

OFAtoday

2015 Edition

Annual Update from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture



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diverse and dynamic
industry forward

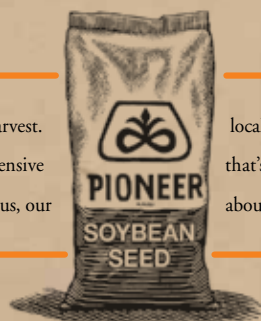
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OFA Today is published for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 37,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic, farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to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



Neil Currie
General Manager, Ontario
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The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is very pleased, once again, to bring you our annual *OFA Today* publication. *OFA Today* informs our valued members of our activities over the past year while providing a glimpse at our direction for the coming year.

Over the past year OFA adopted the theme "Growing Ontario" to capture the intent of the policies and programs we are working towards on behalf of Ontario farmers. Growing Ontario is about ensuring our agricultural resources – our land, soil and water – are protected and improved while we continue developing our production capacity and the ability to feed more people.

Growing Ontario is also our challenge. It is our call to the government and our members to work collaboratively to make sure farming flourishes in Ontario, while protecting our environment for future generations.

Ontario agriculture is diverse. In producing more than 200 commodities and high quality food, agriculture is also a significant growth engine for the Ontario economy. It is a means of boosting the vitality of our rural communities and providing food sector jobs across the province. To grow we will need to develop and adopt technology, and adjust our production in the face of changing consumer needs and fluctuating weather patterns. Our industry will need to learn how to do new things.

In this edition of *OFA Today*, you will read about efforts to protect our farmland by working with the government to address concerns about aggregates and farmland preservation. This is a constant struggle given the pressures of growth and fierce competition for land, particularly near the Greater Toronto Area. However, if farming in Ontario is to grow, we will need to protect this base and our limited land resource.

The OFA's focus has also included ways and means to enable our farm and food industry to be more competitive, enabling the growth of markets and job creation. Our initiative to have natural gas across rural Ontario exemplifies this work. Competitive energy in the form of gas, or more competitively priced electricity is a crucial input in modern farming. A natural gas network will be a game changer for Ontario farm and rural businesses.

The OFA's work lies in not only developing policies and programs to promote growth, but also in working with government to secure these tools. Representing the interests of farm members at Queen's Park is a very important and necessary part of the OFA's work. The 2014 provincial election results translate to years of majority government, enabling a focus on OFA's agenda.

We hope you, our OFA members, will find time to read through this publication. It is a valuable synopsis of the work OFA does on your behalf, all year long. We also summarized what you have told us in the past year through our member surveys and your activities in advocacy.

Member feedback is the foundation of any member-driven organization like OFA. We hope you find this publication valuable in learning more about OFA activities and programs, such as our benefits, and offer your feedback. We welcome your comments, questions or concerns. Please feel free to get in touch about what you read in *OFA Today*, on our website or in other OFA materials.

Sincerely

Neil Currie,
Editor
neil.currie@ofa.on.ca

■ President's Welcome



Don McCabe
President, Ontario
Federation of Agriculture

Welcome to the 2015 edition of *OFA Today* magazine. This is my first opportunity to THANK YOU for the opportunity to serve as your President for the 2014/2015 term.

As farming experiences go, the year 2014 will be a memorable one for all Ontario farmers. Mother Nature threw many a curve ball throughout the year. Every farm operation had to deal with the challenges of the weather. Throw on

top the declining prices for some commodities and skyrocketing increases after years of dismal returns for others, and all one can say is, "Welcome to my farming world!" With 2015, we'll all take another opportunity to procure our livelihood from the best profession in the world.

The goal of every Ontario farmer is to take care of their family, their farm and their animals. The rich history evident on every back road in this province is a testament to the pride and honour of being a steward of the land. At the front of the majority of those farms, it is a choice made, and honour given, to have an OFA gate sign prominently displayed.

The OFA's mission statement is to enable prosperous and sustainable farms. To achieve this mission, it means tackling a number of issues of importance to our members. Some are dealt with rapidly, and others are ongoing for years until the opportunity arises to complete the job. This edition of *OFA Today* will highlight some of those completed and ongoing activities.

Part of the job description of the OFA is to be your constant monitor, guardian and translator to governments about the needs of Ontario farmers for their prosperity. For example, last year Premier Wynne released the mandate letters sent to all Ministers. Over the remaining term of this government, these letters offer a view into the directions and goals this government wants to achieve. The OFA has reviewed these documents to see where alignment is possible to gain support for Ontario farmers, or whether changes are necessary to achieve better results. To be complete, it also means introducing the needs of our membership for action not proposed under the mandate letters.

Society as a whole is becoming even more distant to its agricultural roots. The actions of farmers are coming under greater scrutiny. This is where another role of the OFA rises up. Advocacy is that role. Advocacy means taking your messages and accomplishments from greater yields with less inputs, to great animal welfare, to a job creator, etc., to ensure regulations are removed where possible, balanced where needed and avoided when not required.

Research to innovation at the farm and throughout the sector is an absolute necessity to continue to remain competitive in today's global environment. The amount of technological change that has come to the farm in the past 10-20 years is phenomenal. It is hard to fathom what the next opportunities will be. But this is the job of the OFA to be searching out and researching the new areas for Ontario farmers to draw profitability from under our Ontario climate and natural resources.

In closing, it is an honour to have 37,000 nods to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as your choice of general farm organization. As you battle the elements one more time in 2015, the OFA will be moving your policy, advocacy, infrastructure and related needs forward. This edition of *OFA Today* highlights past and continuing efforts to enable "prosperous and sustainable farms." Enjoy your reading. Speak up with your friends and family members on your pride in being an Ontario farmer. Every voice counts. The OFA board is honored to have yours supporting our efforts for your behalf.

