating any need for anyone to pursue the wasteful and frequently futile FOI route, all communications to Ministers Jones and Thompson are included in section 8.

The same email was sent to Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs.

The text of the email to Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, is used for illustrative purposes.

Dear Minister Jones,

You are copied on the communication of May 31, 2026, to Premier Doug Ford on the subject, "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

In the interests of convenience, self-containment, and context for all readers, the email communication to Premier Ford follows as background for this communication to you regarding evidence on record in your agency which is pertinent to a report in progress which is tentatively titled, Results of Request to Premier Doug Ford and Cabinet Ministers for Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Ontario's Farmland Inventory.

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<gordon.e.brock@gmail.com>; 'George Lefebvre' <shasonje@gmail.com>; 'Martin Straathof' <martin@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca>; 'Nicole Feriancek' <nferiancek@postmedia.com>; office@nfnuontario.ca

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This approach is consistent with Information Research Board (IRB) obligations with respect to the principles of transparency and accountability.

A report by the IRB is in progress, and I seek your assistance in ensuring that I do not misrepresent your position, that of officials, or records.

On the matter of evidence of action taken during the first and second terms of your government to protect Ontario farmland and food security, this can most effectively and efficiently be achieved by providing:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.
3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

I note in closing that in my experience it should require less more than ten minutes to produce the links to the requested productions since the request involves existing records and does not seek information nor does it involve the derivation or creation of information.

Premier Ford, I look forward to receiving the requested response and materials within ten business days to enable production of the research report by the end of June 2026.

As you will no doubt appreciate, the apparent daily loss of more than 300 acres of prime farmland is widely seen as a critically important and urgent matter, and the Information Research Board is duty-bound to seek provincial and municipal legislative, policy, program, and planning changes as appropriate at the earliest moment.

Thank you.

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M.
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa
President, Information Research Board Inc.
133 Ridgefield Crescent

Nepean, ON K2H 6T4

CANADA

<https://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

Minister Jones, the purpose of this communication from the Information Research Board (IRB) is to obtain what might be termed meta-evidence to assist in the review of materials received from Premier Ford regarding evidence of action taken over the previous two terms and the current term of office held by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

Minister Jones/, before presenting the questions which define the search for meta-evidence, I believe it may be instructive if I briefly comment on the closing two paragraphs in the communication to Premier Ford.

First regarding the paragraph, "Premier Ford, I look forward to receiving the requested response and materials within ten business days to enable production of the research report by the end of June 2026"; that observation is based on having spent many years as a professional in the information and governance fields. It is my experience in the policy domain that initiatives such as Protect Ontario are supported by an abundance of evidence.

As a result, I believe it is reasonable to expect that it is a routine, matter of course task to forward to me links to records held by your Ministry which provide meta-evidence pertinent to this research into actions by your Ministry which affect Ontario's inventory of farmland. Asking that your response be provided within ten business days seems very doable in my experience.

Second, regarding the paragraph, "As you [Premier Ford] will no doubt appreciate, the apparent daily loss of more than 300 acres of prime farmland is widely seen as a critically important and urgent matter, and the Information Research Board is duty-bound to seek provincial and municipal legislative, policy, program, and planning changes as appropriate at the earliest moment."

Research and media reports vary widely on the acres of farmland classes 1, 2, and 3 that are converted to non-farmland uses on a daily basis, and it appears fair to say that it is past time for Ontario residents to learn more about how much land is being converted to non-farmland use, but to what kinds of non-farmland use, where, and why.

The Information Research board seeks your assistance in assembling the meta-evidence that we believe will assist in reviewing provincial government actions to protect farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.

We believe that for phase 1 of this project, links to materials containing these records will be of great assistance.

For each of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026:

1. The number of acres of class 1 farmland that that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 1 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.
2. The number of acres of class 2 farmland that that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 2 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.
3. The number of acres of class 3 farmland that that were removed from Ontario's farmland inventory, and the number of acres of farmland class 3 allocated to each of the non-agricultural land use classes as specified by the provincial government, the federal government, or municipal governments.

As previously noted, the IRB has set its schedule to publish the report on this critical topic by the end of June, and is optimistic that it will receive the requested records on or before the end of ten business days,

Thank you.

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9. Communication to Ministers Fedeli, Flack, Harris, Lecce, McCarthy, Pirie, Sarkaria, Smith, and Surma re Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Farmland and Food Security

The same email text was sent to:

- Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

- Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources
- Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines
- Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth
- Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation
- Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure

The text of the email to Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is used for illustrative purposes. For those who follow such matters, questions may arise as how Mr. Flack transitioned between his previous and current ministerial postings.

