A Municipal Issue Guide for Candidates and Future Councils in Simcoe County

2026

Connecting land, water, climate, housing, affordability, transportation, and community well-being

Prepared through a collaborative process with community organizations across Simcoe County and Ontario.

Introduction

Municipal governments make decisions that shape daily life in very real ways. They decide where homes are built, how neighbourhoods grow, how farmland and natural areas are protected, how roads and infrastructure are planned, how communities prepare for flooding and extreme weather, and how people are supported when housing becomes unaffordable or unavailable.

While these issues are often talked about separately, they are connected.

That is why this Municipal Issue Guide brings together organizations working across Simcoe County and Ontario in an initiative unique to our region. At first glance, our issues may seem disparate. Some focus on housing, homelessness and public health. Others focus on farmland preservation, water security and climate action. Further, some work locally, others regionally or provincially and some work to some degree in each. But as we look at the complexity of the challenges facing our communities, it becomes clear that our goals and our vision for our communities are deeply intertwined.

A community with more affordable housing is stronger when people can also reach work, school, health care, food, parks, and services. It is stronger when local workers can afford to live close to their jobs, when seniors can stay in their communities, and when young people can imagine a future where they grew up.

A community that strengthens agricultural systems is also supporting local food security, rural economies, farmland access, water protection, climate resilience, and long-term municipal financial health. When good farmland is lost to poorly planned growth, communities lose more than open space. They lose productive land, local economic activity, food-system resilience, and the chance to grow in ways that make better use of existing infrastructure.

A community that strengthens wetlands, forests, rivers, shorelines, and watersheds is also reducing flood risk, protecting drinking water, supporting biodiversity, cooling neighbourhoods, and avoiding expensive damage to roads, homes, public infrastructure, and local businesses. Natural systems provide real services to communities. Protecting them is not separate from protecting people or public budgets.

A community that plans growth carefully can make better use of roads, pipes, schools, libraries, parks, transit, and public services that already exist. This can reduce long-term costs for municipalities and taxpayers while supporting more complete, connected, and economically resilient communities.

This is the shared understanding behind this guide: good municipal decisions can solve more than one problem at a time. Housing affordability, environmental protection, climate action, social justice, food security, water security, public health, local economic resilience, and good

planning are not competing priorities. They are pieces of the same larger question: how do we build communities where people can live well now, and where future generations can live well too?

How to Use This Guide.

This guide is organized by issue so candidates can find information easily. Each policy consideration is designed to help candidates and future councils see where municipal decisions can create social, environmental, and economic benefits at the same time, while reducing long-term costs and avoiding decisions that solve one problem by creating another.

Broadly, this approach is known as **integrated community sustainability planning**, which is explored in more detail in the next section. This guide is offered in that spirit: as a resource for candidates and future councils to support decision-making that strengthens communities, reduces long-term costs, and cares for both people and place.

The goal is not to make every issue simple. It is to help make the connections clearer: between homes and habitats, roads and rivers, budgets and belonging, growth and responsibility.

Collaborating Organizations

Integrated Community Sustainability Planning

This guide is grounded in the principles of **Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP)**. While this term may not be commonplace, its approach has already been reflected for decades in municipal planning work across Canada, including through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and in Ontario's land use planning framework.

ICSP recognizes that municipal decisions are not isolated even if we treat them as such. For example, the location of housing affects roads, water systems, farmland, municipal costs, climate emissions, household costs, access to services, and public health. A decision about stormwater or wetlands can affect flooding, infrastructure costs, drinking water, biodiversity, agriculture, and community safety. While these issues may come from separate reports or departments, residents experience them together.

For that reason, ICSP emphasizes a triple-bottom-line approach towards decision making. For example, a municipality may make a decision primarily based on economics, but residents may experience impacts in their environmental and social wellbeing.Therefore, ICSP asks councils to weigh the communities' environmental, social and economic considerations evenly and simultaneously. Strong and sustainable municipal decisions should, therefore, be advancing social, environmental, and economic conditions.

Social considerations include things like housing, health, affordability, access, safety, and community well-being. Environmental considerations include water, climate, farmland, biodiversity, natural heritage, and ecosystem health. Economic considerations include infrastructure costs, municipal finances, local businesses, workforce stability, and long-term fiscal responsibility. These categories, while flexible and overlapping, are a way to help candidates and councillors consider the full range of impacts before making decisions.

Municipalities are especially important in this work because their decisions are so close to people's daily lives. Councils make choices about land use, housing, roads, sidewalks, transit, parks, water, stormwater, public land, budgets, bylaws, and local services. Those choices shape whether communities become more affordable, more resilient, healthier, and easier to live in or whether problems become more expensive and harder to solve later.

And as municipalities are facing more complex pressures at the same time, siloed decision making is becoming less effective at solving these interrelated issues. Limited revenue tools, growing infrastructure deficits and increased responsibility to provide services, means

municipalities have an even greater need to ensure decisions maximize benefit and the efficiency of tax dollars.

This guide is organized by issue so candidates can find information easily; however, the policy options are meant to be read through an integrated planning lens. Each municipal action included in the guide is intended to support a triple-bottom-line approach by creating social, environmental, and economic co-benefits.

Adapted by SCGC from several ICSP and government frameworks, the decision lens asks councillors to ensure that they have complete information to accurately assess a project's benefits and risks.

This lens does not assume there will always be a perfect answer. Many municipal decisions involve trade-offs. The purpose is to make sure those trade-offs are visible: what is gained, what is lost, who benefits, what are the full costs that are to be carried, and whether the decision will still serve the community over time.

Used alongside the issue sections in this guide, this lens can help councils move from single-issue decision-making toward decisions that create broader public value.

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Land, Water and Climate

Farmland Preservation

In Ontario, farmland loss due to sprawl style development and other non-agricultural uses is happening at a rate of 319 acres per day. Farmland prices across Ontario have increased at high rates in recent years, creating financial barriers to new and young farmers, and contributing to the price of Ontario-grown food to the consumer. As 40% of farmers are set to retire within 10 years and 66% have no succession plan, it is recognized that without a next generation of farmers, land speculators are likely to acquire the land and try to convert it to other uses. Meanwhile, communities across Ontario have continuously seen increases in food bank usage and food prices.

In the past 35 years, Ontario has lost 2.8 million acres (18%) of its farmland to non-agricultural land uses like urbanization and aggregate mining.

In Simcoe County, agriculture remains a crucial part of the local landscape and economy. As of 2021, Simcoe County had a total of 1,846 farms, 483,350 acres of farmland, and an average farm size of 262 acres. Local farms generated $515 million in farm cash receipts, with the local agriculture sector employing 23,535 people through 3,501 agricultural business establishments. Simcoe County also has an important role in local food access, with 273 farms selling directly from the farm, at stands, and pick-your-own, and 54 farms selling at farmers' markets.

Farmland is the foundation of our communities and our economy. Everyone in Ontario relies on agriculture in some form or another, from the food we eat to the jobs in our communities. Ontario's agri-food sector is the largest economic sector in the province and employs over 860,000 Ontarians. Farmland is the foundation of this sector, so when we lose farmland, these jobs are put at risk. Local food and economic resiliency depend on the protection and stewardship of our agricultural land.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Forming Agricultural Advisory Committees. T**hese committees can be used to bring farmers and local food organizations together in order to inform agricultural land planning decisions.
- **Strong Agricultural Protection in Municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.** Municipal planning documents should protect farmland from unnecessary conversion.
- **Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).** Municipalities can use CIPs to support local food economies and rural economic development.
- **By-laws impacting normal farming practices.** Municipal by-laws should avoid creating unnecessary barriers for farmers carrying out normal farming.
- **On-Farm Diversified Uses.** Municipalities can allow appropriate on-farm businesses that help farmers remain economically viable.