Thank you.



Don McCabe

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Advocating for Ontario farmers

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture serves the needs of more than 37,000 farm members. Our work is as diverse as the family farm operations across the province, and touches on issues, legislation and regulations covered by municipal, provincial and federal governments.

Our mandate is to enable prosperous and sustainable farms in Ontario, whether you are a large dairy farm, have a farm market garden or a large-scale crop farm. We represent and advocate for the interests of our industry. Here is an overview of the top issues we've been working on.

- Farmland preservation
- Affordable natural gas
- Food literacy
- Climate change
- Invasive species
- *Ontario's Trespass to Property Act*
- *Great Lakes Protection Act*
- Open for Business process
- OFA's lobby website
- OFA's provincial election campaign

Keep reading for more information about these government relations initiatives.

Farmland preservation above all else



Farmland is a limited resource. Only 1% of all farmland in Canada is rated as Class 1 – the most productive land. Despite the implementation of several land use plans in Ontario, like the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Greenbelt Plan, Ontario continues to lose agricultural land at an alarming rate. We must preserve every

acre of this land for farming, if agriculture is to continue feeding and fueling all Ontarians. According to Statistics Canada, the total area of farms in Ontario fell by more than 636,000 acres between 2006 and 2011. That's 127,000 acres per year, or 350 acres of farmland lost per day.

The OFA is addressing two specific areas relating to farmland preservation: general preservation of all Ontario farmland, including the proposed Rouge National Urban Park and reviewing protection plans affecting farmland in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The proposed Rouge National Urban Park is an area that

includes more than 7,600 acres that's mostly Class 1 farmland.

Parks Canada is set to manage the stewardship of this new park, and the OFA strongly urges them to include a clear inventory of all agricultural land within the park, and an equally clear intention to preserve at least that amount for farming – with the choice for the type of farming operation left with the farmer.

The OFA will be working with all interested parties, including the provincial government that owns some of the land in the proposed park area, to ensure that Class 1 farmland within the boundaries of the Rouge National Urban Park remains farmland in perpetuity.

Food production is vital to all Ontarians, and we must preserve all existing farmland within this new park for agricultural production so this land will continue to produce food for the surrounding urban neighbours.

Reviews of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Greenbelt, Oak Ridges and Niagara Escarpment plans begin in 2015. These plans all affect farmland preservation in the GTA.

The OFA looks forward to being a part of the review of these plans, as a voice for farmers, finding ways to reduce red tape and ensuring agriculture can thrive in these protected areas. The OFA has been meeting with representatives from the affected county federations to prepare for the review and establish a preliminary position on the plans.

In addition to policy changes to make each plan more consistent, the OFA will be asking for changes to the administration, delivery and governance of all four plans. As the review process develops, the OFA will meet with farmers and county federations throughout the areas to ensure our organization speaks on their behalf.

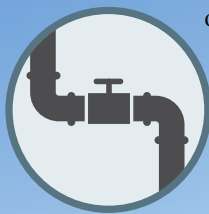


Ontario farmland is being lost at an alarming rate of 350 acres per day.

Affordable natural gas across rural Ontario

The OFA has been advocating for affordable, accessible natural gas across rural Ontario and continues to push government for progress. Natural gas expansion to farms and rural Ontario communities will dramatically boost business – by significantly lowering energy costs.

Natural gas is currently only available to less than 20% of Ontario farms and rural households. Simply expanding access to natural gas to just 60% of Ontario farms, rural residents and businesses would free up \$800 million per year in new disposable income. Imagine the amount



of reinvestment and economic development those savings would fuel in rural Ontario.

In 2014 the OFA welcomed the provincial government's investment in natural gas expansion with \$200 million in loans and \$30 million in grants over two years. The OFA hopes we will learn from the initial work and move to a long-term program to provide gas to rural Ontario.

Greater access to affordable natural gas is an important way to fuel future growth across rural Ontario, and keep our industry strong.

Access to natural gas will lower on-farm energy costs, attract new businesses and fuel economic growth in rural Ontario communities.

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Bring food literacy back in schools

Local food is now a household word. And the OFA wants food literacy to gain the same traction. Food literacy is about giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to make good, lifelong decisions about their food. If we teach our children how to choose and prepare healthy foods, we are setting them up for healthier, longer lives. And in the process, we provide a perfect opportunity to teach them where their food comes from.

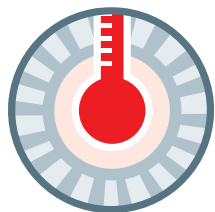
Ontario farmers who make their living producing food want to help consumers, especially the next generation of consumers, learn about all the healthy food choices that are grown and available right here at home.

OFA's food literacy goal is built around the 6 x 16 program. It's a key component of the National Food Strategy, and it would ensure that by the age of 16, Ontario teenagers can plan and prepare six nutritious meals. Better food education will lead to healthier food choices, healthier Ontarians and lower health care costs in the future.

That's why the OFA is advocating for putting food literacy back on the school curriculum. *The Local Food Act* must include food literacy and this will be on our agenda for health and education ministries.



The *Local Food Act* is a great start to help consumers learn about food and where it comes from. OFA is also advocating to put food literacy back into Ontario schools to increase food skills at an early age.



What agriculture needs to address climate change

Weather touches every aspect of agriculture. That makes farmers some of the most flexible, adaptable professionals in the business today. As the entire planet grapples with climate change, we need to recognize this issue impacts agriculture more than any other industry.

