



# StandOurGround.ca NEWSLETTER

Issue 005 - October 2025

## Save Russell Township from Mega Sprawl!

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## The Importance of Preserving Russell's Farmland Community Meeting

*StandOurGround.ca would like to thank those who were able to attend our inaugural community meeting on Tuesday, September 16. We would especially like to thank the three Russell Councillors namely **Charles Armstrong**, **Lisa Deacon**, and **Marc Lalonde** who attended our meeting. We hope they found the speaker's insights valuable, and we encourage them to reflect on the significance of safeguarding the remaining farmland in Russell, prioritizing this cause in their future endeavors.*

*We felt the meeting was a success. We had an audience of about 50 people. While this meeting was entitled "The Importance of Preserving Russell's Farmland" the meeting was not a "farmers only" meeting. We had an excellent mix of people. The audience included Ontario Federation of Agriculture representatives, farmers, hobby farmers, business owners, and township people who care about saving agricultural land and preserving rural life.*

*All agreed speaker **Martin Straathof** (Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT)) and **Jenna Salvatore** (Eastern Ontario Farmland Protection Coordinator (OFT)) gave a fabulous presentation. We all came away with a better understanding of what is happening with the eradication of farmland in Ontario and the knowledge that we are going to have to fight to preserve this important and essential commodity.*

*Our emcee **Mark Van Dusen** introduced the speakers and kept the very informative question period running smoothly. Below is the introduction given by our co-emcee **Harry Baker**.*

*"Organized by Stand Our Ground, a grassroots group established by like-minded residents to monitor and challenge, the political decision-making that decides our collective future.*

*We began in 2024 to influence the Township of Russell's Official Plan that establishes the plans for the growth of the Township for the next 20 years.*

*We need watchful citizens ready to follow the business of the township council and willing to speak out.*

*Without citizen monitoring (and a critical media), governing bodies at all levels will decide our fate with far less accountability. This type of situation has proven disastrous across jurisdictions many times over. It is futile to say later that we didn't see problems coming.*

.../2

Some among us who have settled in Russell Township expecting more open spaces, less traffic congestion, cleaner air and a greener environment. Some others may see it differently.

Too far, too fast is the Stand Our Ground mantra in answer to the headlong planning and development now transforming our semi-rural home into a sprawling suburb of Ottawa.

The alarming growth of the residential and industrial areas is threatening the prime farmland and the rural environment that many of us value and want our future generations to enjoy.

We all live here because, while accepting the inevitable change, we want to see rational growth, and to preserve our basic rural life and the greater availability of local food sources.

At the same time, we are seeing that the Township is falling behind in designing, obtaining the funding and building the required infrastructure capacity for: roads, water supply, wastewater treatment and firefighting capabilities, to support these rapid new developments.

For the immediate future our property tax money and current loan capacity are all tied up in building a large recreation centre.

Our only future is to accept a higher tax burden or move away!

**StandOurGround** is proposing:

- ▶ Township Council slow down development plans and take a reality check on the supportive infrastructure required,
- ▶ We want Township to put reasonable limits on development, with strict protection for farmland and the environment,
- ▶ We also want to see more support for agriculture as a key part of our local economy. Agriculture is not even mentioned in the future economic development plans when it is the largest industrial sector in Russell Township!

Our agenda for this first public meeting focuses on a particularly unsettling problem, the potentially catastrophic loss of farmland across the landscape."

*The Record* (Volume 132, Number 12, Chesterville, Ontario, Thursday, September 25, 2005) printed an excellent article written by Carolyn Thompson Goddard on the "Community meeting on farmland preservation held in Russell. You can read the article on their [website](#).

## Summary of the Ontario Farmland Trust's presentation (submitted by Harry Baker)

Productive farmland is being lost in Ontario at a rate of 319 acres/day due to residential and industrial developments, mining of aggregates, golf courses, and energy production (solar and wind farms). At this rate we will deplete the existing farmland resource in 100 years.

The Agriculture/Food sector contributes \$51 billion/year to Ontario's economy. Ontario is a net importer of food from other countries. We produce over but 200 food commodities, but we import twice the amount of food than what we can grow.

We are losing our farmers (average age of a farmer is 56.7 yrs), 40% of current farmers are planning to retire in 10 years, and 66% have no succession plans.

It is prohibitive for a young person (not inheriting a farm) to get into farming as the land prices are increasing fast (+22% in 2021, +19% in 2022, +11% in 2023).