- **On-Farm Housing for Agricultural Workers.** Housing for agricultural workers can support farming but protecting long-term agricultural land use should be kept in mind.
- **Natural Heritage Systems.** Farmland protection should be considered together with water, wetlands, forests, biodiversity, and other natural systems.
- **Representation through Councilors and Mayors.** Councillors and mayors should understand the importance of agriculture.

To learn more about Ontario Farmland Trust's policy positions on farmland protection, permitted uses, agricultural systems mapping, the Pickering Lands, the ALTO High Speed Rail project, South Simcoe priority sites, and related provincial planning issues, see Appendix A.

Case Study/Best Practices

Bourgeois Farm

- 37 acres in Bruce County
- Ann and Eugene Bourgeois, the original owners, operated the farm as a fair trade wool business known as The Philosopher's Wool Company. Together, they raised and sheared sheep, spun wool, and sold handcrafted woollen products in their storefront on the property. Eugene had a profound vision: that the farm would not be sold after his passing, but instead preserved to benefit the public for generations to come.
- The land itself is rich with natural features, including mature trees, a river and stream, protected riparian zones, ephemeral wetlands, and farmland currently used for hay and pasture. These grasslands also provide valuable habitat for wildlife, including species at risk like Barn Swallows, Monarch butterflies, and the endangered Butternut tree.
- The donation was officially completed in February 2024. OFT now manages the property with the goal of offering equitable access to prime agricultural land and creating an inclusive space for agricultural education and nature connection within the Tiverton community.

Contributing Organization

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Land, Water and Climate

Climate Resiliency

Climate resiliency isn't just the responsibility of federal governments and international bodies. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 50% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are directly linked to municipal decisions. This is mainly due to choices in land use, transportation planning, and building standards that affect individual behaviours.

Every municipality is already dealing with climate change's local impacts, from flooding and extreme heat to infrastructure damage, emergency response, public health risks, and pressure on natural systems. Municipalities are uniquely exposed to the impacts of climate change including severe weather events which contribute to infrastructure loss and repair, and therefore, should consider climate action as risk management. Municipalities own more public infrastructure in Ontario than the province and federal government combined with an estimated replacement cost of $484 billion. The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario outlines municipalities will bear most of the financial burden for climate-related infrastructure costs and estimates that these costs will increase 8% for each degree (℃) of increase in global temperature beyond the base case.

Locally, the financial and infrastructure risk to municipalities was displayed in the ice storm in 2025. It required more than $45 million of cleanup and recovery costs. Although provincial funding eventually helped ease some of this financial burden, some municipalities' reserves were pressured to fill the gap. The City of Barrie ended 2025 with a $1.35 million operating deficit which they attributed to storm cleanup and recovery. The impacts of the storm reverberate as future decisions may be constrained with fewer reserves and budgetary constraints to address deficits.

The FAO anticipates that the financial impact of extreme rainfall, extreme heat and freeze-thaw cycles will be significant to municipalities regardless of whether risks are planned for or not; however, the costs are lowest for a proactive adaptation strategy. The office forecasts that these climate-related events will happen with more severity and frequency, and, as such governments will likely have less time to rebuild their finances and repair infrastructure before the next event.

In practice, climate action is integrated into land use, housing, infrastructure, transportation, public health and emergency planning.

The future councils are planning for can no longer be based only on past experiences or historical weather patterns. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit projects that our area will have a climate similar to:

- Ohio by 2030
- Kentucky by 2050

- Mississippi by 2080

For municipalities, these changes can show up as higher road and stormwater costs, more heat and flood risk, pressure on winter recreation and tourism, greater stress on agriculture and natural systems, and increased demand for emergency response and public health supports.

The question isn't whether a municipality will be impacted by climate change, but how severely it will be impacted, who will be affected and how much it will cost.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Inform yourself about climate change and its local impacts.** You can review a summary chart of local impacts expected as well as a FAQ if you are just starting to learn about climate change. Review the temperature charts for the area.
- **Ensure all local decisions are passed through a climate lens similar to how staff reports consider the financial implications of a decision.** Does this increase carbon emissions or reduce them? Will this remove or add land that sequesters carbon, prevents flooding and reduces air temperature?
- **Establish a Climate Action Citizen Advisory Committee.** This committee will be used to help your municipality prepare for and mitigate a changing climate.
- **Fund allocation.** Allocate funds in your municipal budget for climate mitigation and adaptation specifically to address infrastructure resilience, energy and support for the most vulnerable communities.
- **Vision setting.** Set a vision for your municipality that is energy, food, transportation and housing resilient.
- **Ground your municipality's climate action vision in policy statements in official plans and other municipal planning and policy documents**

Case Study/Best Practices

City of Guelph: Renewable Energy and Home Energy Incentives

The City of Guelph is one of the leaders in clean energy and has been called the "solar capital of Ontario." Guelph's 2007 community energy plan was one of the first in North America. Furthermore, the plan got updated in 2018 with goals of becoming net-zero carbon emitters and achieving 100% renewable energy for corporations by 2050.

Guelph has also started installing rooftop solar panels and solar hot water systems on municipal buildings. Moreover, Guelph has supported climate action by making efficiency upgrades more available. The Guelph Greener Homes program is an incentive approach that helps residents of Guelph improve home energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and make homes more climate-friendly.

[Oxford County: Climate Action Plan]

Oxford County's Climate Action Plan is a five-year plan that focuses primarily on climate adaptation and mitigation. It identifies the risks that climate change has on residents, infrastructure, and the local economy. Oxford County's approach is useful because it connects climate action to community safety, public health, and water conservation. This plan also builds on Oxford County's existing climate plan, which includes a 100% renewable energy plan, Zero Waste Plan, and Fleet Management Plan.

Contributing Organizations

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SENIORS for CLIMATE ACTION NOW!

Land, Water and Climate

Biodiversity

Natural heritage features include forests, streams, wetlands, and regenerating fields (and their interconnections) that support key ecological services such as water provision, purification, air quality improvement, carbon storage, temperature reduction, pollination, and flood prevention.

Simcoe County is blessed with a rich natural heritage, including vast interconnected water systems with provincially and internationally important resources: Wasaga Beach, Minesing Wetlands, Matchedash Bay, and Wye Marsh. Simcoe County is home to over 1,500 species of vascular plants, 150 species of nesting birds, 50 mammals, and 33 types of reptiles and amphibians. It offers specialized vegetation communities adapted to unique habitats such as coastal plains, prairies, savannas, alvars, bogs, fens, the Great Lakes shoreline, and the Niagara Escarpment.

Additionally, the county contains provincially significant wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest, and more than 60 species of plants and animals deemed vulnerable, threatened, or endangered in Ontario and/or Canada. Extensive tracts of undisturbed forest in the north and east provide habitats for forest-dwelling birds and mammals. All these features combine to offer a healthy habitat for Simcoe County's residents, flora, and fauna.

Maintaining and protecting a connected, healthy, and robust natural heritage system has significant benefits for local communities socially, financially, and environmentally.