The OFA believes that climate change will require a serious review of existing policies. We must be at the table when policies and programs are developed to tackle climate change. And we look forward to working with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on the following three key areas.

1. The importance of business risk management tools for farmers to deal with the predicted increase in extreme weather events.
2. The need for OFA to be at the table to make sure climate change programs and policies are available to farmers.
3. To ensure the efforts made by Ontario farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are recognized.

Farmers depend on our environment more than any other industry to raise our animals and grow our crops. And the rest of Ontarians depend on us for their food.



Climate change will require a review of existing industry policies to remain sustainable and help farmers adapt to extreme weather conditions.



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It's time for an *Invasive Species Act*



There's a giant invasive weed spreading across Ontario, threatening the province's biodiversity. *Phragmites australis* has the unwanted distinction of Canada's most invasive plant. At heights of five metres or more, this reed-like plant forms large, dense stands in wetlands, choking out animal habitats and native species.

Phragmites spreads at an alarming rate and is becoming a real problem for Ontario farmers. A working group is searching for control recommendations as there are very few effective options currently available to stop the spread. The OFA is a member of the Ontario Invasive Plants Council and Ontario Phragmites Working Group. The OFA supports the work of this group that would ultimately arm farmers with tools to reduce the impact of this invasive species.

The OFA has four key recommendations for the Ontario government, based on the work of the Ontario Phragmites Working Group, that require buy in from all levels of government.

OFA's key recommendations

1. **Emergency use permits for herbicides**
2. **Approval of aerial treatment application**
3. **Establish a province-wide control program**
4. **Develop an *Invasive Species Act for Ontario***

The OFA is also conducting an extensive literature review to become more familiar with Phragmites, learning more about the plant's growth characteristics, distinctions of the various varieties and control measures. Ontario has already lost hundreds of habitat acres to Phragmites, clogging drainage ditches and cutting off waterways. We must work together on a large scale, coordinated effort to control this invader.

Canada's most invasive plant, phragmites, is spreading throughout Ontario, choking out natural habitats and creating a serious problem for farmers.



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What's great about a *Great Lakes Protection Act*?

The *Great Lakes Protection Act* is expected to be reintroduced to Ontario legislature for the third time in 2015. At the request of the OFA, the proposed act is part of the Open for Business agri-food consultation discussions. The OFA believes the proposed act is a classic case of over legislation, and this new legislation could easily be addressed with existing statutes.

The proposed act will overlap and potentially conflict with existing legislation or programs such as the *Ontario Water Resources Act*, *Clean Water Act*, *Planning Act*, *Source Water Protection Plans* and the *Nutrient Management Act*.

The OFA does support the existing Great Lakes Strategy,

developed in 2012. The OFA will continue working with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to create a *Great Lakes Protection Act* that enables initiatives proposed in the Great Lakes Strategy, without enabling regulations that would duplicate or contradict existing regulations.

The intent of the proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* must be addressed so Ontario farmers are not subject to unnecessary regulations.



The proposed *Great Lakes Protection Act* could create unnecessary regulations for Ontario farmers.

Update the *Trespass to Property Act*



The existing *Trespass to Property Act* needs updating. Enacted in 1980 to protect landowners, the act is intended to restrict entry to rural properties and compensate landowners for property damage. But the current legislation falls short

when it comes to deterring unwanted visitors and then rewarding farmers for damage. The OFA wants amendments made to the current act.

- **Impose a minimum \$500 fine for trespassing.**
The current act has no minimum fine and does little to discourage trespassers. Along with larger fines, the OFA would like broader police enforcement of trespassing to address farm safety and biosecurity concerns.
- **Increase the ceiling on damage awards to \$25,000.**
The current act has damages set at \$1,000. The OFA would like this level significantly increased to match the current ceiling for Small Claims Court.



Ontario's current *Trespass to Property Act* falls short when it comes to deterring unwanted visitors and awarding damage costs to farmers.

Keeping agriculture Open for Business

Farmers consider regulations to be the number one issue affecting their businesses. The OFA has been pleased to work with several ministries on behalf of the Ontario agricultural sector on the Open for Business initiative, and looks forward to continued improvements in the regulatory process.

The Open for Business process has delivered positive outcomes for Ontario farmers and agri-businesses including license exemptions for lower risk meat processing facilities under the *Food Safety and Quality Act* and a revised inspection arrangement with the Public Health Agency.

Greenhouse waste water, or Nutrient Greenhouse Feedwater (NGF), regulations were moved from the *Ontario Water Resources Act*, and are now governed under the Ministry of Natural Resources. Rules applying to land application of NGF are also being developed

by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

Excellent progress has been made on the property tax assessment of grain elevators in Ontario. Final decisions are expected by Charles Sousa, Ontario's Minister of Finance, retroactive to January 2014 for grain elevator taxation.

Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry is the only sector still continuing to hold stakeholder meetings through the Open for Business process. Provincial ministries involved in the process including Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Labour have all expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet, learn about emerging regulatory issues and provide updates on previously identified regulatory concerns.



Property tax assessment changes will be made to Ontario grain elevators through the Open for Business initiative.

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OFA takes advocacy online

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As part of OFA's ongoing lobby efforts, a lobby website (www.actnow.ofa.on.ca) has been active since 2013, providing an easy way for members to communicate directly to MPPs about issues impacting their farm businesses.

OFA featured three online lobby campaigns in 2014 with great results.

