

Niagara This Week (Welland, ON)				Order/Commande 124898
Date 16.05.2008	Circ. 0	Page 42	1 / 1	

COUNCIL: HELP OUR FARMERS

Put money where Greenbelt is

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STAFF**

Pelham council is urging the province to think about local farmers when addressing the Greenbelt.

The town is also requesting that all Ontario municipalities adopt a policy to urge their residents to buy local.

It is all part of the Ontario government's potential request to expand the Greenbelt.

Council has been discussing the issue over the past few weeks and is calling on the government to address the suffering agricultural industry before looking to grow the Greenbelt.

"I think the government needs to help what's currently there before expanding," Coun. John Durley said last month, citing the closure of the Can-Gro canning plant in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Last week councillors voted unanimously on a resolution that will call on the Ontario government to provide help to the community's suffering agricultural industry.

The resolution says that the purpose of the Greenbelt is to "protect productive agricultural lands" and that "the production of crops within Ontario is essential to maintain sustainability not only of food supplies but also employment opportunities."

"I feel very strongly about this," said Coun. Sharon Cook.

"When you see trees being ripped out of the ground it can be shocking," she said, referring to the many farmers who are being forced to remove their crops due to the closure of the Can-Gro plant.

"Hopefully the government will listen," she said, "We are very passionate about this issue and our farms."

Council is recommending that the ministries involved with Greenbelt legislation help the agricultural industry "cope with all forces," including markets, growing, processing and transporting.

Durley requested that the resolution go to not only Premier Dalton McGuinty, but the Official Opposition leader, the NDP party, the ministries of municipal affairs and housing, local MPPs and all Ontario municipalities.