In a previous Ford cabinet, Mr. Flack was Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness. As a result, he has seen the agricultural land inventory story from both sides now, so to speak (11), whereby his previous mandate was to protect the agricultural land inventory, and his current mandate is to convert agricultural land to municipal uses such as housing subdivisions, shopping centers, stadia, ring roads, warehouses, interchanges, and landfills. (12)

Dear Minister Flack,

You are copied on the communication of May 31, 2026, to Premier Doug Ford on the subject, "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

In the interests of convenience, self-containment, and context for all readers, the email communication to Premier Ford follows as background for this communication to you regarding evidence on record in your agency which is pertinent to a report in progress which is tentatively titled, Results of Request to Premier Doug Ford and Cabinet Ministers for Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Ontario's Farmland Inventory

From: wellar.barry@gmail.com <wellar.barry@gmail.com>

Sent: May 31, 2026 4:38 PM

To: 'Premier of Ontario | Premier ministre de l'Ontario' <Premier@ontario.ca>

Cc: trevor.jones@pc.ola.org; lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org; vic.fedeli@pc.ola.org; rob.flack@pc.ola.org; mike.harris@pc.ola.org; stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org; todd.mccarthy@pc.ola.org; george.pirie@pc.ola.org; prabmeet.sarkaria@pc.ola.org; graydon.smith@pc.ola.org; 'Marit Stiles' <marit.stiles@ontariondp.ca>; JVanthof-QP@ndp.on.ca; jfraser.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org; tylerwatt.mpp.co@ola.org; mike.harris@pc.ola.org; mschreiner@ola.org; 'George A. Neville' <george.neville@ncf.ca>;

'douglasarnold douglasarnold' <douglasarnold@sympatico.ca>; 'le hibou' <ottawaowl2@yahoo.ca>; wellar.barry@gmail.com; 'Village Media' <help@villagemedia.ca>; 'Steve Larocque' <speaker.steve@northernontario.ca>; 'Gordon Brock' <gordon.e.brock@gmail.com>; 'George Lefebvre' <shasonje@gmail.com>; 'Martin Straathof' <martin@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca>; 'Nicole Feriancek' <nferiancek@postmedia.com>; office@nfuontario.ca

Subject: "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

Dear Premier Ford.

Re: "Protect Ontario": Looking for evidence of action taken to protect farmland and food security.

I again call to your attention my concerns about the failure over the past 50+ years of Ontario provincial governments to adequately protect the province's inventory of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland.

The following productions are among those included and/or referenced in recent communications to you and/or ministers of agriculture, food, and agribusiness, rural affairs, and other ministries.

- [Research Update on How Combining Universal Law of Location, Game Theory, and GIS Could Contribute to More Informed Land Use Decisions](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Municipal Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Agricultural Land Inventory](#)
- [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Ontario Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Farmland Inventory](#)

And, most recently, a letter to the editor under the title, **Supply of quality land is 'on seriously shaky ground'**, was published in the Temiskaming Speaker. It is included here in the interests of context, convenience, and completeness.

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Temiskaming Speaker

Page 5a

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Supply of quality land is 'on seriously shaky ground'

Dear editor,

Thank you for the supplement, Agriculture - Plant, Grow, Harvest, Repeat in the Speaker of May 20. The supplement paints a very positive picture about the contribution of Northeastern Ontario to the province's agricultural industry, and the state of food security across the province.

However, research by the Information Research Board, as well as other research bodies, confirms that Ontario's supply of agricultural land classes one, two, and three is on seriously shaky ground to put it mildly.

Based on what we can ascertain from open records, over the past five decades Ontario governments have been rezoning more than 100,000 acres of high-quality farmland to non-agricultural uses every year, and once the topsoil has been stripped, concrete has been poured, asphalt has been laid down, toxic waste has been dumped, etc., that farmland is gone for many generations if not forever.

Further, based on non-replies by Premier Doug Ford and Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Affairs, and Agribusiness to numerous inquiries about the size and quality of Ontario's agricultural land inventory, it appears fair to say that there is a cone of silence over the politicians and public servants who should be informing Ontario residents in a timely and comprehensive manner about decisions by the provincial and municipal governments that affect Ontario's supply of farmland and the food security of present and future residents.

Our finding is that citizens must take immediate action to ensure that all governments in this province give the highest priority to protecting and preserving farmland classes one, two, and three, and take steps to upgrade other classes wherever circumstances are favourable.

I believe that in order to achieve that needed change, citizens, opposition parties, and the media MUST insist upon having full, easy, timely, and direct online access to all pertinent records so that corrective actions can be taken to ensure the highest and best use of agricultural land, a limited resource that deserves our utmost respect.

Dr. Barry Wellar (formerly of Latchford), Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa, President, Information Research Board, Registered Professional Planner (Ontario-Lifetime), Member, Order of Canada

Premier Ford, in the event any production is found to contain a factual error of omission or commission, I welcome receipt at the earliest moment of specifics regarding the error, and the link to the corrective document or record.

This approach is consistent with Information Research Board (IRB) obligations with respect to the principles of transparency and accountability.

A report by the IRB is in progress, and I seek your assistance in ensuring that I do not misrepresent your position, that of officials, or records.

On the matter of evidence of action taken during the first and second terms of your government to protect Ontario farmland and food security, this can most effectively and efficiently be achieved by providing:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.
3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

I note in closing that in my experience it should require less more than ten minutes to produce the links to the requested productions since the request involves existing records and does not seek information nor does it involve the derivation or creation of information.