- **Farm loss deductions unfairly penalize farmers** – changes to Section 31 of the federal *Income Tax Act* were unfairly penalizing farmers. More than 300 letters were sent to MPs and select Federal Ministers asking the federal government to support the *Craig v. the Queen* interpretation of Section 31.
- **Early season spring bear hunt** – OFA supported the implementation of the spring bear hunt pilot project and nearly 100 OFA members signed their names in support by sending electronic letters to MPPs, Minister of Natural Resources and Premier Kathleen Wynne.
- **Update Ontario's *Trespass to Property Act*** – OFA's campaign to amend the *Trespass to Property Act* by setting minimum fines and increasing the ceiling on damage awards was supported by more than 200 members, sending electronic letters of support for tighter trespassing enforcements to MPPs.

2014 Provincial Election Campaign: Growing Ontario

In the lead up to the June 2014 provincial election, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture introduced its **Growing Ontario** campaign to draw specific attention to the strength of Ontario agriculture and its vital role in driving economic growth.

We encouraged all provincial candidates to sign on and support our “I believe in Growing Ontario” campaign to acknowledge the significant economic impact the agri-food sector provides to our province.

Our Growing Ontario campaign successfully engaged more than 167 candidates, of which 45 supporters were successfully elected in their respective ridings. That means more than one third of Ontario’s MPPs are already aware of

Ontario’s agri-food sector and understand that an investment in agriculture is an investment for all Ontarians.

Our campaign focused on four key issues that need support so agriculture can continue growing and providing strength and opportunities for Growing Ontario food, fibre and jobs. Election candidates were educated on the importance of *competitively priced energy, fair farm property taxation, increased food literacy and the need to support agri-skills training.*

We continued the momentum of our Growing Ontario with food, fibre and jobs messages by hosting a successful Queen’s Park breakfast in the fall and carrying the theme to the OFA 2014 Annual General Meeting in November.



2014 MEMBER SURVEY SHOWS STRONG SATISFACTION

85%

Member satisfaction

1,967

Surveys completed by OFA members in spring 2014

OFA asked members to complete an online survey in 2014 about many aspects of membership. It was a follow up to a survey conducted in 2012. Here are some of the highlights that are remarkably consistent with the results in 2012.

According to members **LOBBYING GOVERNMENT and ADVOCATING FOR FARMERS** are the two most important OFA activities

OFA benefit partners helped members save an average **\$545** a year

Simplifying regulations is the #1 research priority

83%

Of members feel information from OFA is relevant to their farm



New legislation means changes to OFA governance

Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA) is intended to provide more transparency and accountability to members of not-for-profit corporations, like OFA and many other agricultural organizations. The act was passed late in 2010 but is not yet in effect. It entails significant changes in members' rights and directors' (corporations') responsibilities when compared to those in the current *Ontario Corporations Act*.

The ONCA radically alters the current rights and privileges of OFA members in terms of elections and voting. In addition, the act confuses the role of members when it comes to making "proposals" at an annual general or special meeting.

The OFA has itemized and expressed our list of concerns to the government about the direction of the new act. The OFA shares these concerns with the Ontario Nonprofit Network, an organization looking out for the interests of not-for-profits.

Here are some of OFA's concerns with the ONCA:

Members can vote through proxies

- With diligence and use of technology, a single member or non-member could assemble sufficient proxy votes to elect or remove a director or directors from the corporation, or effect the adoption of any proposal.
- This exposes the corporation to the risk of "takeover" by special interests and not in the best interests of OFA members.

"Proposals" brought to the annual general or special meetings may or may not be binding on the Board

- Boards may be protected from liability

arising from binding proposals through the immunity clause, but members or others may be left without redress for any damages that may have been caused.

Audited financial statements must be available to members who request them 21 days in advance of the AGM

- This will result in delaying the date of OFA's annual meeting.

Classes or groups of members can be assigned different voting rights

- Classes effectively have veto power over administrative proposals as each class must approve proposals.

The Ontario government has recognized OFA's concerns and our proposed solutions. The government intends to consult further with Ontario's agricultural sector to address the concerns and ensure the new legislation works in the best interests of members and their organizations.

The OFA is most concerned about how directors will be elected under the new legislation. The ONCA requires the Board of Directors be elected by all voting members at the annual general meeting of the corporation. This will eliminate OFA's current system of geographically (zone) based elections. The OFA's present election structure allows all members to have geographical representation by voting a director from their area – an important issue for OFA members.

This legislative change limits members' abilities to participate in elections due to distance, expense and time required to attend the annual general meeting. It may also preclude geographical representation at the OFA board table.

The OFA will be consulting with membership throughout 2015 to identify how important geographical representation is and if there are ways and means of addressing this legislative complication. The new ONCA is anticipated to be in effect by 2017. **OFA**