Lake Simcoe's key natural heritage systems provide ecosystem services valued at $922.7 million per year. This includes benefits to the economy, flood prevention, water supply, pollination, and carbon sequestration. Moreover, living in and near nature has cognitive and psychological benefits for both children and adults, including lower depression rates, improved cognitive development in children, boosted happiness levels, and increased physical health.

A report by Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition and the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition found that:

- While 50% forest cover in a watershed is likely to support most potential species and aquatic life, Simcoe County only has 22%, and that number is dropping.
- Only 14% of Simcoe's natural heritage system is well protected by policy, while 58% is only somewhat protected.
- Simcoe County has roughly half of its historic wetland cover.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Strengthen natural heritage policies.** Review your municipality's natural heritage system policies against Ontario Nature's Best Practices Guide to strengthen and improve them.
- **Use green infrastructure to support municipal services.** Subsidize the costs of grey infrastructure by adding or utilizing existing green infrastructure (natural heritage). Learn more at Green Infrastructure Ontario.
- **Direct growth away from natural areas.** Protect the existing natural heritage that your municipality has by re-directing urbanization and transportation investments away from natural areas.
- **Increase natural heritage in built-up areas.** This is useful to mitigate and adapt to climate change, prevent flooding and support existing grey infrastructure. You can find more ideas here.

Case Study/Best Practices

Toronto Ravine Strategy

Toronto's Ravine Strategy is an example of a municipality that has created a coordinated and long-term strategy aimed at managing and protecting a connected natural system. The principles of the strategy are Protect, Invest, Connect, Partner, and Celebrate. Toronto's ravine system stretches 300 kilometres and covers 11,000 hectares of land, representing 17% of the city's land area. A 2026 City of Toronto implementation update estimated that the ravines provide $822 million each year in ecological and recreational benefits.

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WASAGA BEACH Climate Action Team

Land, Water and Climate

Watershed Security

Watershed security means protecting the water systems that make community life possible. It includes clean drinking water, water for agriculture and local businesses, healthy rivers and lakes, flood protection, recreation, and the natural systems that support wildlife and biodiversity. On a global scale, climate change will not only make the planet warmer; it will also disrupt the water cycle, changing rainfall patterns, increasing the risk of floods and droughts, and moving more pollution through water systems. That means municipal decisions about land use, infrastructure, growth, wetlands, forests, and stormwater are also decisions about long-term water security.

Additional local outcomes from an absence of watershed security include water pollution, flooding, fires, and the loss of food security, which impact the food chain and regional food security. While councillors have a fiduciary responsibility to hold their municipality harmless from discriminatory permitting practices, shifting social and legal trends suggest that councillors also need to appreciate that it is impossible to separate land use planning and energy decisions from watershed security, access to abundant and clean sources of drinking water, and their binding international duty to protect biodiversity.

Major bodies of water in or near Simcoe County include the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga watersheds. Lake Simcoe is the fourth-largest lake wholly in Ontario, with a total drainage area of about 2,900 square kilometres. However, most of the lake's sub-watersheds are in York Region, with a smaller set of tributaries flowing south from Simcoe County into the lake. The lake then discharges north into Lake Couchiching before flowing into Lake Huron, the world's third-largest freshwater lake by area. Challenges include the ongoing loss of natural habitat across Simcoe County due to land conversion for urban development; phosphorus pollution from agriculture and sewage treatment plants, currently almost double the annual target of 44 tonnes per year in the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan; and the increasing salinity of Lake Simcoe, due mostly to road salt. We also note concerns that there is no conservation authority north of where Lake Simcoe flows into Lake Couchiching.

While Lake Simcoe captures the public eye due to its population, cottaging, and year-round fishing, most of Simcoe County is in the Nottawasaga watershed. Its upland headwater areas include the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and the Oro Moraine, and it outlets to Severn Sound at Wasaga Beach, the largest freshwater sand beach in the world. Challenges here include the ongoing loss of natural habitat due to land conversion; increases in nutrients, salt loads, turbidity, water temperature, and invasive species; and over-fishing. A recent controversy regarding Wasaga Beach exemplifies a broader conflict between natural heritage protection and development.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Integrate land use and watershed planning.** Clearing natural heritage, draining wetlands, and paving farmland have consequences for climate, water, and biodiversity. Planning, transportation, energy, and works departments should take an integrated approach to protecting watershed security and drinking water.
- **Use an ecosystem approach for development applications.** Ask candidates whether they support an ecosystem approach, which protects ecological form and function, rather than a landscape features approach that may only protect a few trees or other features. An ecosystem approach should also include a watershed or sub-watershed plan that considers how a development proposal may affect the watershed and how those impacts can be mitigated.
- **Require watershed and sub-watershed planning before approving growth.** Climate-related risks include floods, droughts, wildfires, warmer surface water, and impacts on biodiversity. Ask candidates what their priorities are to reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions, and whether they support nature-based solutions to address the climate and biodiversity crises, as well as the lack of publicly accessible greenspace.
- **Protect drinking water, sewage systems, and stormwater management.** Ask candidates how they will address the source of drinking water for new development, water safeguards are in place for its long-term protection, where sanitary sewage will be treated, and whether site-specific stormwater plans are consistent with municipal stormwater management master plans.

For a more detailed list of watershed security questions councillors can ask when reviewing development applications, see Appendix B.

Case Study/Best Practices

Waterloo Region Official Plan and Countryside Line

When land in the Waterloo region was excluded from the Greenbelt in 2005, the region adopted a Regional Official Plan that provided the highest degree of municipal protection for water and other natural resources in Ontario. The plan included innovative elements such as a designation for Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes and the Countryside Line to protect local waters, natural areas, and farmland. Given changes driven by the provincial Housing Action Plan, including the abolition of regional planning, the Regional Official Plan has been designated the official plan for the region's lower-tier municipalities, but amendments may be forthcoming to harmonize the old municipal official plans with the Regional Official Plan.

Contributing Organization

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Land, Water and Climate

Lake Simcoe

Lake Simcoe is one of Ontario's most important freshwater ecosystems. Its 3,400-square-kilometre watershed supports more than half a million residents, working farms, growing communities and a significant recreation and tourism economy. The lake is also central to the region's quality of life, from drinking water and waterfront parks to swimming, boating and fishing.

The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, adopted in 2009, remains Ontario's strongest watershed-based environmental plan. It aims to reduce annual phosphorus pollution to 44 tonnes, protect and restore high-quality natural cover, improve stormwater and wastewater performance, eliminate pathogen-related beach closures and maintain the cold-water habitat needed by lake trout and whitefish.

Despite meaningful progress, Lake Simcoe remains under significant pressure. Annual phosphorus loads continue to fluctuate between approximately 70 and 110 tonnes—well above the Plan's target. Road-salt pollution is rising, natural areas are increasingly fragmented and climate change is bringing warmer water, heavier rainfall and conditions that favour algae and invasive species. Water-quality advisories and beach closures also carry consequences for public health, tourism and community confidence.

Municipalities are on the front line. Decisions about land use, growth, roads, stormwater, wastewater, natural heritage and infrastructure maintenance directly affect the health of the lake. Municipal leadership can ensure that growth strengthens communities without steadily weakening the watershed that sustains them.

