

# OFAtoday

2018 Edition

Annual Update from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

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Ontario agriculture, food  
and rural communities

**OFA**  
Annual Publication  
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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 farms, farm businesses and farm family members and supporters. As a dynamic, farmer-led organization based in Guelph, 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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Tyler Brooks, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

## Editor's Note

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is very proud, once again, to provide you with our annual *OFA Today* publication. Inside this 2018 issue, we highlight our key priorities for the next provincial government, feature a recap of our advocacy initiatives, and look ahead to a new year of growth and opportunities for Ontario's agri-food sector.

We enjoy bringing this annual publication to you, our valued members, as we believe it continues to serve as a valuable resource, informing our members of the issues and activities OFA has been working on over the past year.

Our theme of Producing Prosperity was launched at the 2017 annual general meeting and will guide the focus of our political priorities and messaging as we move forward through 2018. The concept of Producing Prosperity is directed at the need for creating growth opportunities for rural farms and businesses, while alleviating some of the challenges facing our growing urban centres.

The provincial election is an opportunity to showcase and promote the strength of Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities to all candidates, and show how it can be a catalyst for producing prosperity across the province.

In this edition of *OFA Today*, you will learn more about OFA's 2018 election campaign messages, Ontario's long-term energy plan, food literacy research study, minimum wage implications, soil health, reducing phosphorus, Ontario's wildlife damage and compensation program, the process of OFA's policy development and a recap of our 2017 advocacy initiatives.

We also feature a Q&A with OFA President Keith Currie, an announcement on the launch of a redesigned and redeveloped OFA website, success stories from OFA's Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund and OFA's 2017 student bursary award winners.

We look forward to engaging our members in activities and initiatives over the coming year as we strive to create healthy communities and a healthy environment that enables economic growth for the betterment of all 37,000 farm families across Ontario.

Input and feedback from our members is a valuable aspect of our farmer-led organization and we always welcome comments, questions or concerns on ways we can improve as an organization to better serve you, our members.

We hope you enjoy reading this publication and thank you for your continued support as we work together to achieve a prosperous future for our industry and all of rural Ontario.

Sincerely,

Tyler Brooks  
Editor





Keith Currie, President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

## President's Welcome

Compiling all the information for the 2018 edition of *OFA Today* is a great way to reflect and review our activities and accomplishments of the past year. As I begin my second term as OFA President, I'm so proud of the collaboration we've achieved by working together with the entire

agriculture industry on initiatives and issues that impact our sector. And I look forward to making more connections with the people that make this organization, and this industry, so strong and vibrant and innovative.

In these pages, you will find a snapshot of the wide variety of issues we have been working on and some stories on the people that make our organization shine through our Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund.

There are updates on all the files we are involved in. Some of them are long-term files, like phosphorus, affordable energy, infrastructure needs, regulatory burden and ongoing efforts to address public trust. Some issues are newer ones that have surfaced recently including the ongoing implications of the minimum wage hike, the increasing conversations about mental health on the farm, and a new soil health strategy.

Along with our usual projects, we will be putting extra emphasis on the spring provincial election. We officially launched OFA's election campaign Producing Prosperity at the 2017 annual meeting last November. We've taken a little different approach to our messaging with a focus on distributing economic development around the province as a means to strengthen our agricultural and rural economies. You can read more about our election messages in this issue, and we encourage you to visit our special election website [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca).

As we begin a new season, I want to take a moment to emphasize that we live and work in one of the most robust industries in the country. I look forward to the continued opportunities our industry has to flourish, grow and work together. Our strength is in numbers and unity is our best approach.

Thank you,

Keith Currie  
President

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# Producing Prosperity – an election priority



*OFA is advocating for rural Ontario in the upcoming 2018 provincial election with the Producing Prosperity campaign.*

OFA officially launched its campaign platform for the June 2018 provincial election, at the organization’s annual meeting in November 2017. President Keith Currie outlined the key elements of the **Producing Prosperity** theme, and the messages that will be used to advocate for the agri-food industry with candidates across the province this winter and spring.

