

TOWN OF MARKHAM

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT PHASE 2: AGRICULTURAL OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

May 12, 2009

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT STUDY PROCESS

- April 2008 Study Process Initiated
- June 2008 Stakeholder Meeting
- October 2008 Part A DSC – Phase 1: Agricultural Assessment
- October 2008 Public Information Meeting
- January 2009 Farmer's Meeting
- May 2009 Part A DSC – Phase 2: Agricultural Options
- May/June 2009 Public Information Meeting
- October 2009 Phase 3: Final Report and Recommendations

PHASE 1 ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

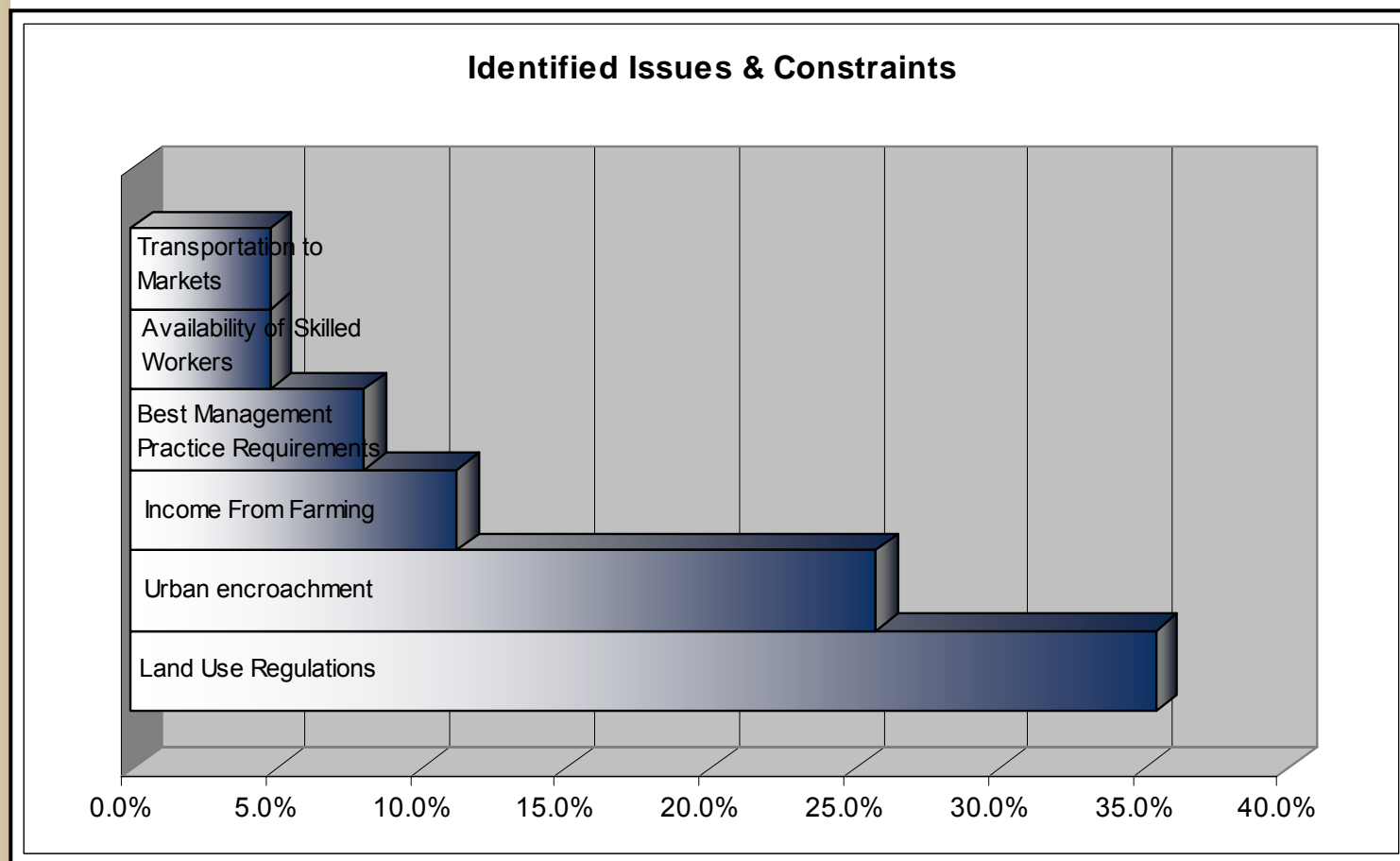
- **Prime land – majority class 1 which is a limited non renewable resource**
- **Farms and farmland declining**
- **Gross farm receipts increased (2001 – 2006)**
- **Interest in long-term farming by farming community**
- **Competing land use interests in rural area**
- **Some fragmentation but generally larger lot fabric intact**
- **Amount of public land ownership very high**

