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A Greener Future for Farmers in the Niagara Fruitbelt: Evaluating the Practicality
of Using Agriculture Easements in Ontario's Greenbelt

By

Executive Summary:**Introduction:**

The *Greenbelt Plan* was implemented in 2005 with the goal of protecting valuable agriculture land surrounding the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) for future

secondary objective of this report is to develop a set of policy recommendations to address the challenges of Ontario's agriculture sector.

Research Methods:

The research methods used in this report include an extensive literature review, a review and analysis of provincial policy documents, case studies, and semi-structured interviews with planners from Niagara Region and the Town of Pelham. The literature review was instrumental in helping to establish the background and context of the report. The document analysis was used to analyze the *Greenbelt Plan* and explore some of the concerns expressed by the Greenbelt's agriculture community in greater detail. A review of relevant provincial policy was also used to explore the administrative aspects of conservation easements monitored by the Oak Ridge Moraine Foundation and the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT). The interviews were used to facilitate discussion on the topic of agriculture easements and to confirm and validate the themes and issues found in the literature and case studies. An analysis of data from these four methods was used to help identify the context of the challenges surrounding the *Greenbelt Plan* and to gain an understanding of how

Recommendation 1: Implement a Public Purchase Conservation Easement Program

The provincial government should reintroduce a Public Purchase Conservation Easement Program (PCEP) that is similar to the cancelled Niagara Tender Fruit Lands Program (1995). This agriculture easement program would pay property owners the difference between the land's value without restrictions and the value of the land after the restrictions had been imposed (Batcher, 2010). An agriculture

agriculture viability, as an objective in the *Greenbelt Plan* would allow the Province to recognize the important role that agriculture plays in the Greenbelt and the role farmers play as stewards of the land (Urban Strategies, 2013).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the success of the *Greenbelt Plan* is dependent upon the support of the local agriculture community as the Greenbelt consists almost exclusively of privately owned agriculture land. An agriculture easement program offers the Province an opportunity to gain the support of the Greenbelt agriculture community as it can provide farmers with the means to continue investing in farming and protect Southern Ontario's prime agriculture land for future generations, regardless of changing political circumstances. An agriculture easement program would not be a standalone or purely financial solution but rather serve as a tool that acknowledged () -7 p 0.20.2 () -4f [(f) - 0 Tm Tricknowlf2 (i