**OFA is focused on farms and food forever, and that requires a sustainable food system.**

Our main message to candidates is that Ontario’s agri-food sector and rural Ontario have the capacity to produce prosperity for the entire province using a policy of distributed economic development.

This may seem like a departure for a general farm organization. Economic development isn’t in our mission statement – but OFA is focused on farms and food forever, and that requires a sustainable food system.

Our farming businesses are highly dependent on our local communities. We need strong and vibrant communities to ensure there are services to support our businesses like internet, farm supplies, technicians, and veterinarians. We also depend on services for our families including close access to schools and health care. But we’ve all experienced a decline in these services in our own communities.

In the political arena, farming is a foreign concept to many politicians and the general public, even though our agri-food industry is an economic powerhouse representing \$37 billion in annual GDP and creating one in eight jobs in the province.

Even with our economic strength, our industry struggles to secure public policy that recognizes and builds on our contributions to the provincial economy. So with this year’s election, we’re taking a different approach to get the attention of politicians that will build our farm businesses and our economy.

**In the political arena, farming is a foreign concept to many politicians and the general public, even though our agri-food industry is an economic powerhouse representing \$37 billion in annual GDP and creating one in eight jobs in the province.**

The average consumer is what we call food comfortable. They are more concerned with affordable housing, traffic congestion, finding jobs and raising their families in safe communities than with the food system. OFA’s Producing Prosperity campaign is about advocating for distributed economic development across Ontario as a way to address the needs for the agriculture sector and provide solutions to the real issues facing urban centres.

Ontario's agri-food sector is the solution to the future of Ontario's economy and way of life. Imagine what a new \$1 billion investment in rural Ontario every year could do.

OFA is advocating for public infrastructure investments that will strengthen and support the agri-food industry and our rural communities. With good schools and health care, reliable internet, roads and other amenities, our farm businesses will be more sustainable. And other investments will follow. More job opportunities will open up across the province, alleviating the pressure on urban centres and creating economic growth in rural Ontario.

**Ontario's agri-food sector is the solution to the future of Ontario's economy and way of life. Imagine what a new \$1 billion investment in rural Ontario every year could do.**

That's what distributed economic development is about and why OFA is focusing our provincial election messaging on it. And here's what it is not – we are not advocating for unchecked development across our farmland and we are not opening the door to an unbridled influx of urbanites looking for a better quality of life in the countryside. Our call for distributed economic development that will produce prosperity in Ontario must not be done at the expense of our farmland. Rural community development must respect boundaries.

We believe a message of distributed economic development speaks directly to the needs of our farm businesses and rural communities, while providing real opportunities to help alleviate the accelerating pressures our urban neighbours face every day.

OFA will be working with partners across rural Ontario to spread these election messages with municipalities, Wardens, economic development officers and chambers of commerce.

For more information, visit OFA's Producing Prosperity website at [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca).



Do you think Ontario policies are urban oriented?

**94% YES 6% NO**

OFA online poll survey – October 2017



Has your community been impacted by school closures?

**73% YES 27% NO**

OFA online poll survey – February 2017



Does your farm have access to high speed internet?

**59% YES 41% NO**

OFA online poll survey – January 2017

### OFA advocates for Ontario agriculture

OFA's role is to represent and advocate the shared interests and concerns of our 37,000 members with government and policymakers. Here's how we tackle the task.

- **Field staff:** a knowledgeable team of 21 Member Service Representatives are the on-the-ground face of OFA with members across the province
- **Researchers:** a team of eight skilled policy staff to keep on top of regulatory and legislative matters
- **Surveys:** regular member surveys to gather input, feedback and gauge impact on issues and policies
- **Board of Directors:** representing farmers from across the province, 18 directors meet with MPPs and policy makers regularly at formal and informal events to bring issues and information to government
- **Collaboration:** with 31 other organizations that represent Ontario agri-food commodities





**MPPs and staff tour an Ontario greenhouse at OFA's 2017 Field Day.**

### OFA 2017 lobby events

OFA hosted a series of lobby events last year at Queen's Park, including Caucus breakfast meetings with all three political parties, a reception celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week and regular meetings with MPPs and staff.