PHASE 2 TASKS

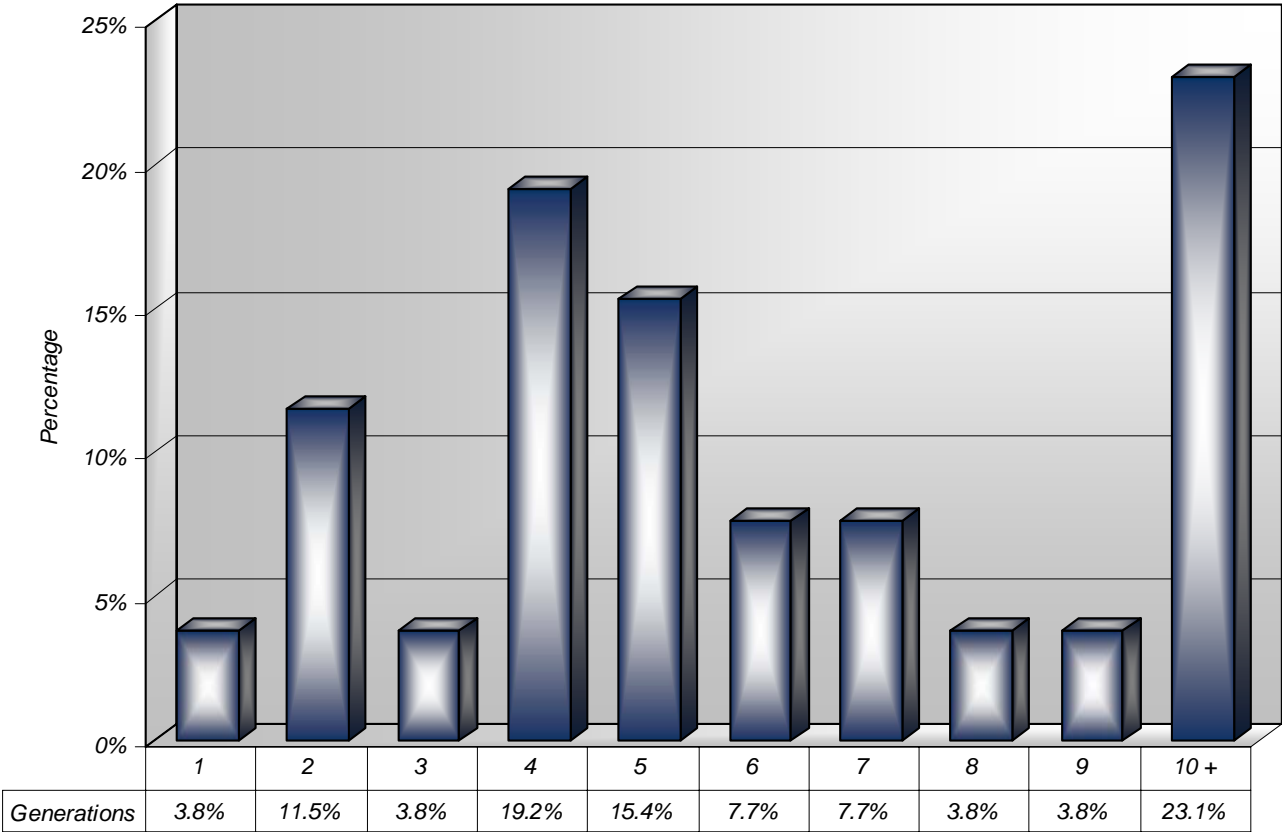
- **Consult with agricultural community to determine long-term objectives**
- **Evaluate Provincial, Region and local policy requirements**
- **Evaluate local constraints related to agriculture**
- **Evaluate local issues related to agriculture**
- **Evaluate local opportunities**
- **Identify a recommended approach for Markham which would include policy, regulatory, financial and implementation implications**