Premier Ford, I look forward to receiving the requested response and materials within ten business days to enable production of the research report by the end of June 2026.

As you will no doubt appreciate, the apparent daily loss of more than 300 acres of prime farmland is widely seen as a critically important and urgent matter, and the Information Research Board is duty-bound to seek provincial and municipal legislative, policy, program, and planning changes as appropriate at the earliest moment.

Thank you.

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M.
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa
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<https://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

Minister Flack, the purpose of this communication from the Information Research Board (IRB) is to obtain what might be termed meta-evidence to assist in the review of materials received from Premier Ford regarding evidence of action taken over the previous two terms and the current term of office held by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

Before presenting the questions, which define the search for meta-evidence, I believe it may be instructive if I briefly comment on the closing two paragraphs in the communication to Premier Ford.

First regarding the paragraph, “Premier Ford, I look forward to receiving the requested response and materials within ten business days to enable production of the research report by the end of June 2026”; that observation is based on having spent many years as a professional in the information and governance fields. It is my experience in the policy domain that initiatives such as Protect Ontario are supported by an abundance of evidence.

As a result, I believe it is reasonable to expect that it is a routine, matter of course task to forward to me links to records held by your Ministry which provide meta-evidence pertinent to this research into actions by your Ministry which affect Ontario’s inventory of farmland. Asking that your response be provided within ten business days seems very doable in my experience.

Second, regarding the paragraph, “As you [Premier Ford] will no doubt appreciate, the apparent daily loss of more than 300 acres of prime farmland is widely seen as a critically important and urgent matter, and the Information Research Board is duty-bound to seek provincial and municipal legislative, policy, program, and planning changes as appropriate at the earliest moment.”

Research and media reports vary widely on the acres of farmland classes 1, 2, and 3 that are converted to non-farmland uses on a daily basis, and it appears fair to say that it is past time for Ontario residents to learn more about how much land is being converted to non-farmland use, but to what kinds of non-farmland use, where, and why.

The Information Research board seeks your assistance in assembling the meta-evidence that we believe will assist in reviewing provincial government actions to protect farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.

We believe that for phase 1 of this project, links to materials containing these records will be of great assistance.

For each of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026:

1. The number of acres of class 1 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
2. The number of acres of class 2 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
3. The number of acres of class 3 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.

Minister Flack, given the longstanding knowledge about the critical importance of protecting and preserving class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland, I expect that your ministry can readily provide links to the requested records, and that it will have no difficulty responding by or before ten business days, and thereby enable IRB to publish **Results of Request to Premier Doug Ford and Cabinet Ministers for Evidence of Action Taken to Protect Ontario's Farmland Inventory** before the end of June.

Thank you.

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10. Response from Premier Doug Ford re Action Taken to Protect Agricultural Land

Premier Doug Ford acknowledged receipt but did not provide a substantive response to the email communication of May 31, 2026, which asked for links to pertinent productions as follows:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.
3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Given the political effort, political promotion, and taxpayer money spent on the “Protect Ontario” initiative on the one hand, and the absence of political effort, political promotion, and taxpayer money spent on responding to an inquiry about action taken to protect and preserve Ontario’s agricultural land inventory in general, and its class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland inventories in particular, it is therefore taken to be confirmed that Premier Doug Ford has not done anything and does not have a plan to take action to protect and preserve Ontario’s agricultural land inventory in general, and its class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland inventories in particular.

One question which arises for Premier Ford as a result of that confirmation and is discussed in section 12, is that if the provincial government spent more than an estimated \$125 million to promote Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, what did his government spend the funds on if not to protect one of Ontario’s most valuable and critical assets, the agricultural land inventory? (13)

11. Response from Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs re Action Taken to Protect Agricultural Land

Neither Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, nor Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs provided a substantive response to the email communication of June 14, 2026, which asked for links to pertinent productions as follows:

1. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
2. Links to documents describing the actions taken to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

3. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and preserve farmland classes 1, 2, and 3.
4. Links to documents describing future actions identified, budgeted, and scheduled to ensure that full measure is allocated to protect and improve preserve farmland classes 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Given the political effort, political promotion, and taxpayer money spent on the “Protect Ontario” initiative on the one hand, and the absence of political effort, political promotion, or taxpayer money spent on responding to an inquiry about action taken to protect and preserve Ontario’s agricultural land inventory in general, and its class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland inventories in particular, it is therefore taken to be confirmed that neither Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness nor Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs has done anything and does not have a plan to take action to protect and preserve Ontario’s agricultural land inventory in general, and its class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland inventories in particular.

One question which arises as a result of that confirmation and is discussed in section 10, is that if Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs spent in the range of \$18 million - \$25 million to promote Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, how did they spend the funds if not to protect one of Ontario’s most valuable and critical assets, and their mandated responsibility, the agricultural land inventory?