In August, OFA hosted the annual Field Day, bringing MPPs and staff out to tour an Ontario farm. The 2017 event was hosted at Beverly Greenhouses of Dundas, ON, a vertically integrated English cucumber farm. OFA believes events like Field Day are important ways to showcase Ontario's agri-food sector and provide an opportunity to show, and not just tell, provincial leaders about the innovations and issues facing our farmers in the province.

### OFA rallies to push for natural gas across Ontario

OFA ramped up advocacy efforts in 2017 to demonstrate natural gas as a solution to soaring energy costs. Rural Ontario is hardest hit by energy inflation with most businesses, residents and farms relying on electricity, propane or heating oil for energy. OFA believes the expansion of natural gas is the single most important investment Ontario can make to support a vibrant and thriving rural Ontario.

Government meetings, community and industry presentations, online lobby efforts ([ontarioruralgrowth.ca](http://ontarioruralgrowth.ca)) and ongoing OFA activities focused on natural gas as the solution to affordable energy.

### OFA members take action

OFA's [actnow.ofa.on.ca](http://actnow.ofa.on.ca) website is an effective advocacy tool for the organization. The site allows members to sign their name to a prewritten letter about an issue facing Ontario or Canadian farmers. In 2017, two lobby campaigns were launched through the site to engage OFA members and send messages to politicians.

**TELL YOUR MP**  
tax changes are bad  
for incorporated farms

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to send a letter

**Natural gas** – 450 Ontarians and OFA members sent a letter to their MPP asking for affordable energy across the province. Each letter explained the need for natural gas access as an affordable

energy option for farmers, rural residents and business owners, and outlined the economic impact natural gas would have on Ontario's economy.

**Federal tax changes** – more than 750 Ontario farmers voiced their concerns through OFA's lobby site to send a letter to Finance Minister Morneau to say the proposed tax changes would be devastating to the agri-food sector.



Do you talk to politicians and leaders about issues impacting ag and your farm?

**58% YES 42% NO**

OFA online poll survey – July 2017





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## Adjusting to Ontario's new minimum wage



*Elgin County cash crop and processing vegetable farmer, Joe VanQuaethem says he's looking to technology and machinery efficiencies to compensate for the rising cost of labour on his farm.*

The Liberal government's plan to raise the minimum wage to \$15 is a reality set to hit Ontario by 2019 as part of Bill 148. The agriculture sector and many small businesses across the province are still reeling from the prospect of the minimum wage rising by a staggering 32% in an 18-month period.

Ontario employers are finding ways to adjust their business models and operations to account for the wage hike. "Finding and hiring skilled labour is already hard enough," says Joe VanQuaethem, owner and operator of VanQuaethem Farms Ltd., a cash crop, grain elevator and processing vegetable farm in Elgin County that employs six full-time and up to four part-time employees during planting and harvest. "Hiring and retaining employees is only going to get harder with the new legislation."

### What \$15 an hour means to employers

Farm employers like VanQuaethem are already crunching numbers, trying to figure out how to make the increased labour costs work for their businesses. "We predict the minimum wage hike will increase our labour costs by 20-25% on our farm business budget over the next two to three years," he says. And as labour costs rise, VanQuaethem is considering making changes around the farm.

Small business owner, Jackie Fraser of Fraberts Fresh Food in Fergus, ON spent days running spreadsheets

for her family run grocery store and catering company that specializes in sourcing local food from about 24 area farmers. Fraser employs 12 people plus herself and her husband, and predicts her labour costs will increase 22% in the first six months of the newly imposed legislation.

"All but one of our employees already make more than minimum wage, but I quickly realized they can't all get 22% raises without running our business in the red," explains Fraser, who says she's optimistic they'll stay in business, but the new legislation has forced her to extend her debt repayment schedule.

