

# Township of Essa Official Plan Review



## Issues and Opportunities



July 2024

# Purpose of this Document

- This issues and opportunities summary has been prepared to summarize planning matters and public comments heard to date from the public and staff during the Official Plan update process.
- It is a reference document to provide a common understanding of matters to be considered when writing the Township's new Official Plan.
- The information contained in this document is not meant to be exhaustive or conclusive. It is a starting point to generate discussion amongst residents and stakeholders at future open houses and events.
- Residents are encouraged to read this document and participate in the surveys that will inform the new Official Plan.
- Future discussions resulting from this document will form the basis of the new Official Plan framework and future policy directions.



# What is the Official Plan?

- The Official Plan is the primary tool for implementing the Township's goals and objectives. It establishes a long-term strategy for the Township for effectively managing growth and change and directs how land is used and developed over the next 20 years.
- The Official Plan plays an important role in recognizing the public interest and identifying a range of community values including:



**Protecting the Natural Environment**



**Establishing a Complete Community**



**Servicing and Infrastructure**



**Enhancing Rural Character**



**Sustaining the Agricultural Community**



**Sustainable Development**



**Community Safety**



**Transportation**



**Climate Change Mitigation**



# Official Plan Review

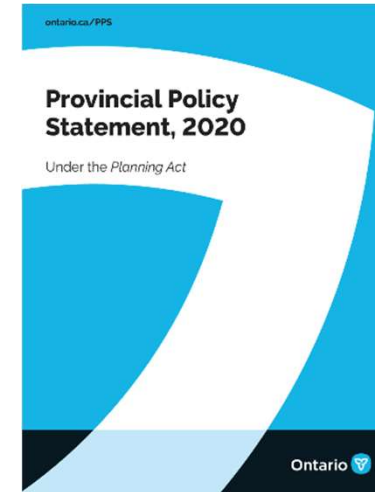
- The new Official Plan will update Township policies and objectives to bring the document into conformity with modern Provincial plans and policies. Community interests and input will be important.
- The Township's current Official Plan was adopted in 2000 and has been subject to several amendments over the years.
- The Planning Act requires municipalities to renew their Official Plan every ten years to ensure it is consistent and conforms with:
  - The Planning Act
  - The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)
  - The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
  - The County of Simcoe Official Plan



# Provincial Planning Documents

## Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

- Provides policy direction on matters relating to municipal planning that are of provincial interest and sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land.
- Main themes include building strong communities, the wise management and use of resources, and protecting health and safety.



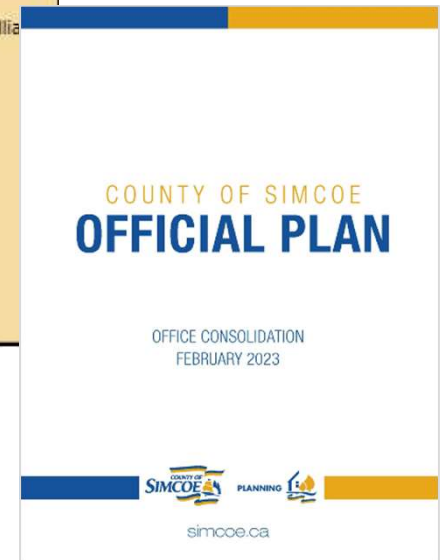
## Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020

- Seeks to plan for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment and helps communities achieve a high quality of life in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



# County of Simcoe Official Plan, 2016

- Provides policies for growth and development for the Township and 15 other municipalities in the County.
- The County of Simcoe will likely lose their planning authority because of provincial changes.
- If County planning authority removed, the current County Official Plan will be incorporated into the Township update. The County will be assisting the Township with identifying areas for future growth.





# Five Policy Themes

- Visioning Workshop held in Fall 2020. Official Plan Review Discussion Papers prepared in 2020 and 2021 reflecting submissions from the community and new policy areas and revisions to existing policies.
- The five (5) policy themes derived from Visioning Workshop and previous Discussion Papers continue to be used to frame and guide the new Official Plan.