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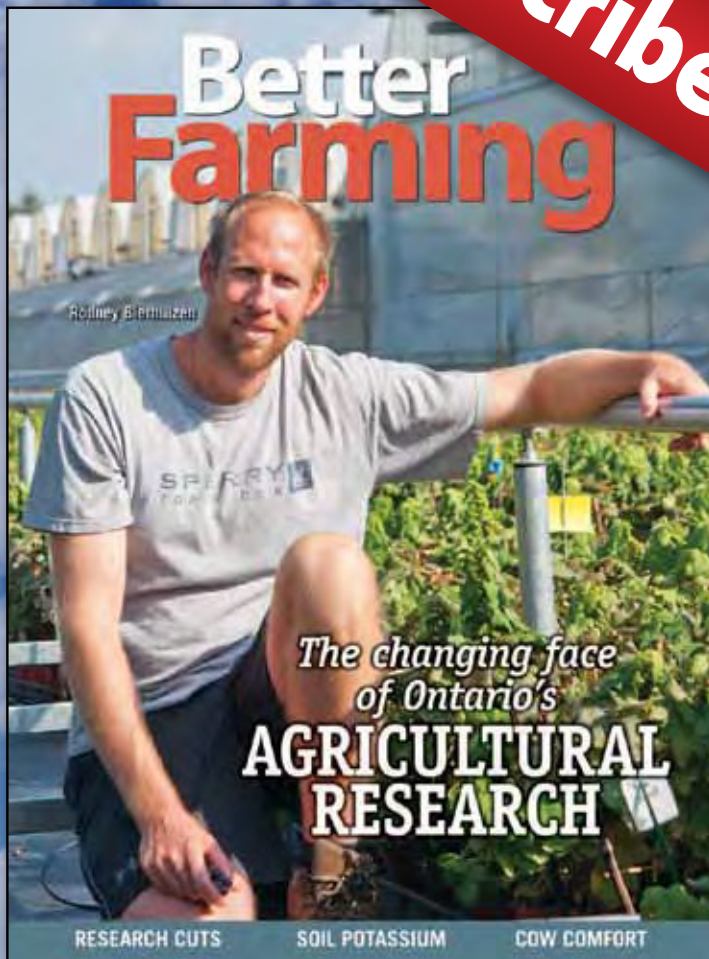
Announcing the lucky winners from our 2014 reader survey participants

The laptop computer winner (valued at more than \$1,000) from the OFA's Federation House at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show was: **Lawney Dunstan of Cookstown**

The \$1,000 cash winner from the 2014 farm show survey participants was: **Brenda Tripp of Foresters Falls**

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Farming**



Research group supports OFA members

With a Farm Policy Research Group of seven staff, the OFA is well positioned to examine and respond to a variety of member issues and concerns. On a daily basis, our research staff address issues that include regulatory modernization, water, labour, environment, land use, wildlife and energy. The OFA research group support OFA members and advocacy efforts.

Building an Ontario bioeconomy

OFA is working diligently with industry partners and farmers to create a healthy bioeconomy using renewable resources and converting them into feed, fuel, bioenergy and other bio-based products. Processing plants and advanced technologies will add important links to our expanding value chain. OFA's goal is to attract and build bioprocessing plants in Ontario to process biomass such as cornstalks and wheat straw residue into cellulosic sugar.

Cellulosic sugar is a source of sugar from the farm that can be used to produce products including fuels and chemicals. Through extensive market development research and consulting Ontario farmers, the OFA knows there's a lot of interest in our province to create markets for our biomass products.

Corn stover, traditionally used for livestock bedding and cattle

feed, has huge potential in Ontario for large scale harvesting. Cornstalks are composed of 47% sugar. Increased corn yields in recent years have improved the amount of stover remaining after the grain is harvested. The ratio of grain corn production to corn stover is 1:1. That means one tonne of harvested grain corn will leave one tonne of corn stover. With that kind of yield, and a sustainable harvest protocol to ensure enough residue is left for the soil's needs, Ontario farmers are potentially leaving a lot of money in the field. An Iowa farm study reported net profits of \$36 per acre from corn stover sales for cellulosic ethanol production.

The OFA is working closely with industry, partnering to host demonstration events and appealing to all levels of government to assist in drawing processing companies to our rural neighbourhoods.



An argument on aggregates

Reserves of aggregates – sand, gravel and stone – are often found beneath some of our best farmland. Every part of the Ontario economy depends on aggregates, including agriculture, but we don't want to disturb our prime agricultural land by extracting aggregates. The OFA is asking that regulations and operating standards within the *Aggregate Resources Act* be amended to acknowledge and protect our vital agricultural lands.

The OFA is also concerned about agricultural rehabilitation for the pits and

quarries used for extraction, or those already retired. Rehabilitation should require more than just grading the sideslopes, spreading topsoil and planting a cover crop. The OFA has participated in discussion groups to improve rehabilitation of exhausted pits and quarries, policies on new pits and quarries on agricultural land, and addressing requirements for license applications and fees. Expected changes to the legislation, regulations and standards governing the operation of Ontario pits and quarries are likely to take time. The OFA will continue working with the government on aggregate issues relating to the preservation, use and rehabilitation of agricultural land.



OFA is working with government to improve the rehabilitation of aggregate pits and quarries, and preserve farmland considered for aggregate extraction.

Unwanted wildlife damage



Wildlife damage to crops, livestock and poultry continues to be a province-wide problem for Ontario farmers. Bears, Canada geese, coyotes, deer, raccoons, sandhill cranes and wild turkeys are the most common culprits in Ontario.

before, it's expected the program will be reviewed in the near future. Unfortunately, there is currently no comparable compensation program for wildlife damage to crops. The OFA is committed to seeing an effective crop damage compensation program, and continue lobbying for a similar program available to livestock farmers. The OFA is also advocating for the removal of regulatory barriers that unnecessarily impede farmers' efforts to protect their crops, livestock or poultry from predation.

A 2009 study conducted by the George Morris Centre estimates Ontario farmers annual losses from wildlife damage were \$40.9 million, with \$1–\$1.5 million in livestock and poultry and the remaining \$39.4–\$39.9 million losses to crop damage.

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. While the program applies to a broader range of predators and farmed animals than

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BE READY.



OFA: working for farmers and rural residents

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is becoming more engaged in the needs and concerns of rural Ontario communities and municipalities. Our members reside in these communities and many are active in local leadership. The OFA is happy to support our members with services and advocacy efforts.

The OFA is speaking directly with members about their concerns and challenges in their rural municipalities, and has developed working relationships with the Western and Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus in efforts to collaborate on common issues affecting rural Ontario.

