

OFAtoday

2014 Edition

Annual Update from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Cultivating our Future:
Moving Ontario
Agriculture Forward





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■ Editor's Note



Neil Currie
General Manager
Ontario Federation
of Agriculture

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is very proud to provide this 2014 issue of OFA Today. The publication highlights key farm issues addressed by your farm organization over the past year, features the work of our Member Service Representatives (MSRs) and covers the benefit program that helps reduce your business costs.

OFA is Ontario's largest general farm organization. We have grown over the past year with

more than 1,900 new supporters signing up as part of the Farm Business Registration process. OFA's members and supporters recognize that their farm organization works hard to deliver what farm businesses need.

It has been a busy and productive year. While Ontario struggled with the effects of the 2102 drought, OFA and our colleagues across Ontario and the prairies battled the winter elements to deliver needed hay to more than 300 livestock farmers. As 2013 drew to a close, OFA worked to secure economical natural gas throughout rural Ontario.

We addressed day-to-day farm issues through the support of our MSRs, reduced costs for tire fees and continued our work on the development of bio-economy markets for Ontario farmers.

The diversity of OFA's work is as broad as that of our sector. Agriculture affects and is affected by more government ministries than any other industry. And the scope of our work certainly attests to that.

Ontario agriculture produces more than 200 commodities and high quality food, and our industry is a significant growth engine for Ontario's economy. Agriculture boosts the vitality of our rural communities and provides food sector jobs across the province. To grow, we must develop and adopt new technology, and adapt our production in the face of changing consumer needs and changing weather patterns.

The front cover of OFA Today conveys some of these changing needs. As a generation of farmers prepares to move on, the Ontario farming community must move forward to ensure sustainable and profitable farms. We will accomplish this through the use of technology, new knowledge, experience and sweat.

At OFA, we want to work together to fulfill our mandate. And we encourage you to get involved, working with fellow farmers towards common goals that benefit agriculture.

Sincerely,

Neil Currie
General Manager and Editor

OFA Today is published for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 37,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic, farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy recommendations, lobby efforts, community representation, media relations and more. OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario's farmers and is Ontario's voice of the farmer.

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OFA

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growing awareness

■ President's Welcome



Mark Wales
President
Ontario Federation
of Agriculture

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) continues to improve as an effective and efficient organization, responsibly representing the interests of Ontario farmers and rural families. Our profile as an organization and as an industry has never been greater. OFA is effectively engaging all of Ontario's political parties and working with multiple ministries in pursuing sound public policy for our membership.

Our agenda has, at its core, remained relatively stable.

We continue to lobby for fewer, but more effective, regulations and better programs so our industry can continue to drive Ontario's economy. We work with our partners in commodities, the processing industry and municipalities to make agriculture and rural Ontario the best it can be.

Last year presented a unique set of challenges to Ontario farmers and our organization. And we all adapted as best we could. Excessive rainfall during the growing season in some areas and weather fluctuations in general put insurance top of mind. OFA assisted Agricorp in a member survey about what a forage insurance program should accomplish in Ontario.

Other government programs gained momentum in 2013. Growing Forward 2 was launched and continues to receive applications. OFA encourages members to consider applying for Growing Forward 2 funds. Never before has this much funding been available to individual farmers, processors, organizations and collaborations.

OFA continues to work with the Open for Business forum and claimed a victory in changing the tax classification of grain elevators from industrial to commercial.

Having the Premier of Ontario also being the Minister of Agriculture and Food certainly raised the profile of our industry in 2013. The province is recognizing the agri-food industry as a valuable economic engine and primary job creator that contributes more than \$34 billion to the Ontario economy and employs more than 700,000 people. All political parties now recognize the key role the agriculture and food sector plays in Ontario – today and in the future.

Ontario's Premier challenged our industry to meet specific growth targets in output and job creation over the next 20 years. And we told our political leaders last fall at Queen's Park, we are prepared to grow but need the tools for growth. To meet the Premier's growth challenge, Ontario agri-food needs:

- Protection of our best farmland, regardless of its location
- A sound and supportive regulatory environment
- Labour laws that do not harm our competitiveness
- Natural gas across rural Ontario to provide energy at competitive prices
- Development of the newly emerging bio-economy

OFA took these messages to our first annual Field Day, hosted at Armstrong Manor Farm in Peel County in August, 2013. Our theme was Cultivating our Future. MPPs and their staff joined OFA on the farm to learn about food production and agriculture's significant contribution to our economy. Many of our commodity partners also joined us at the event, helping to educate political guests about the diversity of the agri-food industry.

The minority government situation in Ontario has created both challenges and opportunities when it comes to getting things done. The passing of the *Local Food Act* brought renewed interest in ensuring more local food is used in government institutions.

I want to thank all our members for their patience while OFA dealt with the Farm Business Registration (FBR) issues – working through the new FBR process for 2013 that required a two-step process to become an OFA member. I'm proud to report that we added more than 1,900 farm business registrations to our organization in 2013.

Our staff and Board of Directors have worked hard to raise OFA's profile, deliver great programs to our members and advocate for the future of agriculture in Ontario. I thank everyone for their contribution to our success as an organization.

The time is right to make agriculture and rural Ontario the best it can be. We look for your continued support in achieving this goal as we truly are in this together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mark Wales". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent.

Mark Wales
President

■ Legislative Roundup

Here's an overview of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's lobbying events and activities during 2013

OFA Government Activities

OFA's fundamental purpose is to secure sound public policy to enable sustainable and prosperous farming across Ontario. And that requires a lot of government relations work. Government relations efforts take many different forms, but one of the most effective is face-to-face contact with our politicians.

Board members regularly meet and speak with provincial politicians at formal and informal events throughout the year. In addition, OFA has found it very worthwhile to organize and host events to take the farm message to our MPPs.

OFA board members speak to Ontario MPPs and their staff at OFA's inaugural Field Day

At Queen's Park

Over the past year, OFA has been very active meeting MPPs on their turf and on ours. Directors met with each party caucus at Queen's Park to present OFA's agenda within the context of each political party's own platform. This type of meeting engages the whole caucus and helps them collectively focus on the policies and programs Ontario farmers need, and always generates lively discussions.

Twice a year, OFA organizes a full day of activity at Queen's Park, meeting one-on-one with MPPs and ministers in their offices. These meetings provide the opportunity to directly deliver our messages and gain valuable insight into what politicians are thinking, how they perceive agriculture and how they receive our ideas. We focus on three or four key issues and leave material behind for more information. Our Queen's Park meetings are an effective way to remind MPPs about the importance of farming. But nothing hits home our message better than having politicians out to our "office" – our farms.