SUMMARY OF FARMERS MEETINGS

- Over 50 attendees – all actively farming in Markham

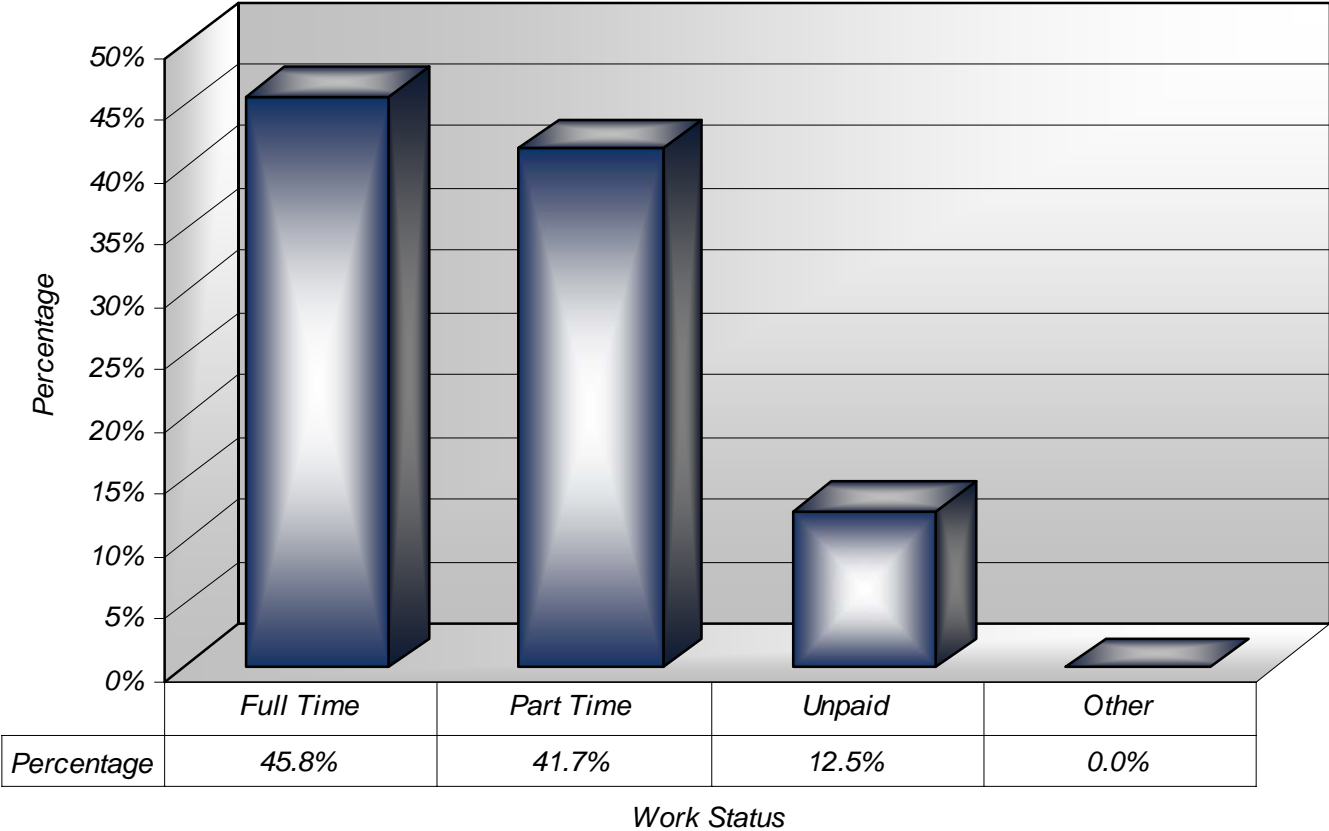


FARMERS INPUT Generation's Farmed



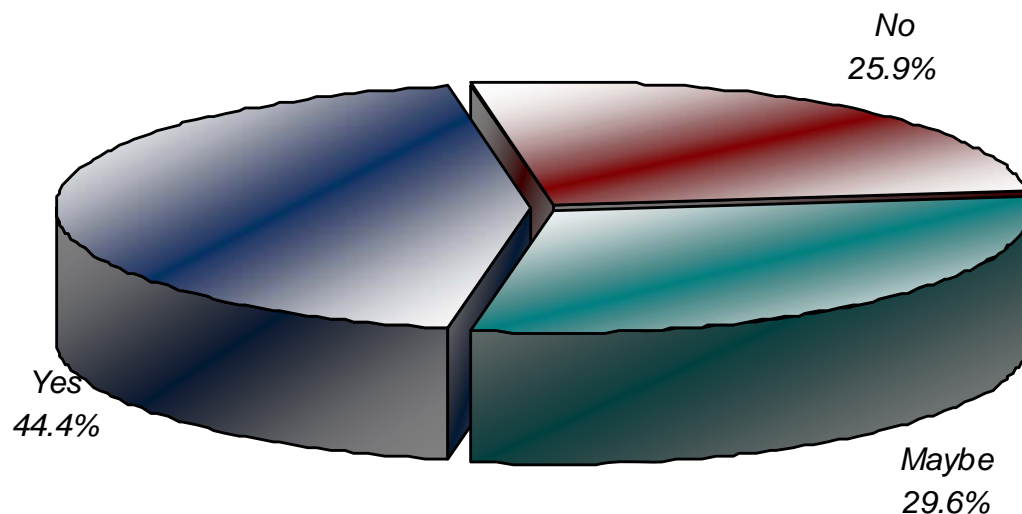
FARMERS INPUT

Full Time Farmers