Sourcing products from local farms means Fraser's rising operating costs are compounded by the prospect of increased food costs from farmers. "Our farmers are predicting 12-17% increases in their wholesale prices to compensate for the new minimum wage," says Fraser, who is concerned the rising food costs will impact the market for locally grown produce. "This is a vicious cycle – if the price of Ontario produce goes up, as we worry it will have to, sales will go down. Therefore, I will be buying less from my growers."

### Making it work

"We're already planning to reduce our hours of operation and won't have extra staff on hand for busy times like the lunch rush," says Fraser. "We'll do our best to maintain our high level of customer service, but it will be a challenge."

Fraser says hiring for their store will also change because she won't be able to hire students with no experience. "For \$15 an hour I need staff to come with solid skills, experience and references," she says.

On the farm, VanQuaethem is considering replacing rising labour costs with machinery. New technologies offer efficiencies and the ability to cover more acres with fewer people. "The new minimum wage makes the gap between wages and equipment costs much smaller," he explains. "Farmers on the edge of reducing employees in favour of better equipment are now making that leap because they're more willing to spend their money on equipment and technology," says VanQuaethem.

While VanQuaethem has determined the approach his farm will take to address the economic impact of the new minimum wage, not all jobs on the farm or all types of Ontario farms are able to replace skilled labour with equipment.

Farmers across the province are facing the same challenge – how to make the new legislation and dramatic spike in minimum wage work for their farm business while remaining profitable. "I hope the government understands the economic impact the new minimum wage will have on farms and small businesses," says VanQuaethem.

### Speaking up for farmers and small businesses

Throughout the announcements and advocacy efforts to respond to the minimum wage hike in 2017, OFA kept close tabs on how the new legislation would impact Ontario farmers and brought their concerns forward to government. OFA also collaborated with all the agricultural commodity groups in Ontario, and through its membership in the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council, to work on minimizing the impact on the industry.

OFA will continue to raise concerns with government about the increasing labour costs and the impact of this new legislation.



Will the minimum wage increase negatively impact your farm business?

**73% YES 27% NO**

OFA online poll survey – July 2017



**Small business owners Jackie Fraser and Derek Roberts will feel double the sting of the new minimum wage hike on their staff payroll and the anticipated rise in food costs as they source from Ontario farmers for their grocery store and catering business.**



# TRANSITIONING YOUR FARM

## BUSINESS AND FAMILY ADVISORY SERVICES, SCOTIA CAPITAL INC.

For many Canadian farmers, the family farm is their most significant asset that may have been in the family for generations. While some farmers may wish to keep the farm in the family for the next generation, others may want to sell to a third party.

Planning well in advance of the date of transition could help with developing the appropriate strategy for your farm and maximize the after-tax proceeds, while considering the impacts of this decision on your family.

### Farm transition options

Farmers approaching retirement will usually be faced with the following options:

- Continue to own the farm directly until death;
- Transfer ownership of the farm to the next generation while still living;
- Rent out farm land or assets; or
- Sell the farm to a third party.

Whichever path is ultimately chosen, ensuring that the transition occurs in the most tax efficient manner can be complicated as there are special tax incentives that may be available and which require professional tax and legal advice.

### Access to the Lifetime Capital Gains Exemption

There is a \$1,000,000 lifetime capital gains exemption (LCGE) available to taxpayers with personally held qualified farm property, shares of the capital stock of a family farm corporation, or an interest in a family farm partnership.

Farmland, shares of a farming corporation or farming partnerships may qualify for the LCGE upon a sale or deemed disposition on death, but only when it has been used primarily as a farming business carried on in Canada by an individual, or their spouse, parent, or child, in which one of these individuals was actively and continuously involved.

### Intergenerational rollover

Unique to the farming industry, qualifying farming assets are transferable from a parent to a child (or grandchild) on a rollover basis during the owner's lifetime or upon death. Generally, these tax-deferred transfers may occur when the following conditions are met:

1. The property must be land, depreciable property, interest in a family farm partnership, or shares in a family farm corporation in Canada;
2. The property must transfer to a child that is a resident in Canada immediately before the transfer; and
3. The farm property has been used "principally" (more than 50% during the ownership period) in a farming business in which the taxpayer, or their spouse, child, or parent was actively engaged on a regular and continuous basis.