Annual phosphorus pollution remains approximately 70–110 tonnes, compared with the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan target of 44 tonnes per year. The Plan seeks at least 40 per cent high-quality natural cover across the watershed. Moreover, chloride concentrations in Lake Simcoe increased from approximately 40 mg/L in 2010 to 61 mg/L in 2024, largely because of road-salt use. Recent blue-green algae and water-quality advisories have also affected beaches, recreation and local tourism. Well-planned compact development can reduce the amount of new pavement, pipes and other impervious surfaces created for each new resident.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Put the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan into practice.** Ensure official plans, secondary plans, zoning decisions, infrastructure projects and municipal budgets reflect the Plan's environmental objectives.
- **Invest in stormwater infrastructure.** Properly fund the inspection, maintenance and renewal of stormwater ponds, pipes and outlets. Expand the use of low-impact development, green infrastructure, infiltration and naturalized drainage systems.
- **Protect and restore natural areas.** Preserve connected forests, wetlands, shorelines and stream buffers, and require restoration or a net environmental gain wherever possible through major development projects.

- **Reduce road-salt pollution.** Strengthen municipal salt-management plans, improve application and reporting practices, train staff and contractors and advocate for provincial liability reform that rewards certified contractors for responsible salt use.
- **Plan responsible, climate-ready growth.** Direct growth toward existing serviced settlement areas, support compact complete communities and invest in public and active transportation that reduces sprawl and infrastructure costs.
- **Advocate together.** Work with neighbouring municipalities, Indigenous communities, conservation authorities and community organizations to secure sustained provincial and federal funding, modernize the phosphorus-reduction strategy and publicly track progress toward watershed targets.

Case Study/Best Practices

Bradford's Phosphorus Reduction Facility

The Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury is helping advance one of the most significant phosphorus-reduction projects in Lake Simcoe's history. The $40-million Lake Simcoe Phosphorus Reduction Facility will treat water discharged from the Holland Marsh before it enters the Holland River and ultimately Lake Simcoe.

The project is expected to remove approximately two to ten tonnes of phosphorus annually—making a meaningful contribution toward the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan's target of reducing annual phosphorus loading to 44 tonnes. Bradford has helped coordinate the project's engineering and implementation alongside the provincial and federal governments, which have committed substantial funding.

The facility demonstrates how environmental protection, productive agriculture and municipal growth can be advanced together. Reducing phosphorus from the Holland Marsh drainage system will improve water quality and fish habitat while supporting the long-term sustainability of one of Canada's most important specialty-crop farming areas.

It also illustrates the importance of intergovernmental cooperation. Municipalities can identify and help deliver practical local solutions, but projects of this scale require sustained provincial and federal investment to move from planning to construction and operation.

Contributing Organization

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Land, Water and Climate

Aggregate

Simcoe County is one of the largest aggregate producers by volume in Ontario. Aggregate operations often conflict with other land uses, including agriculture and nearby residential areas. While there is a need for aggregate, the province approves thirteen times more than what is annually consumed.

Gravel mining is not a benign activity. It destroys the natural environment and permanently alters communities. Gravel is a finite resource that, while still in the ground, supports productive farmland, groundwater filtration, flood mitigation, and other natural services. Gravel companies are not required to show that new sources of gravel mining are necessary. This has led to an oversupply of gravel permits as companies speculate on land for future use.

We must also recognize that with a changing climate, reducing emissions is essential. Most aggregates are used to manufacture cement and construct buildings, roads, bridges, sewers, and other infrastructure. The cement industry produces 8% of global carbon emissions.

Simcoe County annually produces over 15.2 million tonnes of aggregate, on average and there are over 100 licensed pits and quarries within Simcoe County, with a total licensed area of almost 10,000 acres. Based on estimates from the Ontario Geological Survey (2013), combining licensed and unlicensed areas, with over 85,000 acres of land could be dedicated to aggregate extraction in Simcoe County. Moreover, provincial water-taking permits allow aggregate to extract up to 4.6 billion litres per day and an estimated 5,000 acres of farmland per year are lost to aggregate activity in Ontario.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Support a moratorium on new gravel mining approvals in Ontario.** Have your municipality pass a resolution to support a moratorium on new gravel mining approvals in Ontario. This pause on new approvals will allow time to consult on much-needed policies such as prioritizing the use of recycled aggregate, policies that honour Indigenous treaty rights and setting appropriate levies that reflect the full social and environmental costs of aggregate mining.
- **Advocate for stronger municipal authority in aggregate decisions.** Advocate to the province to ensure municipalities have a strong say in where aggregate can be located within a municipality, the levies they are charged and how they are distributed and transparency about aggregate need and production.
- **Local community outreach for information.** Learn from local citizen groups directly affected by aggregate activity to understand how your residents are impacted and how local government can help.
- **Become a Public Servant in using recycled aggregates and asphalt.**

Case Study/Best Practices

[Town of Caledon: Strengthening Municipal Aggregate Policies]
The Town of Caledon showcases how municipalities can respond to aggregate-related land use issues. In 2024, Caledon started using the Supplementary Aggregate Policy Study to update its official plan and in order to inform future aggregate extraction. This approach addressed concerns such as air quality, land rehabilitation, water resources, natural heritage protection, road impacts, and transparency when reviewing future aggregate issues. This case study showcases how municipalities can modernize aggregate policies while protecting residents.

Contributing Organizations

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Reform Gravel Mining Coalition

Non-market Housing

Expanding non-market housing, including public housing, supportive housing, non-profit cooperatives, and community land trusts, is a powerful, proven mechanism for municipal leaders to build economically resilient, thriving communities.

By basing rents strictly on tenant income rather than on fluctuating private-market profit margins, non-market housing serves as vital civic infrastructure that permanently stabilizes local workforces. Non-market housing offers an alternative to the rapid financialization of local rental stock, balancing a market where institutional investors and REITs reportedly now own 20% to 30% of Canada's purpose-built rental housing.

While Canada's non-market inventory currently sits at 3.5%, historical data from the School of Cities highlight our country's proven track record of scaling these assets when non-market options accounted for up to 25% of all new construction. Prominent housing expert Dr. Carolyn Whitzman emphasizes that treating affordable housing as infrastructure is key to unlocking vibrant local economies, advocating for a target in which non-market options make up 20% of the housing mix.

This approach is strongly backed by the business sector: Scotiabank Economics notes that doubling our community housing stock to match international peers is a fundamental economic necessity. Furthermore, research from the National Housing Council and a joint study by Scotiabank and CANCEA show that scaling up this sector boosts overall productivity by 9.3%.

For municipal councils, investing in non-market housing is a pro-growth strategy that directly reduces strain on emergency services while ensuring local workers can afford to live in the communities they serve.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Recognize Housing as a Right.** Formally recognize housing as a human right by aligning local bylaws and strategic municipal growth plans with the federal National Housing Strategy Act (2019), ensuring future planning, zoning adjustments, and budget allocations are explicitly evaluated through an affordability lens, prioritizing residents and vulnerable communities first.
- **Target Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).** Design and implement specialized Community Improvement Plans that prioritize non-profit cooperatives, social housing, and community land trusts, treating these capital projects as the critical infrastructure they are.

- **Establish a Municipal Public Land Banking Strategy.** Conduct a comprehensive audit of all surplus city- and town-owned real estate to create a dedicated public land bank reserved for non-market developments. Instead of selling off public property to private developers for short-term revenue, the city can offer long-term, 99-year land leases to non-profit partners for $1, ensuring deep, multi-generational housing affordability in perpetuity.

