

Help the farmers: Pelham council

RESOLUTION URGES ALL MUNICIPALITIES TO BUY LOCAL

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Pelham town council wants the Ontario government to think about farmers when it thinks about the **Greenbelt**.

It also wants all Ontario municipalities to adopt a "buy local produce" policy.

In a strongly-worded resolution – adopted by council unanimously at Monday's council meeting – the town called on the provincial government to provide help to the agricultural community "to cope with all forces" affecting the industry.

The resolution, prepared by Ward 3 Coun. John Durley, is the town's response to an Ontario government move to offer municipalities "a means to recommend expansion of existing **Greenbelt** boundaries."

Pelham is directly affected by the **Greenbelt**, which stretches from north of the town down through it to Foss Road, surrounding Fenwick and Ridgeville and touching the urban limits of Fonthill.

The resolution points out that one purpose of the **Greenbelt** legislation "is to protect productive agricultural

Pelham farmers who grow cherries, pears, strawberries, peaches and other fruits and vegetables are directly affected by the closure.

"Current legislation appears to fall short of assisting the agricultural

lands."

It goes on to say "the production of crops within Ontario is essential to maintain sustainability, not only of food supplies but also employment opportunities."

The closure of processing plants such as CanGro in Niagara-on-the-Lake "have dealt a serious blow to the farm community of Southern Ontario," council said in its resolution.

PLEASE SEE LEGISLATION/A2

Legislation falls short of assisting the agricultural community

community to produce crops and remain financially viable," said council.

The town recommends the Ontario government, through its ministries involved in **Greenbelt** leg-





The Tribune (Welland, ON)			Order/Commande
			124898
Date 07.05.2008	Circ. 17000	Page A1	2 / 2

isolation, help the agricultural community cope with all forces.

These include markets, human resources, growing, processing and transporting. This will enable the farm industry "to continue to provide food to help meet the needs" of Ontario residents.

Pelham council also wants other municipalities across Ontario to follow the example of Niagara Region and adopt a buy local produce policy.

Such a move will "provide a much needed strengthening of the market for local produce" and "moral and fiscal support to agricultural producers."

The resolution will go to Premier Dalton McGuinty, opposition leaders, ministries of municipal affairs and housing, and, agriculture, food and rural affairs, local MPPs and all Ontario municipalities.

Reflecting on the resolution, Durley said the sight of up to a thousand acres of fruit trees being pulled out is tragic.

"Once they're gone, they're gone forever," he said. "If we can't produce food for ourselves we're in trouble."

He referred to seven issues raised in an agricultural action plan prepared by the region in 2006 that said

all indicators were that we were headed for trouble and now is the time to act.

Ward 3 Coun. Peter Papp said he would like "to ramp things up even more" urging all Pelham citizens to adopt a "buy local produce" policy as well as local businesses.

Ward 2 Coun. Dave Emmons said it's easy for senior levels of government to reserve great areas for agriculture but they don't have anything in place to help.

"When it comes to support for the farmer, he's out of luck," said Emmons. "We have to support our local farmer."

Ward 2 Coun. Sharon Cook, who seconded the resolution, said "she was shocked" to see peach trees being pulled out in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The general public doesn't realize it takes seven to 10 years to replant an orchard and make it productive again.

"When you pull out trees you leave a giant hole" in agricultural production, she said.

"We have to encourage farmers to hang on," she said, which is the reason for promoting buy local produce policies.

"Hopefully the government is lis-

tening," Cook said. "We're very passionate about our farmers."

Welland city council followed suit, Tuesday evening, adding its support to a resolution passed April 14 by the region to promote a "Buy Local Food" campaign, to assist local farmers.

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