Jenna Salvatore and Martin Straathof (OFT) -  
Photographer Harry Baker

Farmland is an asset not just for growing food and grains but farmland can mitigate the effects of floods, sequester carbon, filter and store water, and provide habitat and corridors for wildlife.

With the recent Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (October 2024), municipalities are no **longer** required to perform a comprehensive 5-year review of the economic and environmental implications of converting farmland to development when they are increasing the settlement areas.

**StandOurGround statement:** Settlement area boundary expansion is now permitted at anytime—we draw your attention to its crucial caveat: **ONLY** if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to support it.

Municipal planners are lacking the agricultural knowledge to evaluate the competing land uses in their municipalities.

### What can community groups do?

- ▶ Advocate for:
  - An Agricultural Advisory Committee
  - Improved local planning that considers agriculture as an economic driver
  - Slowing and evaluating urban boundary expansions
- ▶ Push for:
  - Fiscal impact studies by property class (residential vs. agricultural)
  - Transparent reporting of municipal servicing costs
- ▶ Participate in:
  - Local elections
  - Public consultations on planning
  - Events like OFT's annual Farmland Forum in March (focus: municipal roles in farmland protection)
  - Mobilize other communities members!
- ▶ Consider supporting OFT
  - Follow us on Social Media and subscribe to our newsletter
  - Volunteer and/or attend an event

### Ontario Farmland Trust

The mission of OFT is to protect and preserve Ontario farmlands and associated agricultural, natural and cultural landscapes of food production for the benefit of Ontarians today and future generations.

The OFT is the only province-wide conservation charity dedicated to the permanent protection of Ontario's farmland. Since 2004, OFT has partnered with farmers using farmland easement agreements to protect 2,700+ acres of 26 farm properties across the province.

Our vision for the future is where Ontario's farmland is highly valued and recognized as an integral part of a thriving economy.

OFT programs to help farmers:

1. Farmland Easement Agreements
2. Donating Farmland to OFT

Ontario Farmland Trust recorded a webinar a few years ago exploring innovative ways that public policy and conservation easements can work in concert: *Innovative Approaches to Conservation: Opportunities for Municipalities, Land Trusts and Private Landowners*. We ask that you give it a look at the Ontario Farmland Trust [website](#).

*StandOurGround.ca welcomes your feedback, counterarguments, photographs, and written submissions for our Newsletter. Kindly inform us if you would like your Letter to the Editor to remain anonymous.*



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### Ontario Farmland Trust



[ontariofarmlandtrust.ca](https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca)



[OntarioFarmlandTrust](https://www.facebook.com/OntarioFarmlandTrust)



[ontariofarmlandtrust](https://www.instagram.com/ontariofarmlandtrust)



[ontariofarmlandtrust.ca](https://twitter.com/ontariofarmlandtrust)



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# WHAT A "GIFT"!?\*

The Premier and our local Council made a big splash of giving us \$10M of **OUR OWN MONEY** to fund a new Rec Centre built for 2X our population.

## ARE WE PAYING TO PLAY??



We urgently need a new wastewater treatment plant.

**Cost? \$100M\*\***

► Nation Township contribution = **\$31M**

► New DC charges = **\$19M**

**Balance = \$50M**

Who pays?

## YOU!



**Our Asset Management Plan?\*\*\***

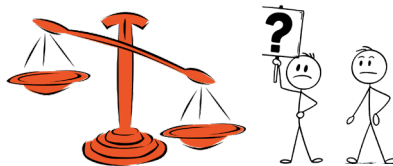
► We need to **increase taxes 2.8%/yr over the next 10 years** to catch up and to stop running deficits.

► Users of the municipal water and sewer networks will see increases of **3.6%/yr and 1.8%/yr for the next 10 yrs!**

Who pays?

## YOU AGAIN!

## Fiscal Responsibility: Which comes first? Needs or Nice to Haves?



Before sending your "Thank You" note to the Premier & Council . . . remember this:

**There's only ONE wallet.**



## Can you afford to play around?

\* This provincial "gift" represents slightly less than 10% of the estimated \$104M cost of the Rec Centre

\*\* Hemson DC Charges - Presentation at Council, September 22, 2025

\*\*\* Asset Management Plan tabled at Council, September 22, 2025

For footnotes \*\* and \*\*\* please refer to the Development Charge Report and updated Asset Management Plan, tabled at Council, September 22, 2025 (<https://russell.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/218639/>)