### Renting warning

If you were to rent out the farm, even a small portion, it could be considered rental income as opposed to farming income depending on how long the land was farmed versus how long it was rented.

### Farm held in a corporation or partnership

Only a transfer of the "shares" of the corporation or interest in the partnership would qualify for the intergenerational rollover rules or LCGE. A transfer of farming "assets" by the corporation or partnership would not qualify so it is important to speak to a tax advisor about whether to structure the transfer as one of shares or assets.

The lifetime capital gains exemption and the intergenerational land transfer options can be powerful tools in transition planning for your farming family.

Review options with the advice of professional tax and legal advisors, discuss plans with family, and aim to start the planning process well in advance of the transition date.



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## Four benefits to farm plates



*Farm designated licence plates are available to eligible Ontario farmers.*

Ontario farmers with a valid Farm Business Registration (FBR) number are eligible for farm designated licence plates. There are four main benefits of registering a vehicle with farm licence plates.

### 1. Lower annual plate fees

Farm plates qualify as reduced fee commercial licence plates for farmers with a valid FBR number. Just like commercial plated vehicles, farm licence plate fees increase by vehicle weight. For more information on fees, read OFA's fact sheet on farm plates at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca).

### 2. Limited dangerous goods exemptions

Vehicles with farm licence plates that transport dangerous goods for farming purposes are exempt from the documentation, placarding and driver-training requirements for goods weighing less than 1,500 kg and when the distance travelled is less than 100 km.

In this case, dangerous goods do not include explosives, flammable gases, toxic gases, infectious substances or radioactive materials. Agricultural pesticides are also exempt where the volume in a single container is more than 450 L but less than 6,000 L and the distance travelled is less than 100 km.

Gasoline and diesel fuel are dangerous goods, but they can be transported in an open vehicle, like a pickup truck, in a securely mounted, approved container. The total amount of gasoline or diesel fuel in all containers must be less than 2,000 L and individual containers cannot exceed 454 L.

### 3. Drive a D truck with a G licence

Farmers or their employees can drive a D truck (registered weight over 11,000 kg) with a farm licence plate and a class G driver's licence if the truck is owned or leased by a farmer. The vehicle must be used by the farmer for the personal transportation or the unpaid transportation of farm products, supplies or equipment to or from a farm. The driver must have an air brake (Z) licence to operate a truck with air brakes.

A class G2 driver can drive a D truck with farm licence plates only if it does not have air brakes. A class G1 driver cannot drive a D truck.

### 4. Drive Clean exemption

Light-duty vehicles with farm licence plates are exempt from the Drive Clean emissions testing program. Light-duty trucks must have a registered gross weight of less than 4,500 kg.

### Farm licence plates use and restrictions

Trucks with farm licence plates can transport farm products, equipment or supplies year-round. During the months of September, October and November farm vehicle owners can be paid to transport farm products, equipment or supplies for other farmers. There are no distance limits for vehicles with farm licence plates.

These trucks can also be used for personal transportation, including transporting personal and household items, farm buildings and maintenance items or recreational vehicles. The transportation of logs, pulp wood, sand, gravel or stone is not permitted.

For more information on registering farm vehicle licence plates visit [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca).



# Towards a stronger soil health strategy

The Ontario government is developing a new long-term strategy to guide soil health and sustainability in the province. The new strategy builds on the extensive soil health work that's been done by many Ontario farmers, agricultural organizations, ongoing research and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs initiatives.

OFA has been an active participant in the process to develop the *New Horizons: Ontario's Draft Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation* document – the draft strategy that was open to public commenting in late 2017.