Case Study/Best Practices

Everyone Benefiting from Supportive Housing in St. Thomas
The introduction of supportive housing in St. Thomas, ON has significantly curbed local homelessness while systematically relieving strain on emergency responders. By integrating wraparound medical and mental health care directly into developments like Indwell's Railway City Lofts, the community achieved a 30% reduction in chronic homelessness in just seven months. This stable environment translates directly into a safer community; data from the St. Thomas Police Service show a 14% drop in overall downtown emergency calls between 2020 and 2024, including a massive 44% decline in "unwanted persons" complaints and a 67% reduction in drug-related calls. Furthermore, local authorities noted a dramatic 80% drop in police incidents in the downtown core immediately after the launch of the first supportive housing development. Crucially, this model provides long-term stability rather than a temporary fix. Indwell tracking shows that residents maintain an exceptional housing retention rate of 89% to 92% one full year after moving in.

Preserving Affordability via Community Land Trusts: The Parkdale Model
To protect the broader workforce from displacement, municipalities can look to the community land trust (CLT) model as a premier mechanism for stabilizing existing neighbourhoods. A leading municipal best practice is the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) in Toronto, which operates in tandem with its charitable arm, the Neighbourhood Land Trust (NLT). By working directly with municipal support and leveraging social-finance tools, PNLT successfully acquires at-risk private market apartment buildings and converts them into community-owned, permanently affordable assets.

Contributing Organization

Name: Redwood
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Homelessness

Homelessness is not simply an individual issue. It is connected to income security, housing, mental illness, addiction, race, health, and the rising cost of living. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services.

According to 2024 Point-in-Time Count, Unsheltered homelessness has increased by 300% nationwide over the last six years. Much like the rest of the country, Simcoe County has seen a considerable increase in the number of people staying in encampments, sleeping in tents, and living in other makeshift shelters.

In Simcoe County, the barriers are practical and immediate. The average rent for a single private room in shared accommodation generally ranges from $750 to $1,050 per month, depending on the municipality. At the same time, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates do not allow many people to live independently. A single person on Ontario Works receives $730 per month, and if the person is unhoused, $300 is withheld, leaving $430 for the entire month. A single person on ODSP receives $1,408 per month, and cohabitating may reduce payments. ODSP increased by 2.8% on July 1, 2025, but OW rates have remained stagnant, with their last general rate increase occurring in September 2018.

Housing is a human right. The right to housing means more than just having a roof over your head; it means the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity. Ending homelessness is attainable with a combination of political and social will.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Treat housing as the first step, then provide additional supports.** Housing First programs provide rapid, permanent housing alongside voluntary support services for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Support transitional and supportive housing.** This will allow people to have a bridge from shelters, encampments, or crisis situations into stable housing.
- **Expand deeply affordable and non-market housing options.** Many people cannot afford “affordable” market housing, so housing tied to income is needed.
- **Use public funding, tax tools, public land, and direct non-profit construction to address market failure.** Unregulated private markets cannot profitably build and rent homes to very low-income populations without public support.
- **Promote integrated housing models rather than segregated housing for vulnerable populations.** Integrated housing can support stability, dignity, and the development of life skills.

- **Educate the public on how solving homelessness improves the whole community by reducing pressure on emergency services**, improving downtown safety and well-being, and helping people reconnect with housing, health care, employment, and community supports.

Case Study/Best Practices

Bridge to Stability
The County of Simcoe's Bridge to Stability project in Barrie uses a Housing First approach to help people move from unsheltered homelessness into more stable housing. The project shows how municipalities and community partners can work together to create transitional pathways from encampments or shelters into permanent housing.

Supportive Rapid Re-Housing Program (SRRP)
The Supportive Rapid Re-Housing Program helps people experiencing situational homelessness move into permanent housing more quickly, while receiving support to stabilize. This model is useful because it recognizes that housing loss can become long-term homelessness without fast and coordinated intervention.

At Home/Chez Soi Study
The At Home/Chez Soi study is one of Canada's strongest Housing First examples. It showed that people experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges were more likely to remain stably housed when they received immediate housing with supports, compared to traditional treatment-first approaches. This evidence supports the use of Housing First as a central homelessness response.

Additional examples and resources include Empower Simcoe Regional Housing First Program, Redwood Park Communities, HART Hub, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Homeless Hub, AMO homelessness data, CMHA Ontario, Income Security Advocacy Centre, and Ontario Basic Income Network, see Appendix D.

Contributing Organization

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Affordability

Affordability connects housing costs, food insecurity, transportation, employment, and health. While municipalities do not control every income or cost-of-living issue, they make decisions that affect how expensive it is to live in a community. In Simcoe County, rising housing costs, high transportation dependence, and income inequality are putting pressure on residents and local services. Municipalities can respond through planning, housing policy, transit, living wage leadership, partnerships, and advocacy for stronger provincial and federal income supports. High housing costs have a large impact on a community's economy, its residents' quality of life, and social service costs. After all, housing costs are the largest portion of people's budget; therefore, helping address housing affordability is an effective way to reduce poverty, increase the health and well-being of residents, and boost the local economy.

Shelter is one of the most fundamental requirements of good health. Inadequate housing and homelessness have an inequitable impact on vulnerable populations, leading to increased illness, stress, poor mental health, and premature death. High housing costs also reduce access to resources such as food, employment, transportation, medication, education, and other essentials. Municipalities play a significant role in housing provision. They make impactful decisions on the type of housing provided, where that housing is located, what type of amenities will be provided, and the type of transportation options available. Approving housing plans that take into consideration equity, affordability, accessibility, and appropriateness for all ages and stages is key.

In Simcoe County, 49% of tenant households, or 18,847 households, spent more than 30% of their total before-tax household income on housing costs. According to the Barrie and District Association of Realtors, as of September 2025, the average sale price across Simcoe County is now $819,742. According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Barrie area has an average pre-tax household income of just over $96,000, which according to the CMHC affordability calculator would only qualify a household for a home that is $150,000 or less. As of June 2023, recent job reports show 9,612 postings, 6,281 of which are new in Simcoe County. The President of the Barrie Chamber of Commerce attributes much of this problem to high housing costs.

For more details on Alliance for a Liveable Ontario's housing and affordability recommendations, see Appendix C.

Municipal Actions to Consider

As in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario outlines in their Housing Blueprint, while a municipality cannot directly build market housing, they can use their authority to steer, regulate and directly support affordable housing outcomes including:

1. **Legalize density.** Implement as-of-right fourplexes in residential areas, abolish parking minimums and adopt a Community Planning Permitting System. See Rehousing.ca for municipal support to convert single family homes into multi-unit homes.
2. **Scale non-profit and deeply affordable housing.** Inventory and discount public land dedicated exclusively to non-profit and co-op housing providers through nominal, long-term leases. Waive fees for affordable infill where possible. Expand funding and municipal partnerships to build transitional housing.
3. **Use financial incentives to support affordable housing.** Implement Community Improvement Programs (CIP) to refund development charges for developments that include affordable housing units. In municipalities where this exists, such as Barrie, increase the funding to this program.
4. **Federation of Canadian Municipalities: Build Smarter Guide for Municipalities:** Learn how modern methods of construction including off-site, prefabricated or modular construction can help communities with the timely delivery of housing, facilities and infrastructure. https://fcm.ca/en/resources/building-smarter

Case Study/Best Practices

Barrie Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

Barrie's Housing Community Improvement Plan is a local case study that uses financial incentives to reduce the cost of new housing development for non-profit developers seeking to deliver affordable options. This is useful as it connects municipal planning and increasing rental housing and affordable housing supply. The Housing CIP is intended to support Barrie's goal that 15-20% of new housing units are affordable by incentivizing their development. It is also intended to accelerate construction of new housing units to increase overall supply of housing options.