And a second question which arises is, “When will citizens receive a comprehensive accounting of the full costs and benefits to residents of Ontario as a result of conversions of land from agricultural to non-agricultural uses directed, induced, encouraged, etc., by the respective ministries? (14)

12. Response from Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure re Action Taken to Protect Agricultural Land

A substantive response was not received from Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, or Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, or Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, or Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, or George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, or Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, or Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure regarding the email communication of June 14, 2026, which asked for links to pertinent productions as follows:

For each of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026:

1. The number of acres of class 1 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
2. The number of acres of class 2 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.
3. The number of acres of class 3 farmland that your Ministry caused to be removed from Ontario's farmland inventory.

Given the political effort, political promotion, and taxpayer money spent on the "Protect Ontario" initiative on the one hand, and the absence of political effort, political promotion, or taxpayer money spent on responding to an inquiry about action taken to protect and preserve Ontario's agricultural land inventory in general, and its class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland inventories in particular, it is therefore taken to be confirmed that none of Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, or Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, or Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, or Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, or George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, or Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, or Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure is able and willing to inform Ontario residents how many acres of class 1, class 2 or class 3 farmland her or his ministry caused to be removed from the respective provincial inventories in each of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026.

One question which arises as a result of that confirmation and which is discussed in section 10, is that if Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure spent in the

estimated range of \$115 million-\$135 million to promote Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, on what programs or projects did they spend funds which caused the conversion of how many acres of which class of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses?
(15)

And, again as a second question, “What are the full costs and benefits to residents of Ontario as a result of the conversions of land from agricultural to non-agricultural uses that were directed, induced, encouraged, etc., by the respective ministries?”

13. Implications of Research Findings for Ontario's Inventory of Agricultural Land Supply and Ontario's Food Security

The following implications of findings in this study are tentative and are intended as a starting point in a much-needed public conversation about protecting Ontario's agricultural land inventory and protecting Ontario's food security.

Since the state Ontario's food security depends in large measure upon the state of Ontario's land inventory, the land inventory implications are presented first, and a selection of derivative food security implications follow.

A. Implications of Research Findings for Ontario's Agricultural Land Inventory

Based on findings presented above and in the related background materials, Table 3 uses a cause-effect approach to outline the relationship between findings and implications.

Table 3. Examples of Cause-Effect Arguments Outlining the Disturbing Relationship Between the Apparent Failure of Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, to protect Ontario's Agricultural Land Inventory and the Implications of that Failure

Finding 1. None of Premier Ford or any minister named in the report — Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure — appears to have done anything or plans to do anything to protect Ontario's agricultural land inventory.

Implication 1. Premier Doug Ford is not even a marginal player much less a “champion” on behalf of protecting any of Ontario’s agricultural land inventory, much less class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland.

Implication 2. The current provincial government does not have even one cabinet minister with agricultural land inventory responsibility who is a “champion” on behalf of protecting any of Ontario’s agricultural land inventory, much less class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland.

Implication 3. The current provincial government does not have even one cabinet minister with an impact on converting Ontario’s agricultural land inventory to non-agricultural use who is a “champion” on behalf of protecting any of Ontario’s agricultural land inventory, much less class 1, class 2, or class 3 farmland.

Implication 4. The absence of political agricultural land inventory oversight points to a sharp increase in the amount of acreage converted to non-agricultural uses. It is our preliminary estimate that the number of conversions will rise from more than 325 acres per day to more than 425 acres per day within five years, that is, from more than 120,000 acres per year to more than 155,000 per year. **(16)**

Implication 5. To put those numbers in temporal perspective, in tens years they add up to 1,200,000 acres lost and 1,550,000 acres lost, respectively. Those numbers could be small potatoes, so to speak, if Ontario has, let us say, 35,000,000 surplus acres of classes 1, 2, and 3 farmland in “Plant, Grow, Harvest, Repeat” status, and another 35,000,000 acres of classes 4 and 5 waiting in the weeds to be upgraded to classes 3, 2, and 1 over the next 50 years at costs that would likely boggle many minds if included in an evidence-based *Protect Ontario* production. **(17)**

Finding 2. Estimates found to date about funds spent by the provincial government to promote **Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act***. indicate that of the estimated \$125,000,000-\$150,000,000+ spent to date to “Unleash our Economy”, very few of those dollars are spent to promote initiatives which protect Ontario’s agricultural land inventory, and most if not all of those funds promote Protecting Ontario by promoting economic activities which are furthered by converting agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Implication 1. All provincial agencies including Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Rural Affairs will follow the money and little if any effort will be made to protect agricultural land because it will be a commodity input to non-agricultural uses of land.

Implication 2. It is highly likely verging on certainty, as per the Universal Law of Location, that unleashing the economy means the spread on non-agricultural land uses will occur by converting agricultural land to non-agricultural land and thereby reducing the number of acres remaining left in agricultural production.

Implication 3. As dictated by zero-sum logic, if unleashing the economy means that an unleashed land-based economic activity does not occur on land designated for non-agricultural use, then it must occur on agricultural land. As a result, if an unleashed economic activity covers 10,000 acres of farmland, then the agricultural land inventory is reduced by 10,000 acres.