FARMERS INPUT

The Next Generation

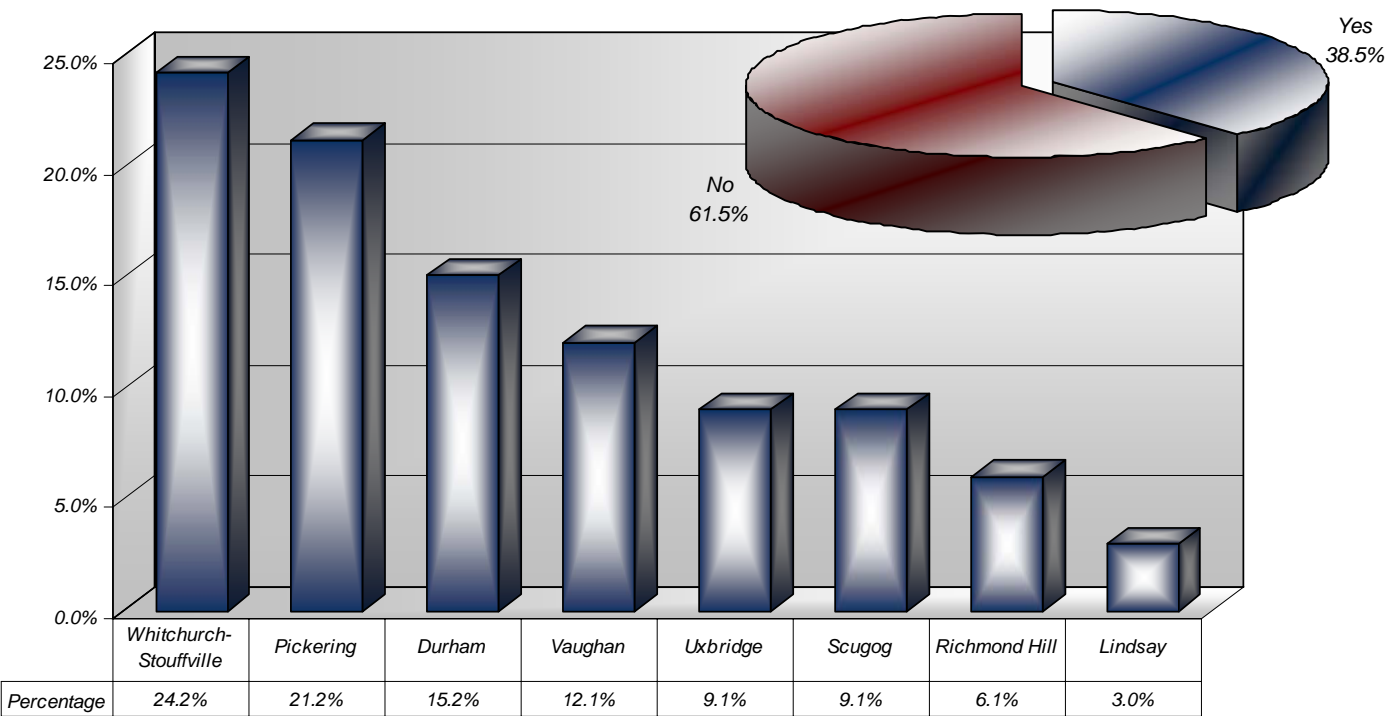


“As long as there is land that can be farmed in Markham – it will be farmed”

FARMERS INPUT

Location of Farmed Lands

• Is all farmed land in Markham?