■ Legislative Roundup



On the farm: MPP Field Day

In August 2013, OFA hosted MPPs and their staff members at our first annual OFA Field Day on the Armstrong family farm, north of Brampton, ON. The farm is close enough to Toronto to enable an easy trip and was an excellent classroom for teaching our political leaders about agriculture.

Learning stations were set up on the farm to teach guests about modern farming technology, the potential of the emerging bio-economy, the economic importance of agriculture and, of course, the milking operation. Commodity organizations were also on hand to speak about their products, markets, technology and economic impacts.

The event was very popular. We know the MPPs in attendance will be recommending the 2014 effort to their colleagues – both rural and urban MPPs. The staff that work most closely with the politicians providing advice felt it was well worth their time to learn about food production and about Ontario's largest industry, agriculture. We're sure they will be back with their colleagues at our 2014 event.

Our 2013 theme for both the OFA Field Day and the Queen's Park events was Cultivating our Future. This speaks to the need to create sound public policy now to ensure a sustainable and profitable farm economy in the future. It also speaks to the importance of cultivating our relationships with policy makers. To be successful, OFA must continue to work with governments of all stripes to help develop and implement sound public policy. That is the essence of government relations.

Ontario makes history for farmers and food banks

By The Ontario Association of Food Banks

In November 2013, the Ontario government made history by becoming the first province in Canada to provide a tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural product to local food banks. Beginning January 2014, farmers in Ontario will receive a 25% tax credit based on the fair market value of the product they donate to local food banks and community meal programs.



Under the new *Local Food Act*, Ontario farmers are now eligible for a 25% tax credit for products donated to local food banks and community meal programs

This tax credit is groundbreaking. Farmers deserve and need a tax credit to help cover the costs of harvesting and transporting product to food banks. Ontario farmers have always been generous, donating thousands of pounds of fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs and dairy products to our provincial food bank network. The passing of this tax credit demonstrates the Ontario government has officially recognized food banks and the important role they play in providing nutrition and food security for thousands of people in this province every day.

Food banks and meal programs provide an essential service by feeding over 400,000 individuals each month in Ontario. No other province in Canada provides compensation for food donations to hunger

relief organizations. Outside of some grant opportunities, food banks in Ontario are not governmental funded.

Details of the tax credit are still being confirmed by government. All farmers and food producers in Ontario play a vital role in hunger relief. It is imperative this credit be applicable to a broad array of products. As food banks and farmers continue to take on the responsibility of feeding the vulnerable in this province, the government must recognize all of these efforts. The tax credit is a great start.



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■ Legislative Roundup

Agriculture and the minimum wage

In July 2013, an advisory panel established by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) began seeking comments on ways to determine future adjustments to Ontario's minimum wage. More specifically, the goals of the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel were to examine Ontario's current policy on minimum wage and gauge the public's interest on whether changes to the wage rate should be tied to an economic indicator. To get the discussion going, the MOL released a consultation paper with eight key questions where they needed advice.

Together with our commodity partners and the Labour Issues Coordinating Committee (LICC), the OFA developed a written submission and oral presentation to the panel expressing our unique position when it comes to coping with legislated increases to wage levels.

OFA approves of what we believe to be the government's concerns in looking at minimum wage legislation – a genuine interest in addressing poverty reduction. However, in our submission and presentation we argued that viewing increases to minimum wage as a means of fighting the issue of poverty is misguided and that asking employers alone to shoulder this burden is ultimately ineffective. Poverty is a social issue that we believe can be better alleviated through changes to basic personal income tax exemptions, the strengthening of social assistance programs and support for continuing education. We strongly recommended to the panel that government must examine the full range of alternatives before choosing to raise the minimum wage rate.

Good intentions, misguided approach

The agricultural sector is faced with a suite of unique challenges when it comes to legislated wage increases, most notably, an inability to transfer that increased cost of production to our products. When we have dramatic increases to the minimum wage – as was seen in the last round of adjustments in 2010 – the eventual result for agriculture is that jobs and job security are threatened.

It is worth noting that, even if farmers were able to raise prices in response to higher labour costs without loss of market share, the effect would be higher food prices to consumers. This has a regressive impact on those in poverty, since there is clearly no substitute for food.

If minimum wage policy is pursued, OFA supports efforts by the MOL to de-politicize the current ad hoc rate setting process and, as the Minister of Labour has stated, take “steps to ensure that the setting of minimum wage is out of politicians' hands.” We believe tying or indexing the



OFA believes that an increase to minimum wage, creating higher labour costs for Ontario farmers who employ thousands of seasonal and full time farm workers, will directly increase food prices to consumers

minimum wage rate to an economic indicator will help accomplish this goal.

As with other jurisdictions, the OFA supports tying future adjustments to the minimum wage rate to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The OFA believes tying minimum wage to the rate of inflation will lead to relatively predictable adjustments, affording businesses the ability to plan for increased costs of production and allowing employers to forecast future productivity requirements. It can also help to prevent political intrusion into the wage adjustment process that has proven disruptive to our industry.

While we support the idea of using the CPI to adjust minimum wage rates, the OFA does have reservations. CPI is a general measure of inflation, but not necessarily indicative of the provincial economy as a whole. CPI does not take into account unemployment levels or an employer's ability to pay, especially those industries like agriculture that function primarily in a global market.

Ontario farmers have a long tradition of helping those less fortunate, but we believe all of society should be engaged in supporting low-income households and reducing poverty. OFA believes using minimum wage policy to alleviate poverty is bad public policy and will be counterproductive.

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■ Legislative Roundup

Farm Property Assessment Review

OFA brings recommendations on farm property tax assessments to government

In October 2013, the Ministry of Finance held a review of the most recent farm property assessment conducted by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). OFA was invited to make a presentation to outline key changes needed to reduce the tax burden on Ontario farmers. Representing the Ministry of Finance in this meeting was MPP Steven Del Duca, (Vaughan) Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance. OFA presented key points on farmland valuation, farm property tax classification and a recommended policy on value-added activities.

Farmland valuation

The most recent assessment of farmland valuation conducted by MPAC saw huge increases in farmland valuation that far outpaced the increases in the residential class. The result is a massive increase in the property tax bill of Ontario farmers to be phased in over the next four years.

The current method MPAC uses is a “farmer-to-farmer” sales approach to value farmland for tax assessment purposes. The OFA pointed out that the scarcity of farmer-to-farmer sales poses a serious challenge to MPAC’s valuation methodology. Fewer than five qualified farmer-to-farmer sales occurred between March 2007 and December 2011 within 108 of the 228 geographical bands MPAC uses to conduct its farm valuation assessment.