B. Implications of Research Findings for Ontario's Food Security

Based on findings presented above and in the related background materials, Table 4 uses a cause-effect approach to outline the relationship between findings and implications.

Table 4. Examples of Cause-Effect Arguments Outlining the Disturbing Relationship Between the Apparent Failure of Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, to protect Ontario's Food Security and the Implications of that Failure

Finding 1. No statements were found which affirm that Protect Ontario includes protecting locations which are the bases of the "Plant, Grow, Harvest, Repeat" adage which is widely known by those engaged in food production activities.

Implication 1. The apparent lack of regard by Premier Ford and cabinet ministers for location as it affects the agricultural economy suggests that citizens in all ridings would be wise to explain to these politicians how location affects food security beginning at the land inventory level right through to stages of production, transportation, and consumption.

Implication 2. The term "Plant" implies that there will be land available at locations where the "Plant, Grow, Harvest" actions occur. With hundreds of acres disappearing per day over recent decades, that implication is more than just cause for pause, it is a red flag to citizens that their food security is seriously at risk.

Implication 3. The term "Grow" implies that there will be land available at locations where the "Plant, Grow, Harvest" actions occur. With hundreds of acres disappearing per day over recent decades, that implication is more than just cause for pause, it is a red flag to citizens that their food security is seriously at risk.

Implication 4. The term “Repeat” implies that there will be land available at locations where the “Plant, Grow, Harvest” actions occur. With hundreds of acres disappearing per day over recent decades, that implication is more than just cause for pause, it is a red flag to citizens that their food security is seriously at risk.

Finding 2. While it is known that the Ontario agricultural land inventory of class 1, class 2, and class 3 farmland is decreasing, the provincial government is not providing citizens, opposition members, or the broadcast media the rate of daily, weekly, monthly, or even annual decreases for each class.

Implication 1. The provincial government failure to properly inform citizens, opposition members, and broadcast media in a comprehensive and timely manner about the acreage of high-quality farmland means a massive guessing game about Ontario's food security in the immediate terms.

Implication 2. Loss of agricultural acreage affects production levels, which affects food security and food affordability.

Implication 3. Loss of agricultural acreage, such as by provincial expropriations, affects the viability of farm operations which affects food security and food affordability.

Implication 4. Loss of agricultural acreage, such as by provincial expropriations, affects the capacity of the farming community to stay in business, which affects food security and food affordability.

Implication 5. Lack of clarity and consistency, as well as lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the provincial government in regard to respect for highest and best use principles, is cause for willing buyer-willing seller decisions, loss of farmland to non-farm uses, and threats to food security and food affordability.

As noted, the implications presented in this report are based on a number of scenarios, which is the required research route in the absence of replies to communications to Premier Doug Ford, to ministers with mandates to protect agricultural land (Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs), and to ministers with mandates which could entail converting agricultural land to other uses (Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and

Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure). **(18)**

The Information Research Board's activity agenda includes consideration of a follow-on investigation in due course to refine existing implications, and to consider other implications that have been identified for further review before publishing. One such topic is known as the United Nations "30 by 30" goal. This initiative is briefly discussed in section C.

C. Implications of Research Findings for Ontario's Role in the Federal Government's Plan to Meet United Nation's' Goal to Designate 30 Per Cent of Earth's Land and Marine Areas Protected Areas by 2030

Land areas to be protected by the U.N.'s 30 by 30 initiative (For a recent broadcast media comment see, for example, (<https://archive.ph/Ei01d>) are parts of existing inventories of land jurisdiction anywhere. That is, and as affirmed by the zero-sum game theory construct, ([Research Update on How Combining Universal Law of Location, Game Theory, and GIS Could Contribute to More Informed Land Use Decisions](#)) these protected lands are already part of an existing land class or land type inventory, including agricultural land.

As a result, Ontario's current and future provincial and municipal governments are likely to experience the "caught between a rock and a hard place" syndrome over long periods as they are faced with deciding, for example, which lands from current inventories to protect in the interests of biodiversity, which lands to convert when and where from agricultural use to other uses, and which lands to convert when and where from non-agricultural use to agricultural use.

And that decision scenario brings me back to the matters of temporal and spatial contexts discussed above in this report and previously in [Research Update on How Combining Universal Law of Location, Game Theory, and GIS Could Contribute to More Informed Land Use Decisions](#).

Beginning in the 1960s and greatly accelerating in the 1970s, Canada's learned literature, government reports, broadcast media, professional literature, and other literature. including statements by politicians at all levels regarding concerns about the state of Canada's land inventories, and the increasing amount of foreign ownership.

As one research case in point, a related project which I was commissioned to undertake while with the federal Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (MSUA) was the Canada Land Market Information System (CALAMARI) project.