TRENDS IN AGRICULTURE

- **Changing food consumption patterns**
- **Climate – Uncertainty**
- **Energy Consumption**
- **International Standards**
- **Water**

THREATS & WEAKNESSES

- **Cost of Land**
- **Conflicting Non- Agricultural Uses**
- **Short Term Leases on publicly owned lands**
- **Uncertainty Regarding Status of Public Lands**
- **Rouge Park Plans**
- **Myriad of Regulations**
- **Aging Farm Population**
- **Urban Growth Pressures**
- **Fragmentation**
- **Deteriorating Farm Infrastructure**
- **Competition for Land**
- **Lack of Agricultural Services**
- **Re-Naturalization Program**
- **Conflict with Natural Heritage Policies**
- **Lack of Public Knowledge about Farming**
- **Categorizing “good crops” vs. “bad crops”**

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Public Land could support Permanency**
- **Municipal support for Local Food**
- **Outstanding Resource (class 1 soil and good climate)**
- **Available Land in White Belt and Green Belt**
- **Strong Markets**
- **Committed Farm Population**
- **Opportunity for Input into Rouge Park Planning**
- **Growing Recognition of Value of Agriculture**
- **Farms as Environmental Stewards**
- **Partnership between NHS and Agriculture**
- **Cultural and Historical Contribution**
- **Abutting Agricultural Areas**
- **Opportunity for Community Sustainability**

POLICY CONTEXT

- **PPS**
- **GROWTH PLAN**
- **GREENBELT PLAN**
- **REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN**
- **MARKHAM OFFICIAL PLAN**
- **ROUGE PARK PLANS**

GOVERNMENT ROLES

- **Federal**

- Trade Policy
- National Food / Agricultural Policy
- Safety Nets – Income Stabilization
- Research and Development

- **Provincial**

- Agricultural Support Strategy
- Specialized Research and Development
- Coordinated Legislation
- Farming and Food Protection Act