To alleviate problems with the lack of data, the OFA has recommended the value of farmland be capped in geographical bands where the existing values exceed the provincial average. This approach would allow MPAC to continue to use the farmer-to-farmer sales approach but not penalize farmers who receive higher than average assessment increases because of insufficient data. As an example, farmland values in bands would have been reduced during the 2012 reassessment if they exceeded the following provincial average base rates per acre per class:

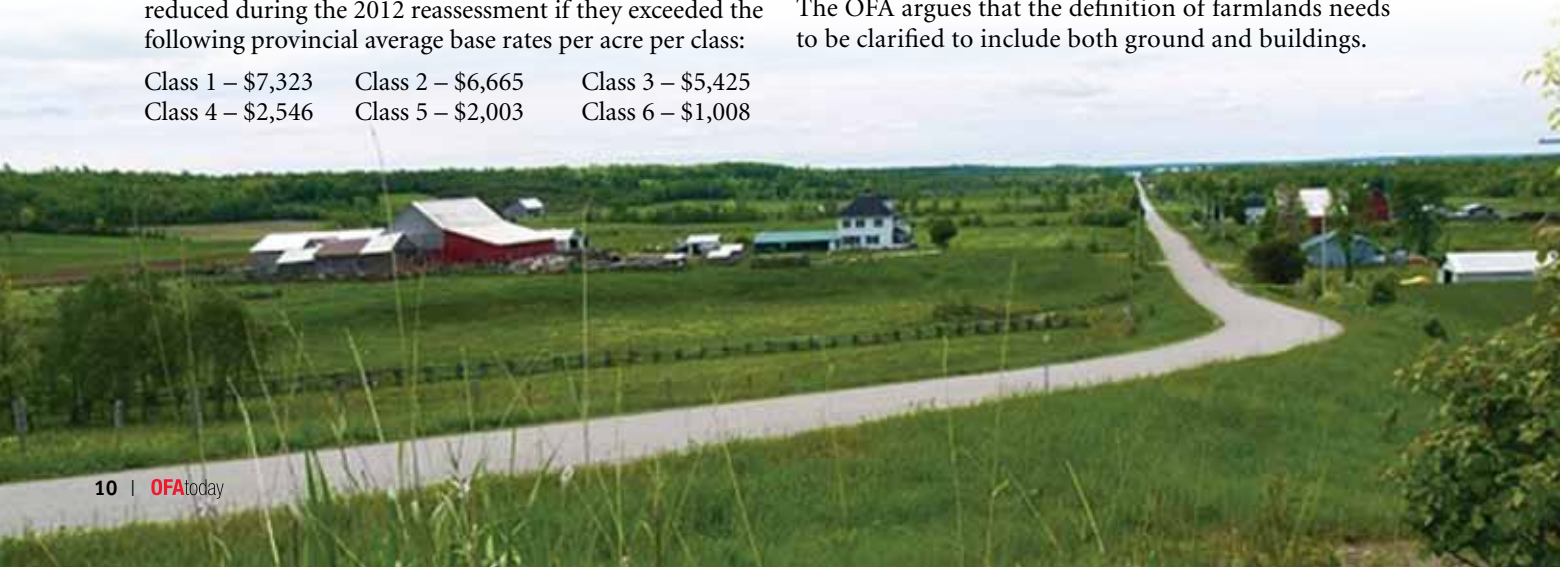
Class 1 – \$7,323	Class 2 – \$6,665	Class 3 – \$5,425
Class 4 – \$2,546	Class 5 – \$2,003	Class 6 – \$1,008

Farm property classification

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) has the discretion to consider late program applications for the farm property class rate program up to December 31 of the taxation year. In most cases, it is not just the application that is late. For example, for a farmer to be eligible for the 2013 farm property class rate program they must have a Farm Business Registration (FBR) number from 2012. The deadline to obtain an FBR was August 2012, so those without an FBR number by this deadline were ineligible for the farm property class rate program in 2013. The OFA has recommended the creation of a formal late application process so OMAF could approve applications with a missing FBR number if the farmer was eligible for the missing FBR number but failed to register. To keep the late process from becoming the main process, the OFA also recommends a late fee be included.

MPAC has the authority to partition a single property into multiple tax classifications. Farm property is classified by the activity it is used for. A farmer cannot currently get an advanced ruling on how their property assessment classification will be affected by implementing a value-added process. The OFA recommended that, upon request, MPAC should advise farmers about how their property assessment classification would change if a specific activity was undertaken by the farm business.

In 2006, there were two decisions made by the Assessment Review Board that accepted MPAC’s interpretation that “farmlands” in section 19(5) of the *Assessment Act* refers only to ground and excludes buildings. This is contrary to a 2004 decision by the Assessment Review Board where farmlands was interpreted as meaning both ground and buildings. The OFA argues that the definition of farmlands needs to be clarified to include both ground and buildings.



OFA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL PROCESS

There is a two-step process now required to become an OFA member in 2014.
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Choose OFA as your accredited farm organization on the 2014 Farm Business Registration form, and send the annual fee (payable to OFA) to Agricorp.

STEP 2

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Watch for your OFA membership agreement in the February 2014 issue of *Better Farming*. There are **three options** for returning your signed agreement to officially become an OFA member, and continue enjoying all the benefits of membership.

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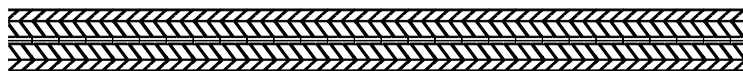
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■ Legislative Roundup

OFA policy on value-added activities

Currently under Section 44 of the Regulation 282/98, facilities used to conduct value-added activities (including farms) are classified in the commercial or industrial property classes. But the land underneath these buildings is valued as farmland under Section 19(5) of the *Assessment Act*. The OFA proposed that property tax treatment of value-added facilities should give special

considerations to products grown in Ontario. The OFA recommended that, if historically, at least 51% of the product is grown by and value-added by the same farmer or farmers, and at least 90% of the product is grown in Ontario, then the facilities should be subject to no more than 25% of the residential property tax rate.

OFA will continue to discuss the implementation of our recommendations with the Ministry of Finance and MPAC.

Rural Ontario needs natural gas infrastructure

Ontario farms and rural businesses depend heavily on sound infrastructure and competitive energy rates. Rural Ontario needs expanded natural gas infrastructure and a rural rate to drive our economy and create jobs. Access to natural gas by farmers and other rural businesses will require the extension of pipelines throughout rural Ontario.

On November 1, 2013 the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) launched a campaign lobbying the provincial government to commit to expanding natural gas infrastructure throughout rural Ontario. The OFA would like to work with government and gas supply companies to create and implement a long-term plan to ensure equitable natural gas access to all Ontarians, including all rural constituents.

The issue of natural gas expansion throughout rural Ontario was also brought to Queen's Park and discussed with MPPs and government officials as part of OFA's Queen's Park lobby day in October 2013.