MSUA was a policy agency, and while inter-agency discussions were held, as were national and international inter-governmental discussions about the design of CALAMARIS, the Ministry lacked a program capability to conduct operational pilot studies, much less begin preliminary investigations into the design of system pre-tests and trial runs. Consequently, for reasons too numerous to fully detail here, CALAMARIS did not make it into a cabinet document much less onto a cabinet meeting agenda. **(19)**

Based on the take-up of the CALAMARIS model in other countries, and my research over the past 50 years into what has happened to Canada's land inventory, I believe that federal, provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal governments, citizens and business entities across Canada would have benefitted from implementation of CALAMARIS in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, etc.

However, although the idea of provincial and federal land market information systems has received periodic attention at conferences and government meetings, to my knowledge there have not been any sustained policy or program initiatives in Canada upon which the federal government could build upon in deciding how Canada can contribute to United Nations' goal to designate 30 per cent of Earth's land and marine areas with protected areas status by 2030.

The bottom line, therefore, is that while this research domain has benefitted from methodological design investigations, numerous new or different wrinkles have emerged to alter how political, geo-political, financial, economic, technological, and other forces affect land market conditions and operations over time and space, especially in a country like Canada which characterizes by a large and diversified land mass.

In the spirit of "Hindsight is 20-20", the current situation of seemingly having little upon which to base the federal initiative could be cause for wishes to be made that the CALAMARIS project had been properly supported more than 50 years ago when it was introduced.

However, that did not happen, and IRB joins those looking forward to examining productions describing federal, provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal information systems created to inform Canadians about how their governments are dealing with the difficult land allocation decisions facing Canadians from coast to coast to coast to border for many decades to come.

14. Land Use Planning Retrospective: Déjà Vu All Over Again, 52 Years Later

It is appropriate to put this report in historical context and give credit to whom credit is due for groundbreaking precedent research.

I returned to Canada in 1972 to join the federal Ministry of State for Urban Affairs as a senior research officer, and one of my tasks was to engage with members of high-end, intergovernmental groups including policy advisors, academics, bureaucrats, and consultants with background in such planning sub-fields as development, ecology, environment, green space, housing, land use, research methods and techniques, and regional, rural, transportation, and urban planning principles and practices.

In addition, there was a technical component to the group with responsibility for building the databases to support descriptive and analytical mapping activities. As the reader may be aware, the early 1970s were very early days in the evolution of geographic information systems (GIS) science and technology.

As a result, while the mapping activities were crude relative to today's capabilities, they were more than adequate to put together an outstanding document discussing the question, *Ontario Planned?* (20)

Of special importance to this report, however, is that I have no recollection of anyone in the primary group or the technical group ever saying in the early 1970s that a minister or agency refused to provide answers to questions, or refused to respond to requests for data, policy documents, program spending, or anything else that those on the task force wished to examine.

Moreover, to my knowledge the notion of hiding behind stalling tactics such as those in the current FOI rigamarole did not play a part in producing *Ontario Planned?*

As noted in a previous report, *Ontario Planned?* made a major contribution to the agricultural land inventory theme pursued in several current reports including this one, and I wish to acknowledge the present relevance of a report by Ontario's planning community more than 50 years ago.

That said, I am concerned about the high likelihood that the *Ontario Planned?* theme of land use planning failure in many respects will continue to be problematic 50 years into the future, with failure to protect Ontario's agricultural land inventory being one of the critical problems that can be traced directly to this government and any other government that fails to properly and simultaneously respect the agricultural land inventory file and the food security file.

I close this section by noting a recent case in point in a seemingly unending series of problematic cases in point about failed land use planning by Ontario provincial governments, which is discussed in a recent article by Randy Boswell, "What really killed a 360-unit housing project?", which was published in the Ottawa Citizen, June 30, 2026.

(<https://archive.ph/YqCJS>)

The primary problematic case in point for this report, and for municipal councils and citizens across Ontario, is that it verges on reckless non-planning for the provincial government to arbitrarily overturn decisions by Ottawa council and citizens, and other councils and citizens about urban boundaries, and instead imposes nonsensical notions about treating land outside current urban boundaries as mere commodities to be turned over to developers regardless of the impacts on, for example, Ontario's agricultural land inventory and Ontario's food security.

15. Conclusion

None of Premier Doug Ford or any of Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure responded to the request for evidence of action taken to protect Ontario's farmland inventory and food security.

Since the requested evidence should have been readily available to citizens, opposition politicians, members of the broadcast media, and other interested parties, and would have brought credit to the government, it is prudent to conclude from the non-availability of evidence that the government has no evidence of action taken to protect Ontario's farmland inventory and food security.

Further, with most of the funds promoting Bill 5 *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act* spent on unleashing economic activities within the ministries headed by Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Mines, Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation, Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure, all of which could involve converting agricultural land to non-agricultural uses on any given day, it is deemed reasonable to conclude that the provincial government is deliberately and with malice imperilling Ontario's agricultural land inventory, Ontario's food security, and the affordability of food produced in Ontario.

