

From: Stewart Skinner

Re: Proposed Amendment to County Official Plan C-2022-016 and S-2022-030 Barry's Construction and Insulation Ltd.

When one visits the website [planthebruce.ca](http://planthebruce.ca)-- Bruce County's online portal outlining the ongoing process to create the next 25 year plan that will guide all planning and growth decisions--agriculture is prominently featured. The first of eight pillars, Agriculture is identified as crucial to the long term sustainability of the county. When one clicks on the link to learn more about plans for Agriculture, they are greeted with the headline "Ensuring the Future of Food Thrives Here" and a snappy YouTube video that praises the importance of the industry along with the need to plan smartly for future generations.

The proposed land development in front of you as a member of County council is a test...a test to see if there is resolve behind the words on those pages. Consider the following quote *"If we plan successfully, Bruce County will be a place where future generations of farmers continue to prosper. Our natural assets are finite, non-renewable resources and our agricultural lands are the foundation for food, fiber, the local food economy, agri-food exports and economic prosperity."* How does a proposal that removes some 25 acres of Harkaway Loam soil and greatly hinders the growth of livestock in an area that already features multiple livestock operations fit with the goals that Bruce County has committed to?

While the new county plan is not yet in place, the interim reports that outline the progress made thus far should bear weight on council given the permanence of your decision. In the interim report published October 2nd, 2020 the goal of a commitment to a healthy agriculture sector is restated while also committing to updating areas designated as prime or potentially prime agriculture areas. On page 35 the report shares that Prime Agricultural Areas should include areas where there is a local concentration of farms that exhibit characteristics of ongoing agricultural operations and goes on to caution an overreliance on Canada Land Inventory soil classifications. There are 4 livestock operations along with hundreds of acres of crop farming within 1500 metres of this proposed development. The area in question most certainly meets the criteria outlined in the to qualify as a Prime Agricultural Area and should be considered as such today.

That same interim report reminds us that properly identifying Prime Agricultural Areas are crucial for succession, investment, growth, and nuisance complaints avoidance. Succession planning in today's environment is tough; non farming siblings need to be treated equitably while next generation operations need to grapple with high debt loads and minimal surplus cash flow. In our family, hog production has always played a crucial role in succession planning, expanding hog operations generate the additional cash flow needed to service the land debt. If this development is allowed, there will be no future livestock expansions along Blind Line, something that limits the opportunities for the next generation who wishes to farm. In our specific case, a finishing barn at the rear of the farm would have additional costs related to servicing that would strip away the viability of the business case and make it very difficult for our farming operation create a viable succession plan for the property at 392 Blind Line, Allenford.

As I stated above, you are being presented with a test as a member of Bruce County council. A test that should give you pause before choosing which direction to go. As a young farmer I have watched many times as my colleagues and I are run over by those who simply have more money than us. In this situation a large landowner is choosing to try and develop a higher margin estate lot project instead of a densely built development along a small town hungry for housing like Chesley or Paisley. Situations like this are where it is likely easier to approve it and push the financial burden of defending the beautiful Bruce County soil on to someone else. While it may be easier, remember the commitments that have been made to elevate agriculture in Bruce County for generations to come. Remember the stated goal that calls you to ensure that the future of food thrives in Bruce County. Stand with agriculture and ensure that these fields stay in production with viable livestock operations carrying on for generations to come along the Blind Line.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S. Skinner', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Stewart Skinner  
President, Imani Farms Ltd