Expanding natural gas service throughout rural Ontario is the largest economic stimulation the provincial government can provide by adding jobs, enhancing rural economic development, improving infrastructure and saving rural families, farmers and businesses money that can be reinvested into our rural economies. Estimates

suggest lower gas prices can save rural Ontarians more than \$800 million per year.

It is also estimated that providing access to natural gas for 500,000 rural Ontario families will cut energy bills by more than \$1,000 per year per household. Access to natural gas in rural Ontario will also reduce demand on our already burdened electrical supply.

Natural gas is half the cost of electricity and approximately one-third the cost of propane. Currently, natural gas is accessible to less than one-fifth of Ontario farms and less than 20% of rural Ontario homes. Expanding natural gas pipelines to rural Ontario would help farmers reduce the operating costs of heated barns, grain dryers, greenhouses and other facilities. Natural gas is the cleanest, safest and lowest cost heating fuel available. Without access to natural gas, rural Ontario is at a major disadvantage.

In November 2013, OFA encouraged its members to voice their support for this initiative by sending a letter to their MPPs and key decision makers through OFA's lobby website at actnow.ofa.on.ca.

Member support is important to move this initiative forward. The OFA wants a commitment from our provincial government to include this important initiative in the spring 2014 budget.



Bee Health

Ontario's bee population has dropped dramatically over the past few years. The recent decline of the bee population in record numbers is due in large part to a mysterious condition called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). While considerable speculation continues on what's compromising these colonies and leading to increased rates of bee mortality, no single reason has been identified conclusively. However, a recent theory has evolved stating the cause of or a contributor to bee deaths is neonicotinoids, a class of insecticide commonly used in Ontario as seed treatment on corn and soybeans.



The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) maintains its position on the bee mortality issue and has requested PMRA develop sound, science-based solutions that can be appropriately applied by all producers in the agricultural industry.

OFA is working with key industry and government stakeholders on the Ontario Bee Health Working Group, formed by Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food Kathleen Wynne. The group's mandate is to provide recommendations on how to mitigate the potential risk to honey bees from exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides. However, OFA cautions against making rash decisions that could negatively impact agricultural production and distract from identifying the real source of bee decline.

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■ Legislative Roundup

Ontario Tire Stewardship

OFA speaks out against tire recycling fees

Legislated under the *Waste Diversion Act*, the Ontario Tire Stewardship introduced a new recycling fee structure early 2013 for off-road tires (including agricultural tires). Ontario farmers saw fee increases of up to 400%. The fees have since been restructured but negotiations continue to maintain a reasonable fee structure.

Most Canadian provinces require tires used on-road by cars, trucks and buses, as well as those used off-road in farming, mining, forestry, construction, etc. be collected for recycling. Ontario's program is unique as it requires owners of on-road and off-road tires to separately and individually cover the costs of the recycling program.

In Ontario, tire stewards (tire manufacturers or importers) are required to collect and remit tire stewardship fees to Ontario Tire Stewardship (OTS).

OTS was established under the *Waste Diversion Act* (2002) to ensure that 100% of used tires, regardless of their type or use, are recycled. OTS is mandated by the provincial government to recycle tires to their highest possible use, thereby eliminating some common uses for scrap tires, namely tire-derived fuel or tire-derived aggregate. This was a political decision imposed on OTS.

Ontario's tire collection and recycling programs costs are higher than other provinces for three reasons:

- Ontario prohibits fees collected for its on-road tire program to subsidize the costs of its off-road tire program. Every other province allows some form of cross-subsidization.
- Ontario prohibits scrap tires to be used as fuel for cement kilns or power plants. The province does not allow scrap tires to be shipped to a jurisdiction that does permit burning scrap tires. These restrictions increase program costs in Ontario.
- Ontario prohibits scrap tires to be used in a range of civil engineering uses, such as daily landfill cover or tire-derived aggregate used in construction projects.

In response to opposition of a proposed new fee structure, OTS offered to lessen the impact on farmers by combining several of the higher weight, higher fee categories. Agricultural tires in the 70-120 kg and 120-250 kg categories were combined into a single category with a set fee of \$47.04. All agricultural tires over 250 kg were combined into another category with a set fee of \$182.28. It was decided this situation would stand for one year.



OFA lobby successful against tire stewardship fee increases

The OFA responded to the concerns of members and lobbied the provincial government in 2013 about proposed increases in tire recycling fees. As a result of OFA's lobby efforts (actnow.ofa.on.ca) – and working together with OTS and industry stakeholders – a proposal to reclassify agricultural tires was proposed for short-term relief to the estimated 75% of agricultural tires that weigh less than 250 kg. OFA thanks the hundreds of OFA members who engaged in this lobbying effort by sending a letter to their MPP.

Legislated under the *Waste Diversion Act*, the Ontario Tire Stewardship introduced a new recycling fee structure early 2013 for off-road tires (including agricultural tires). Ontario farmers saw fee increases of up to 400%. The fees have since been restructured but negotiations continue to maintain a reasonable fee structure.



Negotiations continue

That one-year period is coming to a close. OTS is obligated to operate on-road and off-road tire programs that are separate and financially self-supporting. OTS initially had an off-road fee schedule that separated the 70-120 kg and 120-250 kg categories in the following manner:

- tires 70-120 kg (154-264 lb.) would likely require a \$47.04 fee
- tires 120-250 kg (264-551 lb.) would likely require a \$117.60 fee

These two categories were combined at the \$47.04 level; a situation we are working to preserve for 2014.

Changes to Ontario's tire recycling programs are difficult, with key program conditions imbedded in legislation. Compounding this is legislation recently introduced to overhaul a number of waste recycling and diversion activities, including tires, through the *Waste Reduction Act*. OFA is seeking the following legislative changes:

- An end to the ban on cross subsidization between on-road and off-road tire programs
- Expanded end-use options for scrap tires, including tire-derived fuel and aggregate
- Open discussion of key program features, such as agricultural tire categories and their associated fees **OFA**



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BENEFIT PROGRAM

We know our members want OFA to be their champion on agricultural issues with the government and public. While advocacy or lobbying is the main benefit OFA delivers, our members are always looking for increased value for their investment in the OFA. That's why OFA continually seeks ways to provide unique and exclusive benefits to our members.

The OFA's Strategic Plan directs us to "enable sustainable and prosperous farms" in Ontario. With the strength of our 37,000 farm businesses, OFA is able to secure and deliver programs with savings for members on farm inputs while supporting the organization's overall strategic direction.

The 2012 OFA member benefit survey showed a strong level of member support and interest in programs that deliver cost savings on farm inputs.

OFA carefully selects and assesses partners to be part of the OFA Benefit Program using criteria established by the OFA Board of Directors. Each program or company partnership must:

- Effectively meet identified member needs
- Enhance the image of the OFA
- Generate revenue for the OFA

The OFA's Benefit Program is designed to deliver tangible savings for members, encourage member recruitment and retention, and provide additional, alternative income for the organization. Our Benefit Program does not pay huge dividends to the organization, but does contribute to costs while achieving the primary goal of benefiting members.