**Ontario farmers can expect the release of a new long-term soil health strategy in 2018.**

OFA served on the original steering committee to develop the draft strategy, and we are pleased to see that feedback from Ontario farmers, the Indigenous community and other interested groups was incorporated. The draft strategy was developed in collaboration with

Ontario's agricultural sector and is designed to guide provincial efforts and investments to ensure we are meeting necessary objectives to improve and maintain healthy soils.

OFA submitted an official response as part of the consultation process, and we expect the final soil health strategy document to be released this year. The final strategy will act as a long-term framework for 2018 to 2030 that will guide soil health action, research, investments and activities.



Do you implement soil management strategies on your farm?

**84% YES 16% NO**

OFA online poll survey – November 2017

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## Q & A with Keith Currie

We sat down with OFA President Keith Currie to talk about what's ahead for the organization in 2018 and beyond.



*OFA President Keith Currie addresses members at the 2017 annual general meeting.*

### Tell us about your involvement with OFA over the years.

**Keith:** I took out my first OFA membership around 1987, and got involved with the Simcoe County Federation in the early 1990s when I served on the board of directors. I was elected to the provincial OFA board around 2002, representing the Simcoe Federation. I was chair of the environment committee for three years on the OFA board until it was restructured in 2007. After the board was reduced from 104 to 18, I was elected to represent Zone 13 (Simcoe, York, Peel) and have held that position ever since. In 2010 I was elected to the board executive, was elected vice president in 2013 and president in 2016.

### What do you enjoy most about your role as OFA president?

**Keith:** The people. It's always about people in agriculture. My involvement in OFA over the past 30 years has given me the opportunity to meet people from all across the province. I've toured some U.S. states with Minister Leal, fostering new relationships with farm leaders across the border. When you talk to people about their farming operations, you gain a deeper appreciation for how big and diverse our industry is. In my role as president, I engage much more with government agencies and agri-food

industry partners, and you realize how big an impact this industry has. It's exciting to see how all the links within our industry can work together to move our sector forward. And that includes people and organizations not directly connected to agriculture. All this does come with a huge time commitment. I am away more than 200 days a year, and that makes farming more challenging. I certainly appreciate my time on the tractor or in the fields much more now. Representing our industry to the world is quite an amazing thing. The relationships built through OFA provide a stronger voice for our industry, and that's important when we are constantly working with government on legislation and regulations.

### What OFA accomplishments are you most proud of?

**Keith:** Two specific things come to mind. The first is the work we accomplished as part of the Four Plan Review that included the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Plan and The Growth Plan. In 2015, I was appointed to be part of the advisory panel, chaired by former Toronto Mayor David Crombie, to review these four plans. The panel came up with recommendations that put an emphasis on highlighting and strengthening agriculture throughout the plans. And two of the recommendations – increasing density targets for development and implementing an agriculture systems mapping – have become a reality. I'm proud of these results. My second source of pride is the increased emphasis I have put on a more collaborative approach within the entire agriculture industry. Our strength is in numbers and unity is our best approach.

### What direction do you want the OFA board to take during 2018?

**Keith:** The upcoming provincial election provides an opportunity for the board, our organization and the entire industry to really stress what we need to build a stronger, more prosperous sector. At the board level, we need to encourage OFA members to get engaged and push their local candidates to integrate agriculture and rural Ontario needs into campaign platforms. After the election, our follow up work begins to continually engage with government on ongoing proposed legislation. Regardless of the party in power, we must continue to build relationships with government to foster better decisions for our sector.

### What are some of the key issues on the minds of OFA members?

**Keith:** Regulatory burden is always on our minds. It's an ongoing challenge to make sure the right type of rules are in place, and dealing with decision makers with no skin in the game who are completely removed from the issues. Phosphorus and nutrient loss are at the forefront. Property taxes, hydro rates, predation issues and lack of infrastructure investments are constant issues that members deal with every day. In the last year or so, we've also seen mental health become part of our conversations. It is an issue that agriculture is not exempt from, and I'm happy to see the farm community start to talk about it more openly. OFA will continue to work with members on mental health to be sure they know they are not alone, and we can help alleviate some of the stresses that are part of the industry we work and live in.

