

March 26, 2007 (by email)

Attention Mayor and Councillors,  
Town of Mississippi Mills

Mr. Mayor and Councillors,

Agriculture buffers or setbacks applied to new developments that border farmland have two principal benefits, one immediate and one long term.

The immediate benefit is that the neighbouring farmer has less pressure to curtail legitimate farm operations -- like fertilizing, spraying, or cropping at night -- because houses are kept at a distance. If the buffer is not applied to the development, it is applied to the farm. That is the reality. There are enough economic pressures on farm incomes already. To make the farmer pay the full "cost" of the buffer, as we do now, is unfair.

The long-term benefit will be less development on prime farmland. Farmland is preferred for development because the deep soil makes it cheaper to dig foundations and bury services. For example, building houses near Spring Street is easier and cheaper than building them along Martin Street North where bedrock is close to the surface.

If we make the developer responsible for any agricultural buffer, it means fewer houses can be built on a former farm property. That reduces the overall profit and that makes the shallow rocky soils more attractive. With less profit, there will be less speculation involving farm land. However, because there is no buffer applied to poor farmland, the developer can get a maximum number of houses on the rocky property. So, a 150-meter buffer will level the playing field.

In the long run, something as simple as a buffer will provide room for Almonte and the hamlets to grow and still leave farmland for future generations.

With global warming and higher fuel costs coming, producing food close to home will eventually be cheaper than bringing it in from far away. A buffer today will provide a larger tomorrow.

There is one other benefit to reducing growth on good farmland. It is fairer. Right now, farmers on good land cannot sell lots to help pay the bills. They get frustrated and angry when they hear developers can build subdivisions on the same high quality land.

The MMRA believes that fairness to farmers and a good food future are worthy goals. And we feel that a progressive, far-thinking policy like the agricultural buffer is one of the best tools presented so far at the municipal level to achieve those goals.

The MMRA, therefore, urges you to not downsize the current 150-meter agricultural buffer. We ask Council to find creative and more appropriately scaled planning mechanisms to address individual development projects and to vigorously defend the intent and protection that agricultural policies such as the buffer afford the entire Town of Mississippi Mills.

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*"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"*  
[www.mmra.ca](http://www.mmra.ca)