The OFA has become increasingly involved in municipal finance over the past year by working more closely with rural municipalities. Cutbacks to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund have created serious financial difficulties for many rural municipalities, making them more reliant than ever on property tax revenues. The OFA conducted a community services study to address these concerns and learn more about the fiscal impacts different land uses have on municipal budgets.



OFA's Cost of Community Services study, led by staff researcher Ben LeFort, examines the use of tax dollars to service land use categories.

Cost of Community Services Studies

Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies were developed by the American Farmland Trust in the 1980s and are part of the broader field of fiscal analysis. COCS studies break a municipality's land base into several distinct categories and allocate all municipal revenues and expenditures to these land use categories.

Ontario COCS study: the Municipality of Bayham

The OFA studied the Municipality of Bayham, using this rural Ontario municipality as the setting of the case study. Located in Elgin County, the Municipality of Bayham was established in 1998 through the amalgamation of the former Township of Bayham, the former village of Port Burwell and the former village of Vienna. Given the relatively strong presence of agriculture, relatively weak presence of industrial business and its low population density, the Municipality of Bayham was representative of a "typical" rural municipality in Ontario.

Study objectives

Objective #1: Find the net fiscal impact of each land use in Bayham

This study uses the land use categories: residential, commercial/industrial and farm/forest. After allocating all municipal revenues and expenditures to the three land use categories, ratios were calculated showing the servicing cost incurred by the municipality for every dollar of revenue associated with a particular land use.

Results:

- For every \$1 of revenue associated with the residential land use category, \$1.08 was spent servicing the category
- For every \$1 of revenue associated with the commercial/industrial land use category, \$0.38 was spent in servicing this category
- For every \$1 of revenue associated with the farm/forest land use category, \$0.50 was spent servicing the category

Objective #2: Evaluate the appropriate revenue source for government services

By allocating municipal revenues and expenditures to each land use category, COCS studies can illustrate which municipal services are most heavily related to property. This report also investigates the appropriateness of revenue sources, emphasizing where property tax dollars are the best source of revenue, and where provincial funding is needed.

The Municipality of Bayham utilizes the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) service to provide local policing services. While OPP services do benefit property, the primary users of OPP services are people. All residents throughout the province demand access to police services. Speaking with OPP officials revealed that many calls for OPP services in Bayham in 2012 related to highway accidents, most of which involved people not residing in Bayham.

Policing services represent a large proportion of rural, lower-tier municipal budgets. In 2012, Bayham spent \$743,586 on OPP services. According to Bayham's recently developed asset management plan, local infrastructure (road network, water network and sanitary network) in the municipality is currently facing an annual funding deficit of \$726,000. If the province uploaded local policing expenditures, the funds saved could adequately finance the municipality's essential infrastructure expenditures, while increasing efficiency by linking the funding of services to the primary users.

Fair taxation for land use

The cost of community services study demonstrates an imbalanced approach to land use taxation that is common throughout Ontario. The OFA is concerned the lack of provincial funding could further strain farmland taxes of our members. Municipalities must have reliable revenue streams in addition to property taxation to fund the diverse range of services they provide. The OFA will continue working with rural municipalities and the provincial government to address the financial strain on rural municipalities.

A team to maximize your farm's profitability?

It just makes sense.

It's true that no one farmer—even the largest among us—can significantly affect the supply chain behind him or the value stream beyond the farm gate. It's also true that most businesses face similar challenges and have developed strategies to improve their market position and expand their market power.

Farmers of North America is the farm business alliance that is your strategic answer to these challenges. FNA is your supply chain strategy, developing methods, options and entire new businesses to drive competition for your input cost dollar, reducing your expenses and maximizing your profits. FNA is your value stream partner, exploring markets and building opportunities to improve farm revenues and even own a stake in the stream itself.

FNA changes the whole farming system, with a tested team and proven performance. What one farmer cannot do alone, together we can achieve—in the FNA farm business alliance. Together we have brought Members hundreds of millions of dollars in additional profit they would not otherwise have realized. All because they made the strategic decision to participate in FNA.

And right now, FNA Members are participating in two major initiatives to build a fertilizer manufacturing and distribution business as well as a grain handling & marketing business. These farmer-partners can occupy a larger footprint in the value chain, recapturing excess margins on both ends, instead of feeling squeezed in the middle.

Let FNA work for you. Participate with 10,000 other producers in the only farm business alliance dedicated to maximizing your profitability. We guarantee it will be one of the best investments you ever make in your operation.

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Visit fna.ca for all of FNA's Member benefits.

Let's Talk.
Call us at 1-877-362-3276.



OFA survey shows BRM programs need work

More than two-thirds of Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) members surveyed believe that currently available Business Risk Management (BRM) programs do not meet their needs. When OFA surveyed approximately 250 members in November 2014, asking them to rate the performance of government-funded BRM programs, 69% of respondents felt the programs fell short for their farm businesses.

The online survey measured member opinions about three BRM programs – production insurance, Agri-Invest and Agri-Stability. The OFA will present the results to the Agriculture Policy Framework Planning and Analysis Committee. The committee, spearheaded by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, is tasked with providing program recommendations to government, identifying policy outcomes for the 2015 federal election and offering direction to government on the agri-food industry's needs for the next agricultural policy framework, or Growing Forward 3.

OFA survey results will support discussions on how to improve BRM programs based on feedback from Ontario farmers about the three government programs.

The message sent by survey participants was very clear. BRM programs must be improved as soon as possible. The survey found 69% of respondents felt the current government programs do not meet the needs of their farm operation. However, this was an improvement when compared to a similar survey, OFA conducted in 2010 that found 88% were dissatisfied.