## Official Plan Review Discussion Paper #2 - Draft



Date:

**March 2021**

Prepared for:

**Township of Essa**

1. **Rural Essa**

2. **Natural Essa**

3. **Growing Essa**

4. **Resilient Essa**

5. **Connecting Essa**

# 1. Rural Essa – Agricultural Lands

- Primary objective to promote and protect agriculture as an important part of the Township's economy and identity.
- Increasing development pressure on agricultural lands. Prime agricultural lands and agricultural operations should be protected for long-term use from incompatible land uses.
- Recognise different sizes, types and styles of farms. There are opportunities to broaden the range of uses in agricultural areas, including agricultural-related businesses, agri-food strategies, agri-tourism, and on-farm diversified uses.
- The County's identification of Prime Agricultural Lands will be reviewed and implemented through the Town's Official Plan Review and updated mapping.





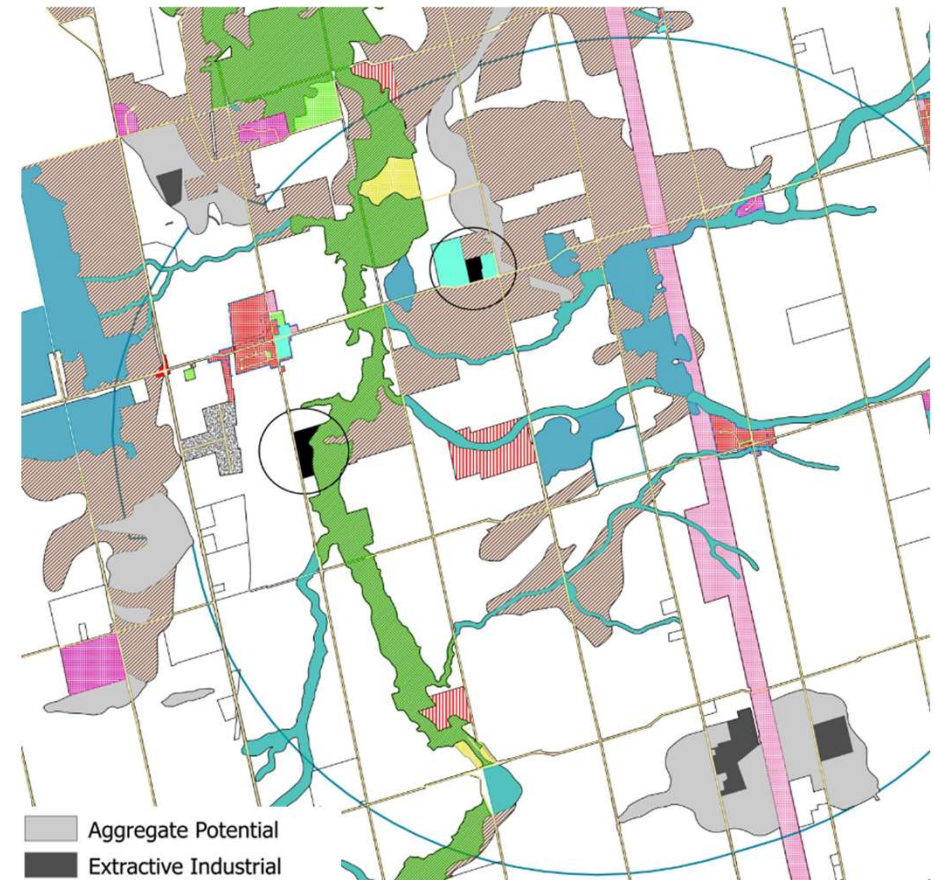
# 1. Rural Essa – Rural Lands

- Preserve and protect Essa’s rural character and the long-term viability of diversified rural economic activities.
- Current Official Plan permits wide range of uses, while still prioritizing agriculture on rural lands and directing non-agricultural uses to poorer quality agricultural lands.
- Ensure non-agricultural uses pose minimal impacts on agricultural uses, provide adequate buffering, cluster non-agricultural uses, and exhaust other alternative locations.
- Focus residential development in settlement areas and limit on “Rural” designated lands including the review and update of Consent policies.
- Develop a supportive agri-tourism and eco-tourism framework.