Contributing Organizations

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Reducing Poverty

Poverty exists in every municipality within Simcoe County. With rising shelter, food, and energy costs, more families and individuals are struggling to make ends meet. Income inequality is also a significant issue across the region. Of the total Simcoe Muskoka income, nearly one-quarter goes to the richest 10% of the population, while just 3% goes to the poorest 10%.

Poverty has a trickle-down effect on children, health outcomes, and mental health. Many of these people are working poor — those who have a job and income but cannot afford basic living standards. As a result, those living in poverty have higher rates of diabetes and heart disease. Moreover, they also have lower mental, physical, and oral health rates and life expectancy. This puts an additional burden on communities and community services. This is why many poverty advocates agree that providing solutions to reduce poverty is much more humane and cost-effective than ignoring the problem or offering superficial solutions.

Household food insecurity occurs when individuals or families lack the financial resources to purchase food. It can affect anyone experiencing a financial crisis, putting them at higher risk. For example, those living on low incomes are often in a chronic state of financial crisis, struggling to pay rent, bills, and buy food. A financial crisis can also happen to working individuals and families, such as during a sudden job loss. In such cases, food is often sacrificed to cover other living expenses.

When someone is experiencing food insecurity, they are likely struggling with other basic needs too. This can include inadequate or insecure housing, lack of money for necessities such as prescription medications, dental care, telephone service, transportation, and clothing, as well as dealing with depression, anxiety, and social isolation. When a family or individual struggles to put food on the table, it is a sign of overall deprivation due to inadequate or unstable incomes. Many people associate food insecurity with unemployment, but over 60% of households, or three in five families struggling with food security, have employment income.

While the minimum wage will increase from $17.20/hr to $17.60/hr in October 2025, the living wage is $23.05 for Simcoe County. In Simcoe Muskoka, 12% of the population are living with low incomes. This includes 15% of children under 18 years, 11% of adults between 18 and 64 years, and 10% of seniors 65 years and over. According to Feed Ontario, poverty costs Ontario roughly $27–33 billion per year when including lost revenue and taxes in addition to healthcare and services.

For additional details in Supporting Local Agriculture & Community Food Access, see Appendix E.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Develop a local poverty reduction task force.** This can be done by working closely with the Simcoe County Poverty Reduction Task Group to address systemic issues that cause poverty.
- **Implement local policies that address many issues.** These issues include affordable housing, early childhood development, education and skills development, transit, social infrastructure and income security.
- **Living wage champions.** Lead by example for other employers in the area to pay a living wage
- **Understand what poverty looks like in your municipality.** This can be done by assessing your municipality's commitment to reducing poverty here and making the appropriate shifts.
- **Treat food insecurity as an income issue.** Raise awareness within the community about household food insecurity and its connection to income.
- **Advocate for stronger income supports.** Advocate to provincial and federal governments for stronger income-based policies and income support programs that reduce household food insecurity.

Case Study / Best Practice

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program in Grey Bruce

The Community Volunteer Income Tax Program in Grey Bruce is a local example of how poverty can be reduced by increasing household income. The program helps lower-income residents file taxes and access benefits, credits, or refunds that may have otherwise missed. In 2023, The Meeting Place Tobermory and South East Grey Community Health Centre helped 332 residents across five municipalities access over $1.16 million in income benefits, tax credits, and refunds. On average, each beneficiary received about $3,100.

Contributing Organizations

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Planning and Movement

Complete Communities

Walkable and liveable communities are places where people can meet their daily needs within a convenient walk from their homes. For areas that are more remote or rural, this may be more difficult to implement, but the underlying principles apply to every community regardless of size or location.

The opposite of a walkable and liveable community is sprawl, which is highly car-dependent, more expensive to live in, costlier for municipalities to service and maintain, and has high per capita greenhouse gas emissions, mainly due to heating and transportation.

With rising inequity, increased housing costs, and a changing climate, it is crucial to design complete communities that are compact, more resilient, less expensive to service, and more affordable.

Building more complete and walkable communities and rejecting sprawl helps address other pressing issues, such as reducing living costs, creating healthier and greener communities, decreasing inequity, and improving municipal finances through wiser infrastructure investments and lower servicing costs. The first step is to support more infill and gentle density and to oppose sprawl.

Hemson Consulting found that infill pays for itself and adds $606 per person/year to municipal coffers, while low-density single detached housing on greenfield costs the municipality $465 per person/year over and above what is received in development charges and new tax revenue. Transitioning to more compact, resource-efficient communities could reduce a community's GHG emissions by 36-54%. Introducing gentle density to existing settlement areas is a key way to make housing more affordable.

For more detail on Alliance for a Liveable Ontario's recommended actions for housing and complete communities, see Appendix C.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Set a vision for your municipality that will stop settlement boundary expansions and sprawl and put more housing within existing built-up areas.** Ensure this vision is reflected in policy statements in official plans and other municipal planning and policy documents.
- **Collect data and resident input about the absence or presence of amenities they need to meet their daily needs** (grocery stores, child care, housing, pharmacy, businesses, public spaces, green spaces, active transportation infrastructure etc.). Ensure these

amenities are accessible to all neighbourhoods, especially lower-income neighbourhoods.

- **Re-think infrastructure investments to provide residents with more transportation choices beyond their cars** (For example protected bike lanes, walking paths, frequent transit).
- **Remove local zoning barriers to building gentle density and infill**. Refer to resources that outline barriers for micro-units and "missing middle".

Case Study/Best Practices

Waterloo Region has done a great job of building complete communities within its many municipalities:

- The construction of the ION Light Rail Transit (LRT) system makes it much easier for residents in Kitchener and Waterloo to move around without relying on cars.
- Prioritizing the construction of new housing within the cities, especially close to the new ION LRT, has created much-needed housing and density within the downtown core.
- The countryside line put hard boundaries around the Region that ensured farmland and natural area protection while focusing new growth within the existing urban boundaries.

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Planning and Movement

Transportation

Transportation is more than just roads and highways. Diversified transportation planning is key to addressing many issues communities face including increasing infrastructure costs, accessibility, safety, cost of living and climate action. There are co-benefits to having a robust, resilient transportation system such as improved health outcomes, better air quality, increased social cohesion and lower servicing costs. Building a diversified transportation network (cars, bikes, transit, walking) is also a key climate action. In Ontario, transportation is the largest carbon emitter, contributing 32% of all carbon emissions— 62% of that comes from personal vehicles.

Locally, the average length of commute in Simcoe County is almost thirty minutes; 92% of those commutes were made in a car. According to the County of Simcoe's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) the majority of these trips were made within the county. The recommendations of this plan align with the province's Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) which encourages multi-modal transportation. This would effectively allow residents to have choice in how they move within their community, reducing the number of drivers as those who cannot or do not want to drive have alternative means of transportation. In fact, diversifying the transportation network to increase the use of other types of transportation can reduce traffic congestion by up to 33%.

New housing also influences transportation decisions and costs. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that on average it costs a municipality $107,000 per home in infrastructure costs to support new housing. This is consistent with findings where annual per capita road expenditures are much higher for municipalities that are more car dependent ($264 per capita) than for least automobile dependent municipalities ($88). Creating options for people to get around beyond the car is a fiscally prudent choice especially when considering new housing.

