

SECTION 2 - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COUNTY

This section is intended to provide a brief overview of some of the characteristics of the County of Perth. It does not constitute Official Plan policy, but rather is general background information which provides some of the rationale or support for policy content of this Plan.

2.1 **POPULATION**

ADDED BY OPA #47 The 2001 population for the geographic area of Perth County (statistics Canada) was 73,675. County municipalities (4 local municipalities) had a population of 37,706, or 51.2 per cent of the above total. The City of Stratford and the separated Town of St. Marys had a combined population of 35,969 or 48.8 per cent of the above total.

Comparable figures for the geographic County in 1971, 1981, and 1991 were 62,973, 66,096, and 69,976, respectively. The average annual rate of growth throughout the County from 1971 to 2001 has been approximately 0.55 per cent.

Comparable figures for the County municipalities in 1971, 1981, and 1991 were 33,816, 34,952, and 36,814, respectively. The average annual rate of growth in the County municipalities from 1971 to 2001 has been approximately 0.38 percent.

As a general rule, population growth within the urban wards in the County has been higher than in the rural wards (i.e. former Townships). For example, the populations of Listowel, Mitchell, and Milverton have increased by 26 percent, 58 per cent, and 43 per cent, respectively, between 1971 and 2001. Over the same time period, the population in most of the rural wards remained relatively constant with the Blanshard, Hibbert, and Downie Wards experiencing small decreases in population.

Population projections were carried out as a part of the research for the County Official Plan when it was prepared in 1997 and were updated in 2004. Using the cohort survival projection method for the rural wards (i.e. former Townships) and a fixed rate of increase for the urban wards (Listowel, Milverton, and Mitchell), the population of the County municipalities (not including Stratford and St. Marys) is projected to be 41,214 by 2021.

2.2 **AGRICULTURE RESOURCE BASE**

Agricultural land use activities are the predominant land use activity in Perth County. The County's good land base for agricultural and farming activities, its favourable climatic conditions, and its skilled work force are all contributing factors to the importance of agriculture in Perth County. Perth County's soil and land base are particularly suited for agricultural activities. According to the Canada Land Inventory, approximately 90 per cent of the total land area in the County has either a Class 1, 2, or 3 soil capability rating for agriculture. Statistics Canada information indicates that approximately 93 percent of the total

land area in the County was farmed in 2001 (i.e. cropland, summer fallow, improved pasture, unimproved pasture, and other land). Perth County's agricultural and farming activities are important in that they are the livelihood for a significant proportion of the rural population, they are an important source of employment, they contribute to the County and local economies (gross farm receipts of 506.1 million dollars in 2002), and they produce significant amounts of agricultural produce for local, regional, provincial, and international consumption.

ADDED BY OPA#6 There is a broad spectrum of farming activities within the County, ranging from those which rely on horse power to those which rely on the most advanced technologies. All of these farming activities are important to the agricultural character of the County.

Previous planning documents throughout the rural or Township portions of the County have placed a major emphasis on the importance of preserving and protecting the agricultural resource base. Agricultural or farming areas have been kept for farming activities while land use activities which are incompatible with agricultural or farming activities have either been severely restricted or prohibited. New non-farm growth and development has been focused or concentrated in settlement areas, particularly those with full municipal services (Listowel, Milverton, and Mitchell). This Official Plan carries forward the principles and importance of protecting and preserving Perth County's good agricultural land resource base to ensure future food and fibre production by present and future generations of farmers in Perth County.

2.3 **SETTLEMENT AREAS**

ADDED BY OPA # 47 The primary settlement areas within the geographic boundaries of the County of Perth are Listowel, Milverton, Mitchell, Stratford, and St. Marys. All are serviced with a full range of municipal services. Listowel, Milverton, and Mitchell are member municipalities of Perth County while Stratford and St. Marys are separated municipalities. Listowel, Milverton, and Mitchell are Wards within the Town of North Perth, Township of Perth East, and the Municipality of West Perth and are therefore a part of the member municipalities of Perth County while Stratford and St. Marys are separated municipalities. These serviced settlement areas have accommodated the vast majority of non-agricultural or non-farm activity which has occurred within Perth County. They are important residential centres in that they have accommodated and will continue to accommodate a large percentage of the County's population. They are important business and commerce centres that serve their resident populations and the surrounding rural populations, both within and outside of the County. They are important for their industrial activities in terms of production of goods and services and employment of resident and area populations. They have in the past played an important role in the overall growth and economy of Perth County and will continue to do so in the future. It is intended that these serviced settlement areas will accommodate most of the non-farm related growth that is to occur in the County during the planning period of this Official Plan and beyond.