# 1. Rural Essa – Aggregate Resources

- Continue recognition and importance of protecting known aggregate resource deposits (sand, stone, gravel) and existing extraction operations from incompatible development.
- Opportunity to develop comprehensive policies to ensure existing and future operations are suitably buffered from adjacent land uses.
- Confirm aggregate extraction can be realized on designated lands and identify areas where extraction is not permitted in the Township.



# 1. Rural Essa – Recent Considerations

- Land speculation (including urban and rural lands).
- Traditional agricultural operations becoming less viable.
- Residential growth pressures from people leaving urban areas and expanding settlement areas (and associated servicing).
- Increased pressure on natural heritage features.
- Increased fragmentation for rural land holdings.





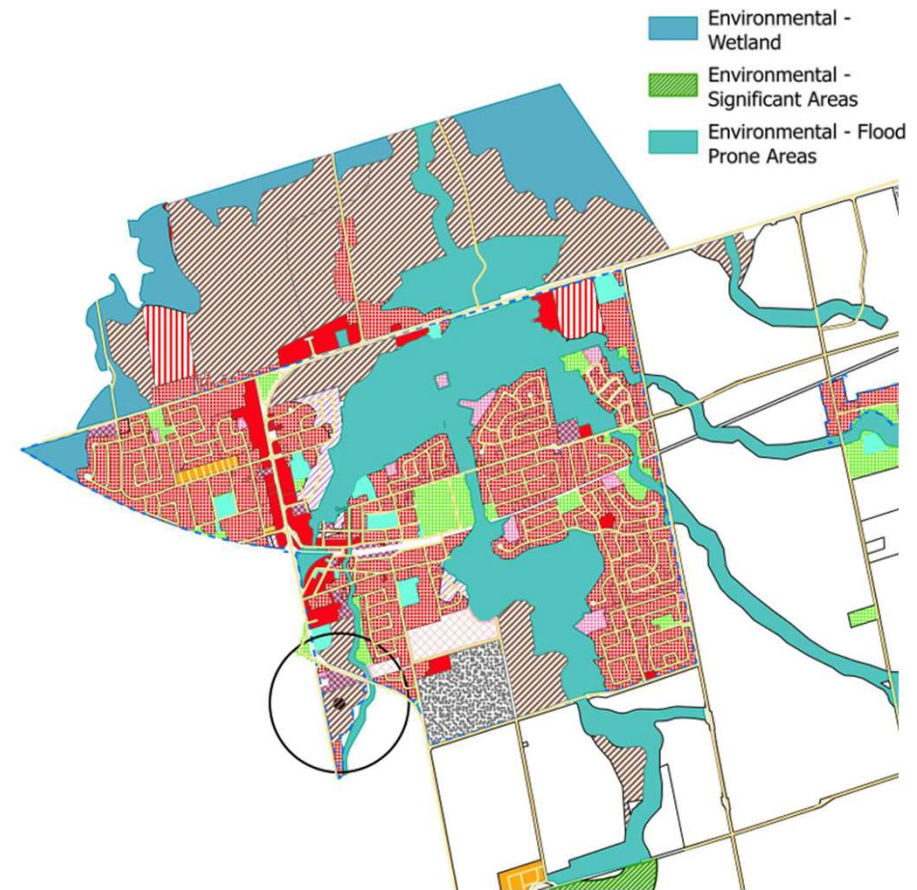
## 2. Natural Essa – Natural Heritage System

- Three existing Official Plan categories applying to environmental areas with policies for conservation and ecosystem management:
  1. **Flood Prone Areas** – Major rivers, streams and defined flood plains
  2. **Wetlands** – All major wetland areas
  3. **Significant Areas** – Nottawasaga River areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI)
- Natural heritage system adds to Essa's rural character and provides for a natural open space landscape. Intent to protect environmental areas from development effects and incompatible land uses.
- Official Plan Review will implement the Provincial Natural Heritage System and the County's Greenlands Natural Heritage System.



## 2. Natural Essa – Natural Hazards

- Existing Official Plan policies direct development away from hazardous lands and sites including flood prone or steep areas.
- Opportunity to update land use and development framework to acknowledge the impacts of climate change and plan for the potential risks associated with natural hazards, such as flooding and erosion.
- Review, update and restrict instances where development can be contemplated on hazardous lands and sites.
- Ensure Official Plan mapping for Flood Prone Areas is well-defined and up-to-date based on current mapping.