### What's been your biggest surprise as OFA president?

**Keith:** It's not really a surprise, but I am continually impressed by the support of the board and OFA staff. There is really good alignment on directional thinking and that makes our collective jobs that much easier to do. When we launched our Producing Prosperity election campaign at the 2017 AGM, it was met with tremendously positive feedback. I was a little surprised because I was unsure how a non-farm specific messages would go over. As an organization, we believe this campaign for distributing economic development has the potential for a long-term positive impact on rural Ontario, and it was very encouraging to have the membership endorse it the way they did.

### What are OFA's priorities in 2018?

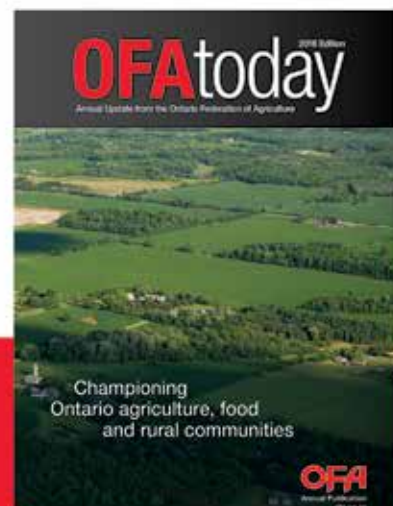
**Keith:** For the first part of the year, we'll be focusing on the provincial election and our Producing Prosperity campaign – addressing issues that impact our members. Our complete election platform is outlined on [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca). After the election, we'll be pursuing the new government to implement the priorities we outlined in the campaign.

### What issue would you like to see resolved in 2018?

**Keith:** Well, it won't be resolved this year, but what I'd like to see us continue to work on is telling our story. Public trust isn't just a buzzword, it's a reality that the agriculture community must address. It's not enough to say "trust us we are doing the right thing" and that sentiment doesn't satisfy many of today's consumers. While the thought of public trust makes some of us uncomfortable, it needs to become part of our every day – just like making cropping plans, choosing genetics to use in our livestock, machinery and capital planning decisions. We'll continue to work with other organizations to give OFA members the tools they need to help build stronger public trust in our agri-food system. And OFA will work diligently with government to be sure they understand the complexities of our industry so they too can help with public trust initiatives.

### What are the biggest opportunities for Ontario agriculture in the next one, five and 10 years?

**Keith:** Ontario agriculture is one of the most robust industries in the country. In the next year, there are continued opportunities to flourish and grow with new commodities and markets. Who could have imagined five years ago that we would be raising shrimp in Ontario! In the next five years, I think precision technology will continue to change how we do business and the new tools the industry will have to really take advantage of. I'm also really encouraged by the renewed interest in farming by our youth – and they will be the ones to really drive the innovation and excitement over the next decade.



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# Down on the farm: mental health myths in agriculture

Mental health doesn't discriminate regardless of who you are or where you work. Anyone can be affected, including those of us working in agriculture. To look at the myths and stigma surrounding mental health, OFA teamed up with Workplace Safety & Prevention Services. We identified and debunked seven common myths about mental health in agriculture to help raise awareness and address misconceptions.

## Myth #1: Mental health problems don't affect me.

Mental health impacts everyone. Mental health problems are common and many of us are personally affected or know someone who struggles. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in the course of a year and one in three Canadians will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime.

## Myth #2: Mental health is not a real illness like cancer.

Mental illnesses are real medical diagnoses. How we talk to and treat someone with a mental illness shouldn't be any different from how we treat someone with an injury or disease. Mental illness is not the regular ups and downs of daily life we all experience. A person living with a mental illness experiences various symptoms such as changes to one's thoughts, feelings and behaviours over a sustained period of time.

## Myth #3: Personality weaknesses or character flaws cause mental health problems. You can snap out of it if you try hard enough.

This is simply not true. People with mental health problems can certainly get better, with help, and may recover completely. But mental illness has nothing to do with a character flaw or not trying hard enough. There are many factors that contribute to mental health problems:

- Biological factors including genetics, physical illness, injury or brain chemistry
- Life experiences that include trauma or a history of abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Some of the strongest people we know are those living with mental illness and coping with daily life.