Our current suite of benefit programs and providers includes cost-saving opportunities for financial services, insurance, farm supply, hardware, clothing and communications. The OFA will continue to explore potential opportunities for benefit programs and savings in other areas such as fuel and machinery.

For more information on exclusive OFA member savings and programs, visit www.ofa.on.ca and click on "Benefit Program."



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■ Research Updates

Ontario Farmers Take Water Seriously

Ontario farmers are committed to feeding their neighbours and ensuring Ontarians have access to safe, nutritious, high quality food. This can only be achieved through the responsible use of resources and appropriate support from government. The need to balance feeding our population with environmental sustainability is one Ontario's farmers have been aware of for years. Collectively, farmers strive to ensure a healthy balance of these two important elements, while relying on the provincial government's support to maintain this equilibrium.

Farmers are integral partners in managing the natural environment. They rely on the air, soil and water to conduct their business, and have a vested interest in the sustainability of these resources. Farmers interact intimately with the natural environment every day, and an agricultural perspective to water resource management is critical.

Proposed Great Lakes Protection Act

The proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* is a current water issue that demands an agricultural perspective. This proposed legislation has just passed second reading.

The purpose of this proposed act is to protect and restore the ecological

health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin, and create opportunities for individuals or communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the area. While OFA believes in and supports these objectives, we believe Ontario already has all the regulatory tools necessary to effectively protect our groundwater and surface water resources. We are concerned this act will cause unnecessary duplication and has the potential to be in conflict with existing legislation and regulations. OFA believes it would be more beneficial to enforce the existing regulations than create another system that has the potential to introduce unintended conflict.

Permit to Take Water

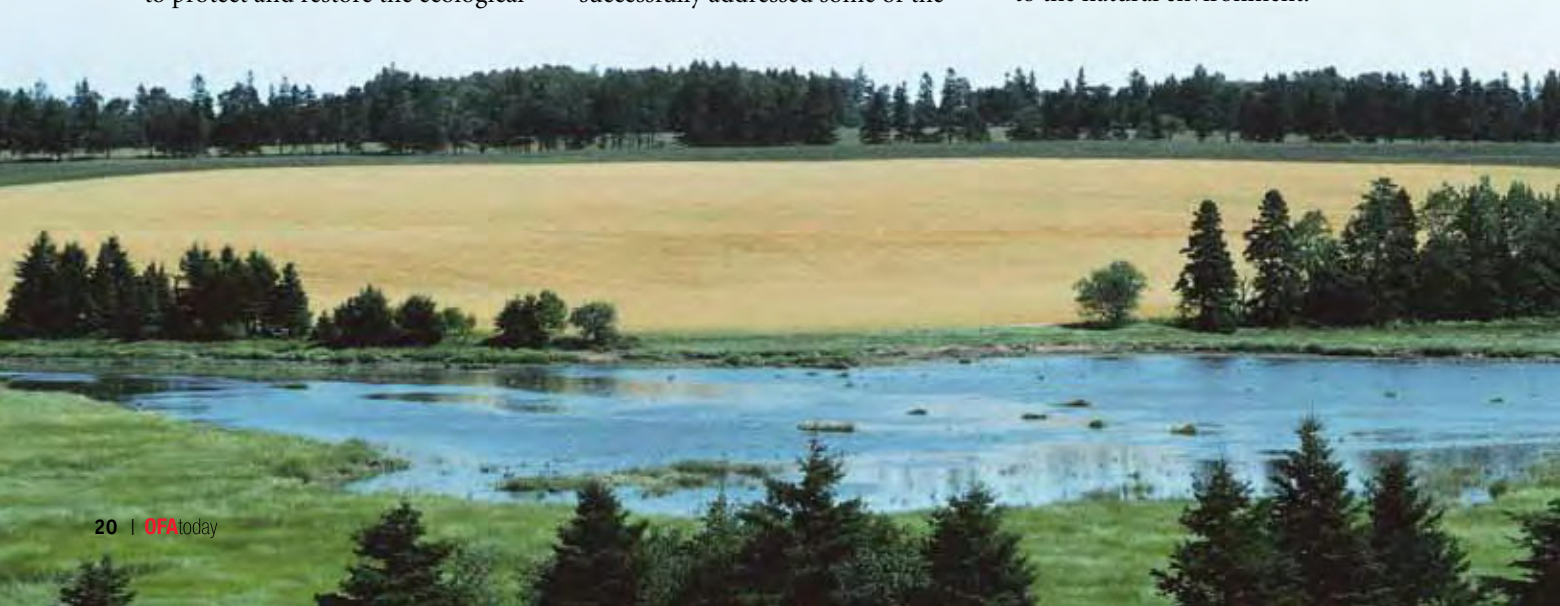
Another very important tool for managing water in the province is the Permit to Take Water (PTTW) program, to regulate the taking and use of water by municipalities and industry across Ontario. A permit is required by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) for circumstances that involve removing more than 50,000 litres of water per day from watershed or groundwater sources. Approximately 63% of all PTTW permits issued in Ontario are for agricultural purposes.

By working with the MOE, OFA has successfully addressed some of the

issues faced by farmers in obtaining or renewing their PTTW permits. OFA ensured guidance materials were made available to those responsible for processing PTTW applications and renewals to provide a timely method for obtaining permits. Information specific to the agricultural sector was also made available to ease the process of completing a PTTW application. There is more work to be done to make the program more successful.

The OFA would like a simplified renewal process across the province for Permits to Take Water to gain efficiencies for both the MOE and farmers applying for permit renewals. A simplified process would help the PTTW program meet its objectives and ensure a simple, effective process for compliance for farmers and the MOE. Currently, the MOE West Central Region is using this streamlined permit renewal approach. OFA would like to see it used across the province.

Ontario's agricultural community is acutely aware of its environmental stewardship role and has made significant management changes in the past 15 years. Ontario farmers are committed to continuous improvement on their farms and continue to demonstrate a proactive approach to protecting Ontario's resources, including water. We need a realistic, balanced approach to meet the needs of agriculture and the biological demands of its products, with appropriate consideration given to the natural environment.



■ Research Updates

Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program

By Katie Burt, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

The Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program (SARFIP) continues, offering new cost-share opportunities for farm-based stewardship projects like improved stream crossings, fencing, habitat restoration, tree planting, invasive species removal and other on-farm Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The program is funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Canada and administered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA). SARFIP was reshaped in 2013 with a unique three-level cost-

share structure tailored to its users and provides farm businesses with the ability to decide how willing they are to research and identify Species at Risk (SAR).