## 2. Natural Essa – Water Resources

- Ensure the protection, maintenance and enhancement of water, related resources and aquatic ecosystems on an integrated watershed management basis.
- Opportunity to include source water protection policies and mapping for clean drinking water in accordance with the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan.
- Opportunity to establish stormwater management policies and requirements using green infrastructure and low-impact development opportunities where possible.



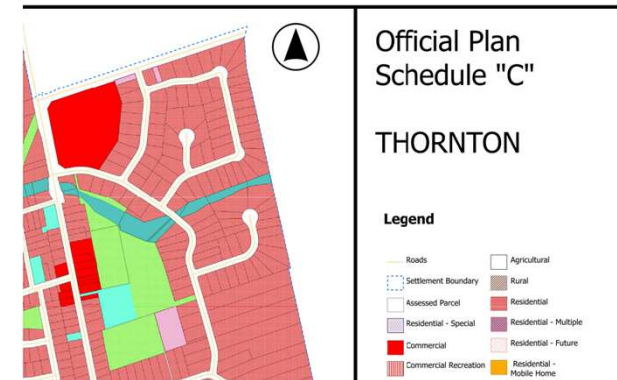
## 2. Natural Essa – Recent Considerations

- Changing role of the Conservation Authorities and reinforcement of natural heritage protection
- Increased pressure and fragmentation on natural features because of pressure on rural lands to development and increased land costs within settlement areas.



# 3. Growing Essa – Growth Management

- Have a greater focus on urban structure, and settlement hierarchy, to preserve agricultural and rural lands that define Township character.
- Consider future directions support fully serviced settlements like Angus as a complete community and directing commercial and industrial development to appropriate areas.
- Consider limiting residential lot creation in the Township's rural areas to support a stronger settlement focussed growth management strategy.
- Refine the settlement area hierarchy and growth management strategy in the new Township Official Plan.



# 3. Growing Essa – Growth Management

## Simcoe County Municipal Comprehensive Review Targets for the Township of Essa:

### Growth Projections

	County of Simcoe*		Township of Essa	
	Forecast to 2051	Increase from 2021	Forecast to 2051	Increase from 2021
Population	555,020	194,340	34,740	10,930**
Jobs	197,980	81,380	13,350	3,720

\*adopted Simcoe County Amendment No. 7 (SCOPA7)

\*\*Equates to approx. 135 ha (340 acres) of additional lands



# 3. Growing Essa – Housing Strategy

- Ensure the Township provides for a full range of housing types, tenures, built forms and densities to meet the needs of current and future residents.
- Plan for and establish targets for market based, attainable and affordable housing options.
- Consider policy incentives to encourage and promote affordable housing projects within settlement areas.
- Opportunities to update policies to encourage gentle intensification and Additional Residential Units in existing residential areas.
- Align policies and incentives with County's Housing and Homelessness Plan.





# 3. Growing Essa – Employment Strategy

- Complete communities accommodate a range of employment opportunities and commercial and service facilities. Existing Official Plan identifies Institutional, Industrial, Commercial and Commercial Recreational land use designations.
- Opportunity to introduce overall employment framework to guide investment and development, as well as the protection of employment areas from conversion applications.
- Opportunity to enhance commercial policies to encourage mixed-use development, as well as the provision new commercial and service uses as part of new residential development.
- Opportunity to enhance direction for rural employment and rural-resource based recreational employment uses.



# 3. Growing Essa – Servicing Infrastructure

- Opportunity to establish a full range of modernized servicing policies, including the servicing hierarchy in support of the Township's growth strategy and settlement hierarchy.
- Consider policy direction for required water, sewage and stormwater infrastructure based on 2022 Infrastructure Master Plan.
- Provide policies to require planning for infrastructure in a manner that is financially sound and lifecycle based, promotes optimization and efficiencies, and is founded in watershed framework.
- Opportunity to provide policy direction for best practices in stormwater including green infrastructure and low impact development and that considers the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.