- **Municipal**

- By-Laws and Policies

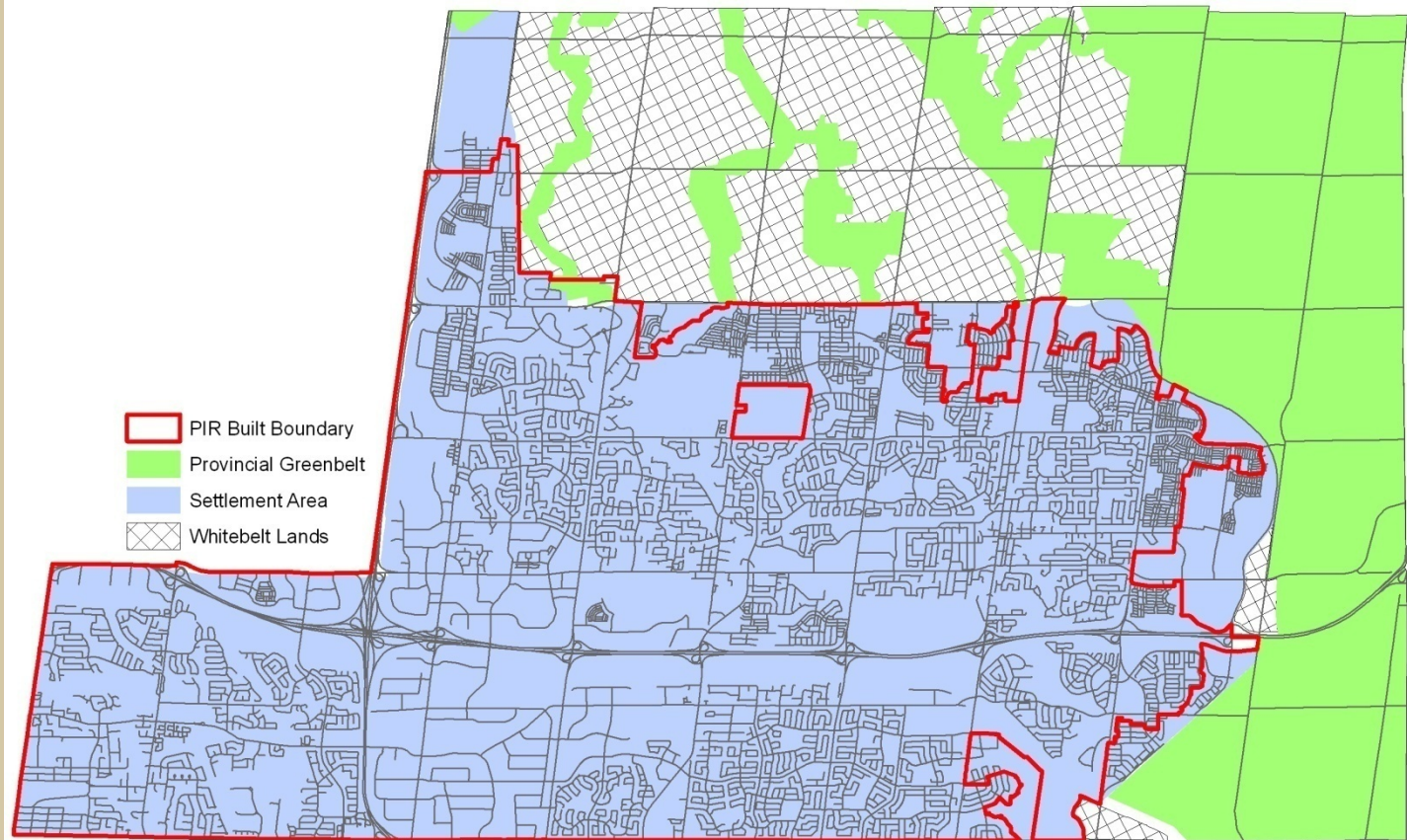
REGIONAL CONTEXT

- **GTA Agricultural Action Committee**
- **York Official Plan Review**
- **Region of York LEAR**
- **York Regional Agriculture Liaison Group**
- **York Federation – Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

MARKHAM'S OFFICIAL PLAN

- **Markham's OP uses a three-tiered agricultural designation approach (A1, A2 and A3) with different use permissions**
- **OP policies generally strong, but reflect a traditional approach to the management of agricultural lands**
- **Existing policies acknowledges potential for non agricultural uses in the agricultural designations**

POLICY AREAS



AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY MUST CONSIDER THE DISTINCTIVE AGRICULTURAL AREAS

- **Whitebelt lands required for growth to 2031**
- **Whitebelt lands not required for 2031 growth**
- **Greenbelt Federal Airport Lands**
- **Greenbelt Rouge Park Lands**
- **Greenbelt Private Ownership**

CONCLUSION

- **There is a future for agriculture in Markham.**
- **An Agricultural Strategy for Markham could address the following matters:**
 - Stronger Official Plan Policies and new policies to recognize various contexts for agriculture in Markham
 - Economic Development Policy for Agriculture
 - Local – Right to Farm Policy
 - Partnership with Federal Government to Encourage Agriculture on Airport Lands
 - Partnership with Provincial Government & Rouge Park Alliance to Integrate Sustainable Agriculture in the Rouge Park
 - Facilitation to assist with regulatory controls
 - Coordination with Farm Community to Provide support
 - Coordinated strategy with Region of York

STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR MARKHAM

- **Option 1: Strengthen and Enhance Agricultural Policies, Work with Rouge Park to prepare a long-term Rouge Park Agricultural Strategy and create an Agricultural Advisory Committee**
 - Enhance Official Plan Policies to address short term agriculture (2031 lands) and long-term (post 2031 and Greenbelt)
 - Strengthen the partnership with Rouge Park in dealing with agricultural activities
 - Create an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the purpose of providing input to Council on agricultural related issues

STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR MARKHAM

- **Option 2: Secondary Agricultural Enhancement Initiatives**
 - Option 1 plus.....
 - Incorporate Agriculture into the Town's Economic Development and Greenprint (Community Sustainability Plan) Strategy
 - Review Local Food Policy to align with Local Food Production
 - Prepare and endorse a Municipal Right to Farm Policy (statement of principles supporting agricultural farm practices)

STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR MARKHAM

- **Option 3: Agricultural Enhancement Initiatives Requiring Municipal Staff and Financial Resources**
 - Option 1 & 2 strategies plus...
 - Introduce agricultural farm financial incentives such as further reduced property taxes (beyond 25%) for long-term agricultural production
 - Consider assigning duties to Town staff to facilitate agricultural support programs
 - Identify the financial and staff resources needed in conjunction with the Region of York

IMPLICATIONS

- All options enhance the sustainability of long term agriculture
- All options requires a shared vision between the Town, Rouge Park and Federal Government
- All options require the formation of meaningful, effective partnerships with landowners and the agricultural community
- Town would need to address staff-work assignments and resource priorities in the moving forward with the recommended options 2 and 3
- Reduced Revenue from Development Charges & Property Tax (Option 3)

NEXT STEPS

- **Release Options Report for Public Input**
- **Public Information Meeting (late spring or early fall)**
- **Final Report and Recommendations**

DISCUSSION