16. Endnotes

1. Over the past six years dozens of emails were sent by the Information Research Board to Premier Doug Ford and several ministers regarding policy, program, planning, and operations

decisions affecting Ontario's agricultural land inventory and Ontario's food security. None of those emails received a substantive response. That experience is not unique we are informed by other researchers, members of broadcast media, members of the agriculture, agribusiness and food security communities, and elected and appointed officials at the municipal and provincial levels. There is consensus among this expansive contact group that when politicians want citizens to know what they are doing, why, and how, they "shout it out from the rooftops" so to speak, and when they are not shouting it out that is a clear signal for citizens that politicians are hiding something that could cost them votes and even elections. The lack of openness, transparency and accountability which marks Ontario's agricultural land inventory and food security files is widely taken to mean that citizens are in for some nasty surprises.

2. It is taken as a given that the governing party in any jurisdiction takes liberties with the labelling of legislation, so the language of Bill 5, *Protect Ontario: Unleashing Our Economy* is taken at face value, but only to a limited degree. That is, the language of Bill 5 affects every citizen and enterprise in the province, and this report uses the government's own language to ascertain the extent to which the provincial government is being forthright and honest with Ontario residents regarding its actions to protect Ontario's agricultural land inventory and food security.

3. Copycat populism is practised by many politicians, but it is quite something else to mimic a term used by Donald Trump or U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, both of whom are widely regarded as being both linguistically and numerically challenged and are deemed to have only a superficial sense of the fundamentals of macroeconomics, microeconomics, fiscal policy, monetary policy, or public finance. Moreover, using the term "unleashing" as in unleashing a provincial economy suggests a very limited understanding of how to measure the consequences of such an action, much less dealing with unexpected or unintended consequences that could arise should the provincial government "back the wrong horses" which has been the result of many similar provincial government initiatives.

The assessment of Trump's intellectual limitations is detailed in [DOES DONALD TRUMP HAVE THE KNOW-HOW TO SAVE THE U.S.A.?](#), and those of Bessent are based on listening to him respond to questions by members of U.S. Senate and House committees on 25 or so occasions. It is acknowledged that he could have been playing "doofus" in order to annoy members, but in my experience even if he was being evasive on purpose his comments were on the trivial side on every occasion and had no intellectual upside whatsoever.

4. Given that the Ford government has draped a 'cone of silence' over cabinet ministers and policy initiatives, (for discussion of the code of silence and cone of silence see, for example, [Interim Report 18. Invoking the Code of Conduct to Publicly Oblige City of Ottawa Politicians to Demonstrate Due Regard for Transparency and Accountability](#); [Interim Report 19.](#)

Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Reports from the Pilot Study Chronicling the Use of Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring the Standard of Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice; Interim' Report 20. Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Communications to Mayor and Councillors that Received 'The Silent Treatment'; Interim Report 21. Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Media Stories That Indicate a Code of Silence Has Been Adopted by Members of Council; Interim Report 25. City of Ottawa Mayor and Councillors, 2022-2026: Do You Agree that Citizens Are Entitled to Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to the Public Records Held by the City of Ottawa? Survey #2), it appears clear that a current government tactic is to preclude citizens, broadcast media, and opposition parties ascertaining the results arising from Bill 5, and their impact on Ontario's agricultural land inventory and food security. I bear that precautionary note in mind when assessing government claims of achievement regarding any aspect of Bill 5 that could negatively affect Ontario's agricultural land inventory and food security.

5. It is emphasized that class 1, class 2, class 3, class 4, class 5, class 6, and class 7 farmland all contribute to Ontario's agricultural land inventory, and to the standing of Ontario's food security. Attempts to locate analytical reports in government records on the contributions of each class have not been successful.

6. Citizens across Ontario understand that first and foremost politicians and political parties seek to protect themselves so that they might be elected or re-elected. In the case of using the phrase "Protect Ontario" as the lead-in for Bill 5, there appears to be little public understanding of what the government means by the phrase in operational terms, or how the public is to evaluate the Protect Ontario mission, and especially if a cone of silence is draped over ministers and civil servants.

7. For a quick overview of Ontario's farming story see, for example, **Farming & Agri-Food in Ontario: 30 Facts**. <https://www.canadaaction.ca/ontario-farming-facts>. For in-depth coverage of the significance of the agriculture sector to Ontario's economy and to Ontario citizens and, hence, to the critical nature of the province's agricultural land inventory upon which the sector is based, many hundreds of productions are available for inspection.

The following is an illustrative selection of links to pertinent organizations and productions, with apologies in advance for cross-postings: <https://www.canadaaction.ca/>; <https://ofa.on.ca/>; <https://adaptcouncil.org/member-organizations>; <https://ontarioagsocieties.com/>; <https://sustainontario.com/farmland-agriculture-network/>; <https://www.ofvga.org/>; <https://gfo.ca/>; <https://oia.on.ca/>; <https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/>; <https://www.ontariosheep.org/>; <https://nfuontario.ca/>; <https://www.oaba.on.ca/>; <https://gfo.ca/about-us/>; <https://www.ontariobeef.com/>; <https://www.farmfoodcareon.org/>; <https://ontarioagsocieties.com/>; <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/>; <https://ofa.on.ca/>.