Production insurance ranked as the most popular BRM program with OFA members – 77% said the program is easy to use, and 80% would recommend the program to other farmers.

Agri-Invest is also a popular BRM program with Ontario farmers with 76% saying they would recommend it to other farmers. An Agri-Invest account allows farmers to deposit up to 1% of allowable net sales and receive a matching government

contribution. Many survey respondents said they found parts of the program confusing, but 80% agreed that when considering the time and costs required to participate the program was still beneficial to their farm business.

Agri-Stability was the least popular of the three BRM programs covered in the survey with only 43% of respondents willing to recommend the program. The Agri-Stability program is a margin-based program available to eligible farmers. Recent changes, including a reduction in coverage, have lowered farmers' satisfaction with the program.

The results of this recent BRM program survey provide OFA with important feedback for government and program administrators. We received a clear message that these programs must change to meet the needs of Ontario's farmers. These survey results will feed OFA efforts to shape future BRM programs and government investments in the sustainability of Ontario farms. **OFA**



69% of survey respondents felt current government programs do not meet the needs of their farm operation.

OFA Member Service Representatives

Every OFA member has access to an experienced, knowledgeable Member Service Representative (MSR), ready to take your call to help with issues affecting your farm or region. As OFA employees, MSRs are the on-the-ground advocates for Ontario farm families. Our team of 21 MSRs is involved in most aspects of farm business and rural life, and represent a valuable benefit of your OFA membership.

Western Region

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Deb Knapton – Arnprior, Lanark, Ottawa, Renfrew
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deb.knapton@ofa.on.ca

NEW 10% off every day discount for OFA members from TSC stores

TSC Stores is excited to introduce a new member benefit for 2015 for all OFA members. Beginning January 1 2015, OFA members will receive 10% off regular priced items every day when they show their TSC Discount Card at their local TSC store. The cards were distributed to all OFA members in the January issue of

Better Farming magazine.

The new TSC Discount Card offers extra value to OFA members so they can purchase what they need when they need it and save every day. The 10% discount applies to regular priced items (some exceptions apply – see card for details). To receive the 10% off discount, simply

show your TSC Discount Card at time of purchase for the cashier to scan. Cards are valid until December 31, 2015.

With 50 locations across Ontario, TSC stocks 1000s of items for life on the farm and in the country including fencing, pet, animal, feed, workwear and footwear. Visit tsctestores.com to find your local TSC Store.

Member Benefits that work for you



The OFA Benefit Program is one of the advantages of membership. The program offers a wide range of services and promotions exclusively for OFA members, delivering additional value to farm businesses. It's another way OFA works to deliver on its overall mission to enable sustainable and prosperous farms.

Every Benefit Program partner is carefully selected and benefits negotiated on behalf of OFA members. OFA partners with companies that meet member needs, and deliver enhanced value and savings to all OFA members. According to criteria established by the OFA

Board of Directors, each benefit program or company partnership must:

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

According to the 2014 OFA survey, members reported saving an average of \$545 a year through the Benefit Program – that's more than double the savings since 2012.

For more information on OFA's Benefit Program, visit www.ofa.on.ca and click on "Benefit Program" or follow @OFABenefits.

OFA Benefit Partners – helping meet your farm business needs

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- Preferred rates and special discounts on banking services for OFA members.

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Chrysler Dodge Jeep



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For full details, visit the Benefit Program page at www.ofa.on.ca or call 1-800-668-3276

GM Canada



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For full details, visit the Benefit Program page at www.ofa.on.ca or call 1-800-668-3276

GM signs on to OFA benefit program

Looking for a new farm vehicle this year? OFA members now have twice the choice for significant discounts on new vehicles as part of OFA's expanded fleet vehicle program.*

GM Canada has joined the OFA benefit program with deep discounts for OFA members on select new 2015 Chevrolet and GMC models. This new offer is available for OFA members at GM dealers across Canada.

For more information on the new GM Canada fleet vehicle discounts, visit the Benefit Program page at www.ofa.on.ca or contact OFA at 1.800.668.3276 or info@ofa.on.ca

*OFA's fleet vehicle program includes exclusive member discounts on select new 2015 GM vehicles, and new Chrysler Dodge & Jeep vehicles.

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OFA's Board of Directors



Back row standing (left to right): Eleanor Renaud, Bruce Buttar, Ralph Brodie, Joe Dickenson, Drew Spoelstra, Louis Roesch, Bruce Webster, Peggy Brekveld, Mark Reusser, Brent Royce, Peter Lambrick, Paul Wettlaufer, Rejean Pommerville.
Front row seated: Don McCabe, Keith Currie, Mark Wales, Debra Pretty-Straathof

New OFA directors Joining the board in November 2014 is Pat Jilesen, director-at-large and Mark Kunkel (Zone 15)

Best wishes Michel

Following 42 years of outstanding dedication and service to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and our members, Michel Bourgon, Member Service Representative Manager for the eastern and northern regions of Ontario, retired December 31, 2014.

Bourgon began his tremendous career with OFA on March 3, 1973 and says he was grateful for the opportunity to be able to stay at one organization for more than four decades. "I really enjoyed my career with OFA," says Bourgon. "I had the privilege of working with a very dedicated staff who I consider to be not only colleagues, but friends as well."

During his career with the OFA, Bourgon was responsible



Michel Bourgon

for helping to establish strong local county federation boards by recruiting valuable directors and presidents. "It was satisfying being able to help build the organization with people who have a vision and want the organization to move forward," he says.