“What the funding levels do for this program is give the decision-making tools to the farmer, allowing them to figure out where their interests lie,” says Christine Schmalz, senior environmental programs coordinator. “For OSCIA, categorizing projects this way means there are broad opportunities for farmers across the landscape, with the focus on those that directly support species at risk.”

- Level one funding offers 30% cost-share to a maximum of \$2,500 to

implement any one of the eligible SARFIP BMPs. Applicants are not required to have SAR on their property to participate in the program at this level.

- Level two funding at 50% cost-share to a maximum of \$5,000 connects



The SARFIP offers cost-share funding for projects like improved fencing



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more closely with SAR. Applicants can elevate their projects to this level by identifying if their farm is located in a federal SAR priority area using the map provided at www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/programs/species_at_risk.htm or determining if the farm is located in a key habitat area for provincial SAR.

- Level three funding offers opportunities for applicants who have SAR on their property and are directly addressing the species' habitat needs. At this level, applicants can access 80% cost-share to a maximum of \$15,000.

OSCIA approved several level one, two and three projects in 2013.

A shelterbelt and windbreak plan was approved at level one, enhancing the connection between existing woodlots and reducing soil loss due to wind erosion. A livestock-fencing project that will keep livestock from entering a waterway, protecting the shoreline and reducing agricultural impacts on water quality, was approved at level two because the farm is located in the federal SAR priority area. And a cash cropper in southwestern Ontario was approved for level three funding for a project aimed at combating invasive species located in an existing woodlot, where several types of SAR are known to exist.

Farmers can apply for three levels of funding through the SARFIP to implement on-farm Best Management Practices.

Farm businesses interested in SARFIP are welcome to apply via email or mail. The program is a first-come, first-serve with applications accepted until the existing budget is fully allocated. Any questions can be directed to Claim Reviewer, Brad Carberry at 226-979-2465.

For more information, visit the SARFIP website at www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/programs/species_at_risk.htm

Agricultural Land Preservation

Growing populations will place greater demands on the world's food producing lands

Ontario covers a vast and diverse area, 1.07 million sq. km (415,589 mi²), with distinctly differing geographic regions. But only 5% of Ontario's land base (12 million acres) is suitable for agriculture – Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 soils.

From the 2006 to 2011 census, there was an alarming decline in the number of farms (57,211 down to 51,560) and the area being farmed (down 259,890 hectares). Regardless

of the reasons for the loss, Ontario cannot sustain annual losses of 51,522 hectares while continuing to maintain its ability to produce a high volume of food, fibre and fuel. Loss of productive soil for any reason is simply not sustainable.

Population growth doesn't equal loss of farmland

Currently there are almost 7 billion people in the world. The United Nations projects that number will rise to more than 9 billion by 2050 – a 28% increase in less than 40 years. Ontario's population is also projected to grow. Based on

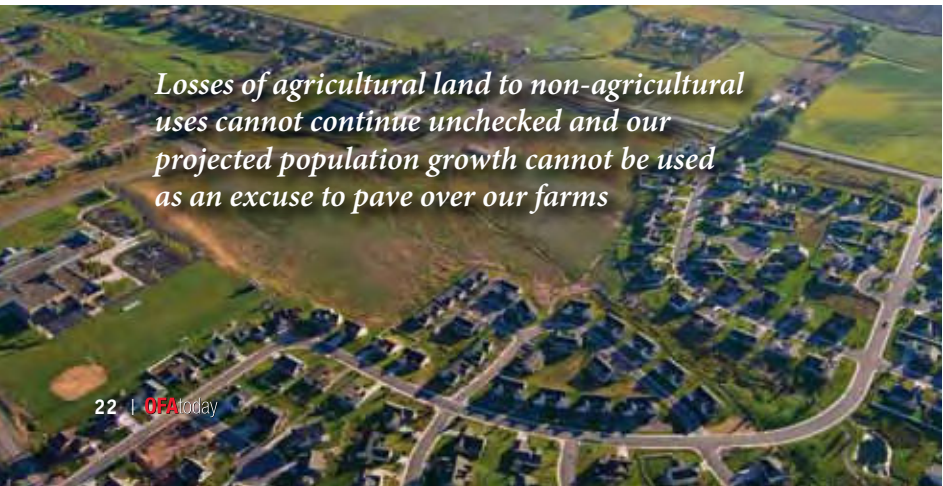
Ministry of Finance projections, Ontario's population will grow from 13.5 million in 2012 to 17.4 million in 2036 – an increase of more than 28% in 24 years.

Feeding our own province and feeding the world on an ever diminishing supply of productive agricultural land will be a formidable challenge. Ontario needs to retain as much of its limited arable land as possible in agricultural production. We must ensure that actions and policies do not limit our ability to produce food, fibre and fuel.

Losses of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses cannot continue unchecked and our projected population growth cannot be used as an excuse to pave over our farms. Ontario needs to focus urban growth where it will not consume prime agricultural land.

Land use planning

As the stewards of highly productive agricultural land, Ontario farmers have a keen interest in ensuring public policy does not jeopardize or destroy this resource. Ontario's farmers require and deserve the assurance that neither urban expansion nor the presence of



Losses of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses cannot continue unchecked and our projected population growth cannot be used as an excuse to pave over our farms

aggregates on or adjacent to a farm will be the end of that farm.

Ontario has a complex network of land use planning policies. The overarching piece is the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), which applies province wide. Additionally, we have several other plans that apply to specifically defined areas of the province, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. All of these plans contain policies intended to limit the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. Their success in achieving long-term protection of agricultural land from development is debatable.

OFA believes the provincial definition of prime agricultural land should be expanded to include Canada Land Inventory Class 4 soils, along with Class 1, 2 and 3 soils. We also advocate that aggregate extraction be prohibited from Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 soils and Specialty Crop Lands.

We expect the province will begin reviews of the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation and Greenbelt Plans in 2015. We are preparing in advance for that review by developing recommendations to these three plans that will, from our perspective, ensure the long-term protection of our prime agricultural lands for farming. We will also advocate that policies intended to protect natural heritage features (woodlots, wetlands, wildlife habitat, etc.) from development do not unintentionally constrain farmers endeavouring to fully use the productive capability of their fields to produce the food, fibre and fuel we need.

It has been said that the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago and the second best time is now. When it comes to agricultural land preservation, we say that the best time to protect our agricultural land was 20 years ago and the second best time is now.



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■ Research Updates

Protection of Property and Nuisance Wildlife

What can farmers do?

We all enjoy seeing wildlife in their natural habitat. But when wildlife numbers increase to the point where they turn to crops, livestock or poultry for food, then farmers ask, “What can I do?”

In Ontario, your options depend on the species of wildlife causing the trouble.