8. In my experience of dealing with federal and provincial cabinet documents and other policy statements, it seems highly likely that if the Ford government has not made documents justifying Bill 5 publicly and widely available, then they do not exist.

9. Ontario's agricultural economy is extremely sophisticated, and the thoughtful publications covered by the links in endnote 7 are but an introduction to the complexities of this very significant component of Ontario's economy. As for the competency of the current provincial cabinet, a review of the descriptions provided by ministerial profiles indicates that not even one minister has a background in education, training, experience, or any other kind of expertise to even begin to identify or understand the parameters much less the analytics underlying decisions directing this cabinet how to best go about unleashing the agricultural component of the provincial economy.

10. The bottom-line point is that if Bill 5 has evidence-based support, then a pragmatic provincial government would take advantage of having notice of Bill 5 disseminated by any and all means, including by an organization such as the Information Research Board. Lack of take-up of dissemination opportunities by the Ford government appears to further affirm among other more negative possibilities, that the Ford government has draped a cone of silence over Bill 5 and wants to keep it from falling under public scrutiny.

11. Thanks to singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell for "Both Sides, Now". Written in 1966, the message has abiding pertinence, although in Mr. Flack's case the message is one which puts him between a rock and a hard place when it comes to who gets blamed for the destruction of thousands of acres of agricultural land in Ontario during his current and previous ministerial postings.

12. It has been suggested that Rob Flack should know more about the protect agricultural land-convert agricultural land relationship, process, and activity levels than anyone in cabinet during the current and previous terms of Ford governments. In his previous role, Mr. Flack did not respond substantively to inquiries. [Applying Universal Law of Location as a Land Use Planning Decision Tool: Ontario Government Data, Evidence, and Research Studies Must be Upgraded to Enable Informed Decisions that Best Use and Preserve the Province's Threatened Farmland Inventory.](#)

Perhaps he will step out from under the cone of silence for this report

13. Examination of numerous broadcast media and social media comments, including those involving poll results, suggests there is a widely-held view that the vast majority of taxpayer funds were spent on promoting and protecting the Conservative Party of Ontario with emphasis on leader Doug Ford who is receiving 'flak' from a variety of directions.

14. A search of readily available government accounts did not locate any productions that would enable an analysis of the accounts pertinent to that question. If that is indeed the case,

then it seems abundantly clear that Bill 5 is based on whim rather than reality and is a smoke-and-mirrors exercise of the first order. If that is not the case, then I welcome being the first person to learn otherwise via being provided the links requested of Premier Ford and Ministers Jones and Thompson.

15. A range of figures have been published in broadcast media stories about funds spent on “selling” Bill 5, and the provincial government has not been forthcoming about the amounts spent when, where, why, by whom, by what means, to what ends. Figures in the range of \$175 million to \$200 million spent already are part of this discussion, and that number is seen to likely double or more in a year if the Conservative government continues to drop in the polls and/or a provincial election comes into play and public money is used to promote the party currently in power.

16. The provincial government requires municipalities to provide a 15-year supply of residential land. A 50-year supply of high-quality farmland is a first estimate with a 100-year supply likely the prudent timeframe to allow for movement up the 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 class of land hierarchy.

17. Reference here is to what might be termed redundant, parallel, standby, Plan B, residual agricultural land, or agricultural land reserve which is “shovel-ready” to use a phrase which is popular with politicians, and ready to be rolled into use for farming purposes.

18. In the communication to Premier Doug Ford, mention is made of the Supplement, “Plant, Grow, Harvest, Repeat” in the letter from this space to the editor, Temiskaming Speaker, which was published May 27, 2026.

The Supplement also contains a column titled, “Province introduces Food Independence Act”. However, the column does not inform citizens, the media, etc., of any measures or actions that are proposed to protect class 1, class 2, class 3, class 4, class 5, class 6, or class 7 of Ontario’s agricultural land inventory. As some might say, the column is long on vague exhortation and exceedingly short on action-oriented details.

Further, this footnote is in the final draft stage on July 3, 2026, and all members of cabinet have had their communications about the agricultural land inventory project for at least two weeks.

Since no evidence could be found of any Ontario cabinet ministers who does not take credit for vote-getting deeds whenever the opportunity arises, it appears fair to say that no responses have been received because no actions have been taken other than to promote the notion of food independence which may seem prudent in principle but amounts to less than a hill of beans if nothing or too little is done to protect the agricultural land inventory.

19. This matter may be added to the IRB research agenda for future consideration. In the interim and having due regard for the original research effort expended on the CALAMARIS project, it remains to be seen whether inter-governmental and inter-agency competition and rivalry, along with the influence of vested interests, will continue to play a major role in how land allocation decisions are made by Canadian governments.

20. Richardson, Nigel, (ed.). *Ontario Planned?* A special issue on the Golden Age of planning in Ontario 1966-1975. ***Plan Canada***, 24:3/4 Dec 84. Canadian Institute of Planners, Ottawa.

17. Acknowledgements

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