High car dependence also leads to transportation poverty which is when a household cannot access or afford the transportation required to meet baseline daily needs. This is especially impactful on seniors, youth and middle to low income homes. The average cost to own a compact car is estimated to be up to $12,000 per year. The average Canadian household already spends 13.6% of its budget on private vehicles, but for lower-income families, this percentage can spike to 20% or 30%, leaving inadequate funds for housing, food, or heating. Car-dependent communities necessitate this increased cost for their residents to access employment and daily needs. A more diversified transportation network is just.

Municipal Actions to Consider

- **Use a complete street approach to land use and transportation planning, considering the needs of all users** (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages

and abilities) and give priority to street connectivity and safe active transportation infrastructure.

- **Invest in urban and rural public transportation.** This investment will connect communities, contribute to climate change reduction, and connect workers to job and employment opportunities.
- **Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure.** Sidewalks on both sides of the street, benches, maintenance of sidewalks, traffic signals should be prioritized in new and existing neighbourhoods and plan for future developments.
- **Build active transportation networks.** Reduce travel by encouraging development close to transit routes, parks, squares and community centres, as well as personal and commercial services, such as banks, coffee shops, hair salons, restaurants, and dry cleaners.
- **Make transportation equitable.** Ensure transportation, transit and active transportation infrastructure supports seniors, persons with disabilities, youth and people living on low income.

Case Study/Best Practices

Toronto Complete Streets Guidelines

Toronto's Complete Streets Guidelines are the best practice for designing streets that work for people walking, taking transit, cycling, and driving. The guidelines provide a toolbox for improving streets and are meant to be considered in street design projects. This is useful for Simcoe County municipalities as it gives a practical model for moving from car-oriented road design towards safer and more connected streets. Transport Canada's Complete Streets resource notes that pedestrian crashes are twice as likely in areas without sidewalks and that installing raised medians and redesigning intersections and sidewalks can reduce pedestrian risk by 28%.

Contributing Organizations

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ontario Farmland Trust Policy Positions

Appendix B: Ontario Headwaters Institute Watershed Security Questions

Appendix C: Alliance for a Liveable Ontario: Building a Liveable Ontario - Roadmap for Municipalities

Appendix D: Additional Case Studies Regarding Homelessness

Appendix E: Ideas in Supporting Local Agriculture & Community Food Access

Appendix F: Ontario Greenbelt Alliance - Greenbelt Pledge for Candidates

Appendix A: Ontario Farmland Trust Policy Positions

The OFT has policy submissions regarding the Greenbelt Plan, Permitted Uses, Agricultural Systems Mapping, Federal Pickering Airport Lands, Rouge National Urban Park, and others, which can be found here: https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/farmland-protection/farmland-policy/.

Transport Canada – Future Uses of Pickering Lands Consultation Submission

- OFT supports the federal government's exploration of long-term stewardship options for the Pickering Lands, and urges its protection to strengthen food security in the region.

ALTO High Speed Rail – Consultation Submission

- OFT raises concerns related to the impacts surrounding the agricultural, natural, cultural, and ecological landscapes of Ontario and Quebec along the proposed 1,000 km railway, and calls for an immediate suspension of the Alto high-speed rail project in pursuit of a cautious, transparent approach that allows for a thorough economic, social, and environmental impact assessment and meaningful consultation with affected agricultural, forestry, and rural communities.

Bill 98 - Proposed Planning Act, City of Toronto Act, 2006, Building Code Act, 1992 and Municipal Act, 2001 Changes

- OFT strongly recommends that the Province reconsider standardizing and streamlining Official Plans and reconsider the importance of allowing these critical land use planning documents to adhere to the local needs and contexts of each community.
- OFT has additional concerns that stem from the proposed changes to Official Plans, specifically with respect to Site Plan applications. OFT is concerned that these proposed changes are providing extensive authority to the Province over the Site Plan process. Explicitly blocking municipalities from requiring certain regulatory development standards, removes their autonomy to make educated decisions for their local community.

Bill 109 - Farmland Security Act: a legislative framework to restrict foreign acquisition of Ontario farmland

- The proposed Bill states, "keeping farmland in local ownership." However, this does not imply that farmland ownership will be held by individuals or organizations who are contributing to Ontario's agriculture economy. Local ownership implies that farmland could still be held by individuals who hold interests that fall outside of agriculture such as commercial or residential development.
- The proposed investment of agriculture into the Claybelt is celebrated by OFT, however adequate planning and investment in agricultural infrastructure will be needed in order

for this to be successful within the region. Furthermore, the promotion of increasing agriculture within the Claybelt should not provide an incentive to remove other protected and productive agricultural landscapes such as The Greenbelt.

Request to Suspend South Simcoe Priority Site Approvals Following Honda EV Project Suspension

- Before any decision is made, we respectfully request that the Ministry:
    - suspend any approvals related to the South Simcoe priority sites;
    - assess how Honda's indefinite suspension of its Alliston EV project affects projected population, employment, housing, and land needs in South Simcoe;
    - determine whether Simcoe County's existing growth projections and identified land supply are sufficient in light of this changed circumstance;
    - explain whether any additional lands remain necessary beyond those already identified through the County's growth planning process; and
    - only if additional lands are still demonstrated to be necessary, require full agricultural impact assessments or equivalent agricultural evaluations before any sites are approved.

Appendix B: Ontario Headwaters Institute Watershed Security Questions

Questions Councillors Should Consider for Development Applications

- Are development plans based on an ecosystem approach, which protects ecological form and function, or a landscape features approach, which might protect specific features such as a few trees?
- Is there a watershed or sub-watershed plan for the area of the proposal? How might the proposal impact the watershed and how can that be mitigated?
- What is the source for drinking water for this development and what safeguards are in place for its long-term protection?
- Where will sanitary sewage be treated; will the effluent meet discharge standards; and what plans are in place to deal with spills or non-conforming discharges?
- Is the site-specific storm-water plan consistent with the municipality's storm-water management master plan?
- What are the cumulative impacts of this proposal and nearby developments, and can the municipality offset them through increased local natural heritage protection?
- Can the municipality reduce negative ecological impacts associated with the proposed development through natural asset management?
- What ecological conditions that relate to watershed security, such as protecting wetlands, significant surface water contribution areas, and groundwater, need to be protected in a permit for site alteration?

Appendix C: Alliance for a Liveable Ontario: Building a Liveable Ontario - Roadmap for Municipalities

Building a Liveable Ontario

Roadmap for Municipalities

Candidates running for local Council will be talking to voters about what they'll do, if elected. Please share the 10 actions below with them. Ask candidates to support the actions and build liveable communities. Let them know they can learn more by watching the Building a Liveable Ontario podcast at YouTube/com/@liveableontario.

Build Liveable Neighbourhoods

1. Support the construction of housing within existing neighbourhoods and oppose municipal boundary expansions for new developments.
2. Prioritize the construction of missing middle housing and midrise housing that contain multiple units and a diversity of unit sizes (eg. bachelor to 4 bedrooms).
3. Ensure all new developments include upgrades to and/or the creation of the social and physical infrastructure communities need.
4. Prioritize transportation options that encourage walking, cycling and public transit use.

Safeguard food and water security

5. Preserve farmland and adjacent buffer lands in and around your municipality that are key to a sustainable food supply for Ontarians.
6. Preserve and protect natural areas, including watersheds, in and around your municipality that are key to a healthy water supply and accessing free ecological services that drive our economy and livelihood.
7. Put forward a Council resolution that supports the protection and expansion of the Greenbelt since most of these lands are vital to protecting water and food security for Ontarians.