Section 31 of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* provides for the protection or defence of property from wildlife. Under Section 31, if you believe that wildlife is damaging or is about to damage your property, you may, on your own land, harass or kill the offending wildlife. These provisions apply to all property owners, not just farmers. The threat must either be immediate, or about to happen. You cannot simply shoot wildlife because it is there. Although a hunting licence is not required to protect your property in this situation, you do require a firearms licence. Your “own land” includes rented land.

These provisions apply to all wildlife except those on the endangered species list – moose, caribou, elk or white-tailed deer. The prohibition against harassing, capturing or killing an endangered species needs no explanation. Moose, caribou, white-tailed deer and elk are “big game” species, each with a regulated hunting season, the likely reason for their exclusion.

Big game

Farmers facing white-tailed deer damage to field crops, vegetable crops or orchards can apply to their local Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) District Office for Deer Removal Authorization (DRA). A DRA allows you to harass or kill up to 10 deer outside the normal deer hunting season. If damage persists, additional



authorizations can be issued. A valid Farm Business Registration (FBR) number and ownership or occupancy (rental) of the farm where the deer removal will occur is required. If you are unable to remove the deer yourself, you can hire anyone with a valid hunting licence to act on your behalf as your agent.

Farmers suffering elk damage can apply to their local MNR District Office for an Authorization for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk, which gives the farmer permission to harass or kill nuisance elk damaging or about to damage agricultural property. For elk damage, agricultural property includes standing crops, stored feed and farm fences.

If you are unable to harass, capture or kill wildlife damaging or about to damage your property, you can use an agent to act on your behalf. A number of people are automatically authorized to act as your agent – licenced hunters (H1 Outdoors Card), licenced trappers, members of your immediate family, persons whose business is nuisance wildlife removal, municipal employees responsible for wildlife control or Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals employees.

If you are unable to find an agent from the list above, there are two additional types of agents available under the act:

1. A named individual agent – tied to a specific property, usually a 30-day

appointment, and must be able to be licensed as a hunter. In the case of bears, where the response time is critical, authorization can be done over the phone.

2. A term agent – authorized to deal with all the nuisance wildlife (bears, raccoons, etc.) in a defined area, for example a specific property, concession or township.

Contact MNR for further information on these two options.

Other wildlife nuisances

For all other wildlife, including wild turkeys, you can take reasonable action to protect your property – including crops, livestock, poultry or honey bees – from predation, by harassing or killing wildlife damaging or about to damage your property.

If Canada geese pose a problem, you must contact the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). Although Canada geese are protected under federal law, farmers can obtain a permit from the CWS to use “acceptable deterrent techniques”, such as sterilizing eggs or discharging firearms to protect their crops. Contact the CWS Permits Officer at 905-336-4464 or wildlife.ontario@ec.gc.ca to obtain an Application for a Migratory Bird Damage Permit – Agriculture. Processing the authorization can take a couple of weeks, so apply before the geese are expected to return to your fields.

In Ontario there is a ban on hunting and trapping wolves and coyotes in the 39 townships immediately around Algonquin Park. There is also a closed season and a limit of two per hunter for hunting wolves and coyotes in central and northern Ontario, roughly north of the Severn River, Bancroft and Pembroke. Check with your local MNR District Office to determine if these restrictions apply to your farm. Livestock farmers throughout Ontario can shoot wolves and coyotes in defence of property.

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Nevertheless, if your farm is north of the Severn River, Bancroft and Pembroke, you are required to report this to MNR.

Similarly, when bears are shot in defence of any property in Ontario, you are required to notify MNR. Killing certain specially protected raptors (e.g. hawks, falcons) and fur-bearing mammals in defence of property must also be reported to MNR.

Allowing hunting on your farm during the open seasons can help reduce wildlife damage. Encourage your neighbours to allow hunting on their property. In some instances, trapping may be a viable solution. Your MNR District Office can provide a list of licenced trappers who take care of nuisance wildlife removal.

OFA believes that a municipal “no discharge of firearms bylaw” does not apply when using a firearm to protect your property.

Since July 2011, the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program provides enhanced compensation to farmers for wildlife damage to livestock, poultry or honey bees killed or injured by predators. The program applies to a broader range of predators and farmed animals than before. You must provide a premises ID plus a current FBR number or other approved documentation including that issued by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food for new or retired farmers, a religious exemption or a confirmation letter from the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario. In the case of bee damage, a beekeeper ID under the *Bees Act* is required.

Unfortunately, there is currently no comparable compensation program for wildlife damage to crops. OFA is committed to seeing an effective crop damage compensation program implemented.

You must be licenced to use a firearm in the protection of property. Firearms and ammunition must be stored in accordance with the law. However, in areas where it is legal to discharge a firearm, an unloaded and unlocked shotgun or rifle can be temporarily kept close at hand for predator control. The ammunition must be stored separately or locked away.

For further information on defence of property from nuisance wildlife, contact your local MNR District Office, your OFA Member Service Representative or OFA's Guelph office at 1-800-668-3276.



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■ Research Updates

Mandatory Awareness Training

By Dean Anderson, Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

Four essential facts to counter misinformation

“There’s a lot of misinformation about the proposed mandatory health and safety awareness training for workers and supervisors,” according to Kirsi Henry, Workplace Safety & Prevention Services consultant. The misinformation involves compliance requirements and deadlines. Henry is concerned the misinformation is distracting agricultural operations, whether the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* applies to them or not, from the purpose behind this training, and the broader benefits it can offer business.

The truth about health and safety awareness training

Based on current information, there are four basic facts about the proposed training:

- 1. In late 2012, the Ministry of Labour released for consultation a proposed regulation** that would make specific training mandatory for all workplaces covered under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The proposal indicated that awareness training for workers and supervisors would be first. Other mandatory training would follow.
- 2. No compliance deadline has been set.** The ministry must first file the regulation and publish it in the *Ontario Gazette*. Early 2014 is a possibility, but the regulation may contain a later date for compliance.
- 3. Courses are not expected to be part of the requirements.** Instead, the ministry has already published



free, downloadable worker and supervisor workbooks and companion employer guides to help workplaces meet the proposed requirements.

- 4. The awareness training will help employers meet existing obligations, rather than impose new obligations.** Sandra Miller, WSPS’s vice president, Innovation & Knowledge Mobilization, describes awareness training as an extension of the act’s general duty clause for employers, “It isn’t extra. It’s already mandatory. The Ministry of Labour is just providing employers with more tools to help employers deliver the training successfully.”

The proposed training

According to the draft regulation, **workers and supervisors** would require training on the following:

- workers’ and supervisors’ rights and responsibilities under the act
- roles of workplace parties, health and safety representatives, and joint health and safety committees
- roles of the Ministry of Labour, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
- and health and safety partners such as WSPS

Workers would also receive training on:

- hazard recognition
- right to be informed of hazards

- an employer’s obligation to provide information and instruction to workers about controlled products as required under Regulation 860 (WHMIS)

- latency and illness related to occupational disease

Supervisors would also receive training on hazard recognition, assessment, control and evaluation; resources; and other sources of assistance.