There are a number of smaller settlement areas scattered throughout Perth County. Their size, mix of land uses, and functions vary considerably. None of these smaller settlement areas are serviced by full municipal services. While these smaller settlement areas have experienced varying amounts of growth in the past, it is anticipated that future growth of these areas will be limited and constrained due to the lack of municipal services. It is expected that they will continue to play an important role for the resident and surrounding area populations. Many of the smaller settlement areas host commercial and industrial uses which provide local services and employment opportunities to the residents of the settlement area and surrounding rural areas. These settlement areas have been classified as villages and hamlets in this Official Plan.

ADDED BY In 2004 and 2005, some of the municipalities in the County have been
OPA #47 examining the possibilities and options for providing municipal water and sewage services to some of their village areas. Should these investigations lead to the provision of municipal water and sewage services in the village areas, such villages are likely to play a greater role than they have in a recent past with respect to growth and development issues.

2.4 **NATURAL RESOURCES/ENVIRONMENT AREAS**

Due to the good agricultural resource base in Perth County, many of the natural resource features present in the County prior to settlement in the 1800's have either been cleared or drained in the pursuit of agricultural land use activities. As a result, the amount of remaining natural resource features or areas in Perth County is relatively small. They consist of a number of wetland areas, wooded areas (approximately 9 per cent forest cover), and watercourses and valley lands.

ADDED BY Owing to the relatively small amount of natural resource features and areas
OPA #47 remaining in Perth County, the significance and importance of the remaining areas is heightened and deserving of greater attention. This County Plan takes a strong position in respect to the protection, preservation, enhancement, and improvement of the natural resource features and areas within the County. Through the "Natural Resources/Environment" designation, many of the natural resource features and areas are identified as a separate land use designation.

Complementary policies for other land use designations established by this Official Plan carry forward the principles of protection, preservation, enhancement, and improvement of natural resource features.

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The County recognizes the importance of looking at a watershed perspective in respect to resource management issues and land use planning activities. Accordingly, where it is considered appropriate by the County, support will be given to watershed plans.

2.5 **MINERAL AGGREGATE RESOURCE BASE**

ADDED BY OPA #47 Mineral aggregate resources in Perth County consist primarily of gravel, sand, and limestone. In 2006, there were 42 licensed gravel and sand pits in Perth County while there was only one licensed quarry operation.

Overall, Perth County does not have an abundance of mineral aggregate resources. Primary and secondary gravel and sand deposits tend to be few in number while tertiary deposits are inconsistent from both a quality and quantity standpoint. While there are vast amounts of limestone material throughout Perth County, those resources which are overlaid by minimal amounts of overburden are very small and localized in location (Blanshard-St. Marys areas). It is important that this Official Plan protect and preserve both the operating and potential gravel, sand, and limestone resource areas in order that these aggregate materials can be used to serve local and County demands for aggregate material.

ADDED BY OPA #47

2.6 **CITY OF STRATFORD AND TOWN OF ST. MARYS**

While the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys are geographically located within Perth County, they do not form part of the County from a political standpoint. Stratford is a separated City and St. Marys is a separated Town. Both have their own Official Plan documents which apply independent of the County of Perth Official Plan and the local Official Plans of member municipalities in the County.

This Official Plan acknowledges that both Stratford and St. Marys are an integral part of the commerce and economy of the geographic area of Perth County. This Official Plan encourages the co-operation between the County (and its member municipalities) and the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys in all matters that are of mutual interest.

2.7 **COUNTY RESTRUCTURING**

In 1996-97 the County of Perth and its fourteen member municipalities undertook a municipal restructuring exercise to look at the reform of local governance in the County. The study resulted in a Proposal For the Reform of Local Governance which was submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval in May 1997. The proposal called for the County's fourteen local municipalities to be amalgamated into four larger municipalities which were, to a large extent, based on communities of interest. The County's proposal was approved by Order of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing pursuant to the Municipal Act on June 26, 1997. The Minister's approval order became effective on January 1, 1998.

Under the restructuring proposal, the four local municipalities in the County are as follows:

- (a) Town of North Perth - consisting of the former Town of Listowel and the former Townships of Elma and Wallace.
- (b) Township of Perth East - consisting of the former Village of Milverton and the former Townships of Ellice, North Easthope, South Easthope and Mornington.
- (c) Township of Perth South - consisting of the former Townships of Blanshard and Downie.
- (d) Township of West Perth - consisting of the former Town of Mitchell and the former Townships of Fullarton, Hibbert, and Logan.

Each of the 14 former municipalities are identified as a Ward of their respective new municipality (i.e. Milverton Ward of the Township of Perth East).

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