### 3. Growing Essa – Recent Considerations

- County has allocated population and job targets to the Township until 2051.
- How and where should these targets be applied including:
  - Traditional growth patterns amongst a variety of Towns and Villages within Essa
  - Servicing availability
  - Requests made to date for expanding settlement areas and future requests – how will they be considered?
  - Reducing impacts on agriculture
- Effects of proposed employment/industrial lands in Alliston and Barrie to support a 'living wage'.
- Effects of growth on electoral ward boundary review.
- Finding school sites for increasing numbers of students.
- Consistent definitions between building, zoning and engineering terms.
- Role of 'seasonal' residential recreational sites for permanent/attainable housing.
- Consideration of Township campus node.





## 4. Resilient Essa – Healthy, Complete Communities

- Focus on approaches that achieve healthy and complete communities through design, active transportation, improved safety and providing meaningful places live, work and play.
- Opportunity to introduce community design direction and guidelines for all areas across the Township that build upon and enhance existing character, enable high-quality spaces and foster a unique sense of place.
- Develop new policies through a placemaking lens, focusing on mixed-uses, connectivity and age-friendly design.
- Opportunity to enable the concept of complete streets and healthy community design which promotes safety for all demographics.



# 4. Resilient Essa – Climate Change

- Age of current Official Plan pre-dates climate change considerations.
- New Official Plan will introduce new policy guidelines and framework for climate change adaptability and resiliency in Essa, as well as energy efficiency, conservation, demand reduction and management.
- Opportunity to weave climate change and energy considerations throughout the entire Official Plan, relating to but not limited to:
  - Low-impact development and green infrastructure standards
  - Transportation, active transportation and transit
  - Parks, open spaces and recreation facilities
  - Agricultural and rural lands
  - Sustainable building design





## 4. Resilient Essa – Recent Considerations

- Increasing density is reinforcing the need for quality outdoor spaces for improved experiences and community interactions.
- Higher density is creating neighbourhood 'friction' and increased by-law enforcement.
- Recent storm events in Ontario and globally will trigger the need to assess infrastructure requirements differently.
- Opportunities for the Township to 'lead by example' with innovative policies and Township capital project design.
- Opportunity to integrate Conservation Authority hazard mapping with new Township Official Plan mapping.
- Official Plan should encourage the coordination of Township Master Plans for more effective and efficient long term planning across multiple departments.
- Opportunities for strategic land acquisition for community services (e.g. Former Provincial Tree Seed site).
- Establishing community planning permit system framework for improved processes and development outcomes.