What’s expected of employers

The regulation would require employers to:

- provide basic health and safety training to workers and supervisors already in place, and new workers and supervisors who have not already completed an awareness training program
- maintain records of training completion to demonstrate compliance

Awareness training resources

The Ministry of Labour has free, downloadable resources in place now to help employers meet the requirements or assess their existing training. Find out more at www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/prevention/awareness.php

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services offers a range of resources to help all workplace parties fulfill their roles and responsibilities under the act. Contact Customer Care for more information: 1.877.494.WSPS (9777) or customercare@wsps.ca **OFA**

■ Around OFA

MSR Milestones

Best wishes Gertie



Gertie Blake

After 26 years of steadfast service to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and our members, Gertie Blake, Member Service Representative western region manager, retired December 31, 2013. Gertie says working with OFA gave her great satisfaction. "I had the opportunity to work with wonderful people, and know that I could be of real and practical help to farmers, the salt of the earth, whom I admire and respect." OFA thanks Gertie for her years of services and genuine dedication to Ontario's farmers.

Michel marks 40 years with OFA



Michel Bourgon,
OFA Member
Service
Representatives
Manager for the
eastern and
northern regions

The year was 1973, and Michel Bourgon was hired as the OFA's first Individual Service Member representing the eastern region of Ontario, including Glengarry, Prescott, Russell, Stormont and Dundas counties.

"At the time, we had roughly 50 members in Glengarry, 30 in Prescott, 30 in Russell, 40 in Stormont and 100 in Dundas," says Bourgon. "There were only a few hundred members in the region at that time and now we have a few thousand."

In the early 1970's OFA had less than 10,000 members across the province.

Today, OFA represents more than 37,000 farm families in Ontario. Bourgon was promoted to his current post as Member Service Representatives manager for the eastern and northern regions in 1987.

Having been with the OFA for 40 years, Bourgon has seen many aspects of the organization evolve and notes the members' use of technology and accessibility to information as one of the greatest changes. "After all," he says, "with the evolution of farming comes the evolution of technology."

Working with the OFA for 40 years has provided Bourgon with the opportunity to meet with farmers, develop personal relationships and build trust with members. "I'm still the first point of contact for a lot of members because of the relationships I've built and the number of farmers I've met over the years," says Bourgon.

Bourgon says his biggest satisfaction working with OFA comes from the smaller services he's been able to provide for some farmers. His approach is to listen to members and whenever possible, make the extra effort to support them.

Hurray for HayEast



HayEast 2012 saw 10,000 bales of hay transported to more than 350 farmers in Ontario and Quebec

HayEast 2012 was successful in transporting a total of 10,000 bales to well over 350 livestock producers in Ontario and Quebec.

HayEast 2012, most notably known for its "farmers helping farmers" motto, officially wrapped up June 5, 2013. The volunteer-run program saw farmers, truckers, donors, individual companies and governments donate time,

money and hay following a severe drought that devastated field crops and pastures on many farms across Ontario and in parts of Quebec during the summer of 2012.

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United Farmers of Ontario – A Part of OFA's History



A restored photo of the 1917 convention of the United Farmers of Ontario, donated to OFA by OFA member Grant Collins from Ripley, ON, was presented to the OFA at the 2013 annual general meeting and convention



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Drew Spoelstra

New to the board effective November 2013 is Drew Spoelstra (Zone 3)

Proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act

The OFA supports the intentions of Ontario's proposed *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* to provide more transparency and accountability by not-for-profit corporations to their members. But we feel strongly that it encroaches on the rights that OFA members value. Specifically, the OFA is concerned with the proposed elimination of geographic-based elections. If directors were elected by all voting members at an annual meeting, as the act proposes, we would lose geographic representation and the ability of members to vote for a director in their area. This is an important issue for OFA members. OFA has some specific ideas for how to address this, and other unintended challenges with the act, and will continue addressing these with MPPs and policy makers. **OFA**

Farm News

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OFA's Board of Directors



Back row (left to right): Peggy Brekfeld, Ralph Brodie, Brent Royce, Joe Dickenson, Rejean Pommainville, Mark Reusser, Eleanor Renaud, Peter Lambrick, Bruce Buttar, Louis Roesch. **Front row:** Larry Freeman, Don McCabe, Mark Wales, Debra Pretty-Straathof, Keith Currie, Paul Wettlaufer. **Absent:** Bruce Webster, Larry Davis

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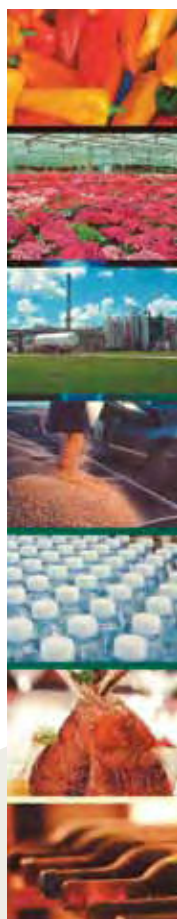
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ONTARIO'S ECONOMIC ENGINE

As farmers, we know the importance of agriculture to our family and our community. Here are impressive numbers about how Ontario's agri-food sector is fueling the economy.

Primary agriculture – on the farm

\$13.7B

Agriculture contributes \$13.7 billion to Ontario's annual GDP



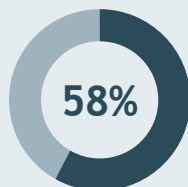
158,000 jobs are generated by the farm sector

\$8.1B

\$8.1 billion in wages and salaries are supported by Ontario farms

\$12B

Ontario farms spend almost \$12 billion on farm inputs

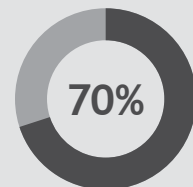


58% of those jobs are located in rural areas

\$1.4B

Ontario's farm sector generates \$1.4 billion in provincial tax revenues

Along the value chain



More than 70% of Ontario farm products remain within the province

\$21,300,000,000

Ontario's food and beverage processors contributed \$21.3 billion to the province's GDP in 2012

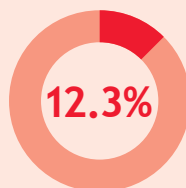


Food processing directly employs more than 91,000 workers across Ontario and more than 193,000 secondary jobs in other areas of the economy

Rural Ontario – in the community



Rural Ontario is home to 70% of Ontario's farm sector employment



The farm sector is a driving force behind the province's rural economy accounting for 12.3% of rural Ontario GDP

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Our industry needs more advocates

To reach its **full potential**, agriculture needs everyone in the industry to speak up and speak positively.

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