Every day provided a new challenge for Bourgon, one aspect of the job he enjoyed most. "Every day was different. When I came to work in the morning I did not know what the day was going to present, but I always tried to approach it with hard work and a positive attitude." Bourgon took satisfaction in being able to offer helpful advice and information to members and fellow colleagues in the agriculture industry. **OFA**

2015 OFA membership renewal process



We heard our members loud and clear. When it comes to membership – simplify the process. And we are. 2015 is the last year OFA membership renewal will require a separate signature to remain an active OFA member.

The OFA will be returning to the one-step process to simplify membership (like it used to be), and we appreciate your patience over the past few years as the process shifted. Beginning in 2016, your OFA membership will be in good standing if you renew your Farm Business Registration with Agricorp and choose OFA as your general farm organization.

In the meantime, the two-step process for becoming an OFA member will continue – just for 2015.

Step 1 – Register your farm business and choose OFA as your general farm organization on the 2015 Farm Business Registration form. Send your annual fee (payable to OFA) to Agricorp. See your FBR form for payment options including convenient online payment.

Step 2 – Read, sign and return your OFA membership agreement to OFA.

Questions? Contact 1-800-668-3276 or info@ofa.on.ca

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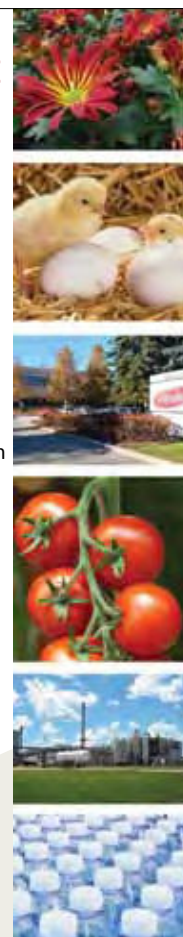
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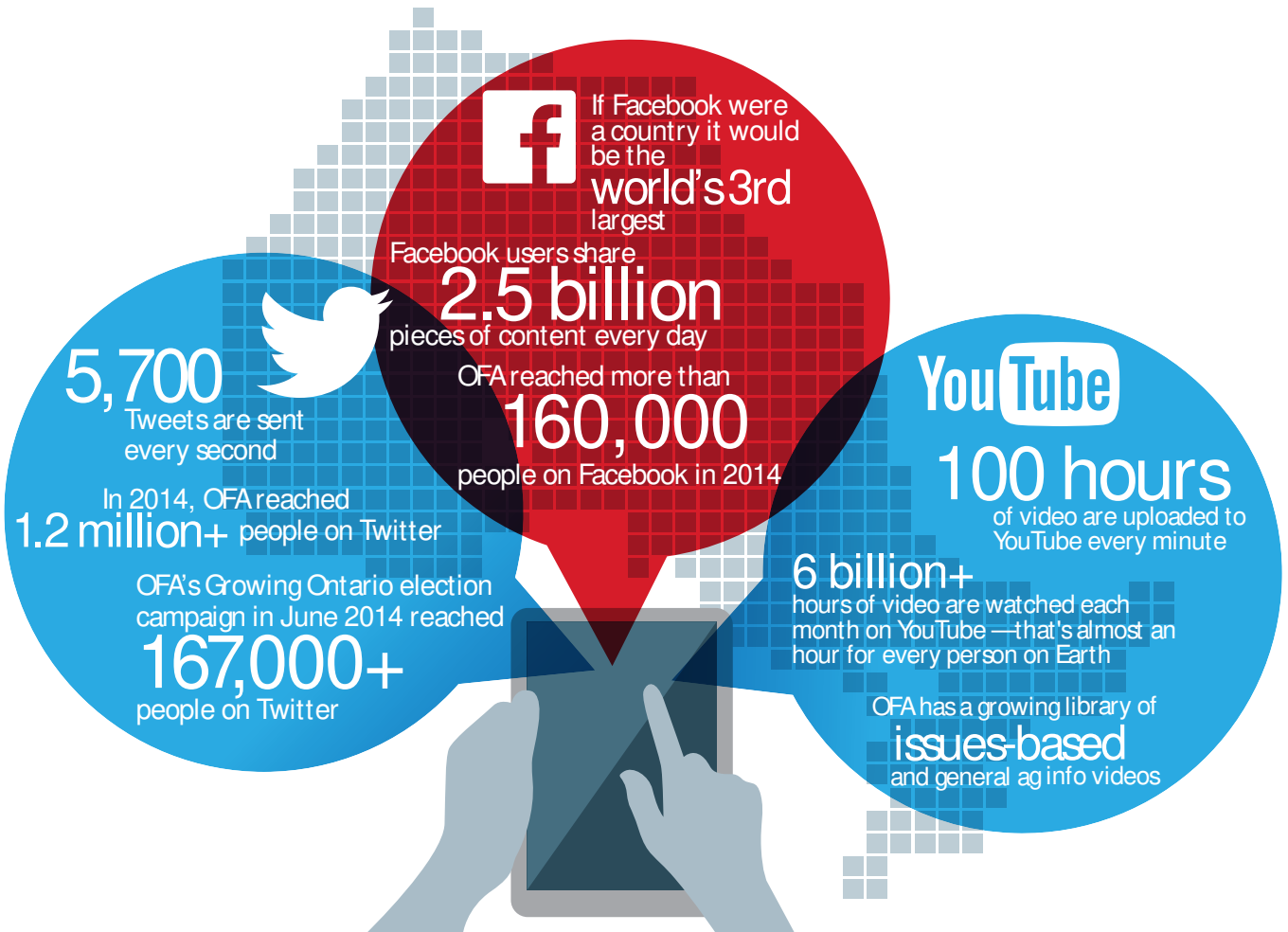
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