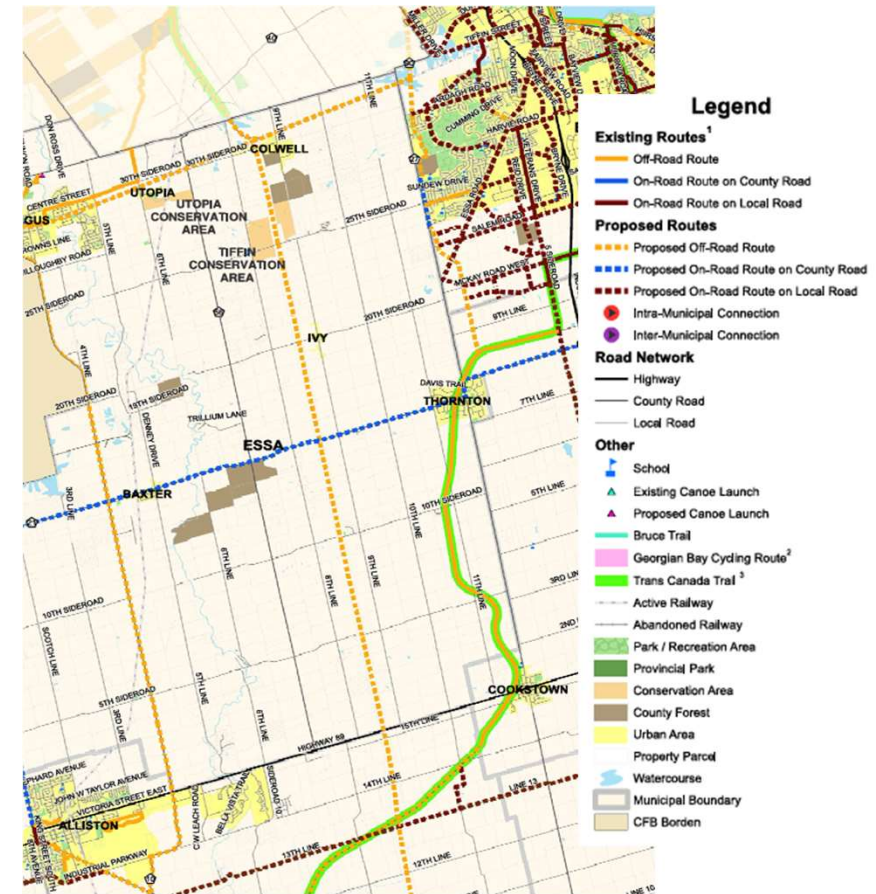
# 5. Connecting Essa – Road System

- Existing objectives seek to provide a road network and transportation network that meets long term needs and facilitates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
- Existing Official Plan categorizes Arterial Roads, Collector Roads and Local Roads. Official Plan Review will analyze current minimum road widths, access requirements and any planned upgrades to the road network.
- Opportunity to develop context-sensitive road design requirements and criteria for complete, safe street design.
- Opportunity to introduce policies that protect key transportation corridors, facilitate the movement of goods for the long-term and ensure infrastructure can support future growth and development.
- Roles of local aerodromes and effects on local policies.



# 5. Connecting Essa – Active Transportation

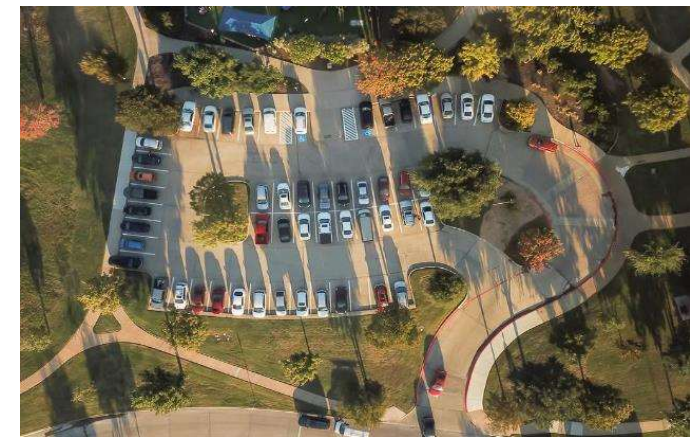
- Historically reliant on the automobile. Overall land use patterns promoting higher densities and mixed uses can promote active transportation.
- Benefits of active transportation for human health and environmental well-being.
- Opportunity to use trails in the Township for more connections.
- Implement the County's Transportation Master Plan and Active Transportation Network Concept through new mapping and policy direction.
- Opportunity to implement design requirements which promote multi-modal transportation and complete streets.





# 5. Connecting Essa – Transit

- Explore Province and County options for transit service integration and modal share. Essa's rural nature and relatively low population limits transit viability.
- Proximity to larger urban centres provides opportunities to identify planned/potential transit routes and multi-modal integration:
  - Current service from Simcoe County LINX bus from Angus. County Transportation Master Plan identifies link between Barrie and Angus/CFB Borden.
  - Potential GO Bus service extending from Barrie through Angus and south to Alliston.
  - Proposed busway with trail identified south of Highway 90 with a proposed Station in Angus.
  - Opportunities to identify locations for carpool lots.





# 5. Connecting Essa – Recent Considerations

- Amount of cars and car parking needs are having a negative impact on some neighbourhoods.
- How to better integrate and plan around the expanding County Transit program – LINX.
- What role can the Barrie-Collingwood Railway reserve play in terms of connecting communities and future transportation options?
- Active transportation connections should be integrated in transportation planning.
- Integration of the Township's ongoing Transportation and Trails Master Plan.



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- Active transportation connections should be integrated in transportation planning.



# Summary and Next Steps

- The Township appreciates your time to review this document we encourage you to participate in upcoming public meetings and surveys found in the following link:

[Official Plan Review - Essa Township](#)

- The issues and opportunities heard to date will evolve as more input is received from residents and stakeholders. Future discussions resulting from this document will form the basis of the new Official Plan framework and future policy directions.







## Learn More – Project Web Page and Survey Link:

[Official Plan Review - Essa Township](#)