Make Housing Affordable

8. Prioritize the construction of affordable housing operated by non-profit housing providers.
9. Put forward a Council resolution requesting the provincial and federal governments set aside at no cost provincial and federal lands for non-profit housing providers working with private builders to create permanent non-market housing.
10. Put forward a Council resolution to join the "From the Ground" initiative where municipalities offer free land to non-profit housing providers ready to create non-market affordable housing.

Learn more at liveableontario.ca;
YouTube.com/@liveableontario

Appendix D: Additional Case Studies Regarding Homelessness

Local Simcoe County Examples

- Empower Simcoe Regional Housing First Program: This initiative focuses on moving chronically homeless individuals directly from streets or emergency shelters into permanent housing with ongoing, customized support.
- Redwood Park Communities: Redwood Park Communities is a local Barrie charity that builds safe, affordable homes and provides on-site transitional housing programs, including Lillian Place, Lucy's Place, Jubilee House, United House, and Ayub's House.
- HART Hub: Barrie's Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub is intended to integrate supportive housing with primary care, mental health, and addiction recovery services.

Ontario and Canadian Examples

- Homes First: Homes First used the Critical Time Intervention Housing First approach to support 530 clients in exiting the shelter system, with a 99% success rate among follow-up clients.
- Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing in Ontario: Rent-geared-to-income housing helps prevent homelessness and provides long-term stability by capping household rent at 30% of income. This gives vulnerable residents predictable and dignified housing conditions through municipal housing providers and non-profit cooperatives.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing provides temporary, supportive accommodations, typically for up to three years, and can serve as a stepping stone to permanent independence. It provides stability, embedded support services, life skills training, mental health support, and time to build financial and personal autonomy.

International Examples

Finland, Helsinki, and Vienna are often cited as examples of jurisdictions that moved away from relying primarily on emergency shelters and toward permanent supported housing and social housing models. These examples show that homelessness can be reduced when governments commit to permanent housing, income stability, and long-term public investment.

Local Projects to Watch

Projects currently in the works in Barrie and Simcoe County include the Collier Street United Church community hub and affordable housing proposal, the Tiffin Street bridge housing kitchen project supported by Barrie Cares, the Lighthouse in Orillia, the Coral Affordable Housing Project, Flourish social purpose real estate development services, and Empower Simcoe life skills development for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Appendix E: Ideas in Supporting Local Agriculture & Community Food Access

Why This Matters

Food security at a systems level is when all community residents have access to a safe, culturally acceptable, and nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. Household food insecurity is one part of food security. Another part is community food access, which includes food charity initiatives and community food programs such as farmers' markets, community gardens, rooftop gardens, and more.

Did You Know…?

- Ontario is losing 319 acres of farmland every day.
- In the last 35 years, Ontario has lost 2.8 million acres of farmland to non-farm uses like urbanization and aggregate mining.
- There are over 2000 operating farms across the County of Simcoe. The agricultural sector plays an important part in our local economies.

What You Can Do As A Public Servant?

To increase community food security:

1. Support and increase funding for farmers' markets.
2. Create and invest in community food programs such as community gardens, rooftop gardens, edible landscapes, incubator kitchens and farms.
3. Protect existing farmland from urbanization.
4. Provide a letter of support for the creation of the Recreation, Research, and Education Farm at Lakehead University Orillia.
5. Create an Urban Agriculture Strategy within the municipality to preserve existing public land and enhance the community's urban-scale food production.
6. Strengthen municipal community food security by ensuring agriculture and food are part of Official Plans and Community Improvement Plans.
7. Support local school food literacy programs through financial donations and shared infrastructure and resources.
8. Provide food literacy programming through municipal facilities and integrate food programming into recreation departments.
9. Support libraries to be leaders in food literacy initiatives in your municipality in partnership with community food champions.

To support local agriculture:

1. Ease municipal building codes that limit on-farm housing to allow more housing options for farm workers which could include micro-units and tiny homes.

2. Pass a by-law to classify farm gate sales locations or buildings as agricultural, not commercial, for property taxation.
3. Create a Municipal Food and Agriculture Committee to use a "systems thinking" approach, and apply a food lens to municipal work to address the complexity of food access and urban agriculture through leveraging community food assets.
4. Ensure agriculture representation exists in municipal governance to provide input and feedback in decision-making.
5. Increase your municipality's intensification target to ensure less farmland is lost to sprawl.
6. Review policies that create unintended barriers for local food initiatives like community gardens and farmers' markets.
7. Remove barriers and streamline navigation through the agricultural development process and land improvement (i.e., tile draining, and farm buildings).
8. Strengthen agritourism by promoting on-farm value-added initiatives and showcasing local food.
    a. Resources: Tourism Simcoe County and Always in Season

For More Information:

Simcoe County Food Council
Email: foodcouncilcoordinator@gmail.com
Website: https://www.scfoodcouncil.com/

National Farmers' Union - Ontario
Email: office@nfuontario.ca
Website: https://nfuontario.ca/

Ontario Farmland Trust
Email: martin@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca
Website: https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Email: memberrelations@ofa.on.ca
Website: https://ofa.on.ca/

Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture:
Email: simcty.fed.agriculture@outlook.com

Appendix F: Ontario Greenbelt Alliance - Greenbelt Pledge for Candidates

Ontario's Greenbelt protects what communities need to thrive: clean water, local food, farmland, natural heritage, rural communities, responsible growth, and a more climate-resilient future. Because these shared foundations do not stop at municipal boundaries, communities within, beside, and beyond the Greenbelt all have a stake in protecting them.

If elected to municipal office, I pledge to support local decisions and policies that protect and strengthen farmland, water systems, natural heritage, and complete communities. And, where Greenbelt policies apply, I will uphold the Greenbelt legacy and the values, vision, and objectives reflected in Ontario's Greenbelt Act and Greenbelt Plan, including the protection of the Greenbelt as a connected system that includes the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment.

To sign this pledge, submit the following information to: ontariogreenbeltalliance@gmail.com

Candidate Name:

Municipality: Position Running For:

This commitment is grounded in the Greenbelt's proven public benefits:

- **Water:** The Greenbelt provides clean drinking water for over 7 million Ontarians.
- **Economy:** Greenbelt-connected economic activity contributes $17 billion to Ontario's GDP and supports more than 247,000 full-time jobs.
- **Farms and food:** The Greenbelt protects 750,000 acres of some of Canada's most productive farmland and is home to more than 4,000 operating farms.
- **Climate and resilience:** The Greenbelt's natural systems provide nearly three times more ecological benefit per hectare than the rest of Ontario, meaning these protected landscapes are among Ontario's most effective natural assets for reducing flood risk, absorbing carbon, protecting water, and strengthening climate resilience.
- **Biodiversity:** The Greenbelt is home to 121 species at risk, representing 42% of all species at risk in Ontario.
- **Recreation and tourism:** The Greenbelt supports trails, cycling routes, river corridors, green spaces, rural destinations, local food, tourism, and recreation.

Sources: Greenbelt Foundation: 2026 Economic Impact Assessment; Safeguarding Water Resources; 2022 Year in Review; The Ecological Value of Ontario's Greenbelt. Ontario Nature: Greenbelt is a Refuge for Species at Risk. Ontario.ca: Greenbelt Act and Greenbelt Plan.