## Myth #4: Farmers don't get depressed.

Anybody can get depressed, even farmers. Until recently, little was known about the mental health of Canadian farmers. A University of Guelph study in 2015 and 2016 by Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton, surveyed more than 1,000 Canadian farmers and found that 35% reported feelings of depression. Additional survey results include:

- Approximately 45% of farmers self-identified in the high stress category
- 25% reported moderate anxiety
- 20% reported mild depression
- The term 'stress' is over used and misunderstood, which can negate the complexity and seriousness of mental health issues
- Survey respondents scored high for incidence of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and burn out

According to the survey, farmers scored higher than the general population when it came to feelings of anxiety and depression. Mental health problems are happening on the farm and we need to recognize the seriousness of the illness. Unfortunately, 40% of Canadian farmers surveyed also reported they would feel uneasy seeking professional help because of what others might think.

## Myth #5: Mental health illnesses are excuses for poor behaviour.

It's estimated that almost half of people in the workplace believe mental illness is used as an excuse for poor behaviour. The result is that many workers choose to go untreated rather than risk being labeled as "unreliable, unproductive and untrustworthy". No one chooses to experience mental illness. While some people affected by mental health may act in ways that are unexpected or seem strange to others, we all need to remember that the illness, not the person, is behind the behaviour.

## Myth #6: People with mental health problems have no fear they might jeopardize their jobs.

Fear does, in fact, stop people from sharing their mental health issues with employers. Nearly half of working Canadians agree that their work or place of work is the most stressful part of their day and life, and 16% feel their workplace is a source of feelings of depression, anxiety or other mental illness (Ipsos Reid, 2013). Mental health is especially concerning for the agricultural industry as farm owners and employees live and work in the same place. Unfortunately, the stigma attached to mental health means

many people dealing with a mental health problem fear they may lose their job or their livelihood if they share their mental illness with others. In fact, 31% believe that their employer would not be understanding or supportive if they told them about their mental illness (Ipsos Reid, 2012).

**Myth #7: Canadians are less aware of mental health issues than five years ago.**

Thankfully, Canadians are actually more aware of mental health compared to just five years ago, and there's been a significant shift in the understanding and open discussion about mental health. A 2008 Canadian survey found that 42% of respondents were unsure if they would socialize with a friend who had a mental health illness. A 2015 survey found 70% of Canadians believe attitudes about mental health have changed for the better compared to five years ago, including an increased understanding, awareness and acceptance of people experiencing mental health issues.

We've come a long way, but there is more work to be done, especially in the agriculture industry, to break down the myths about mental health. Visit [www.thinkmentalhealth.ca](http://www.thinkmentalhealth.ca), where you'll find free information, tools and resources for Ontario workplaces, including agriculture.



Do you talk about stress and mental wellbeing on the farm?  
**50% YES 50% NO**

OFA online poll survey – July 2017

## OFA participates in Sustainable Farm and Food Initiative



As sustainability becomes a key ingredient in the production and processing of Ontario grown and raised products, a new coalition has formed to understand the needs of value chain stakeholders and streamline verification. The Sustainable Farm and Food Initiative (SFFI) is a coalition of Ontario farm organizations including OFA, working in collaboration with representatives from the food and beverage sector, academia and non-government organizations.

The SFFI is working to create a system that uses a whole farm approach to simplify the process of meeting sustainability requirements.

Building on the strength of the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) and Growing Your Farm Profits (GYFP), Ontario farmers have a unique opportunity to develop

a robust and trusted sustainability initiative. The goal of the SFFI is to assist farmers in streamlining the increasing requirements made by food manufacturers, food retailers and other customers relating to the assurance that farm products have been produced in a sustainable manner.

As a member of the Sustainable Farm and Food Coalition Steering Committee that oversees the development of SFFI, OFA has been active in this new initiative. The promotion of sustainable farming practices and production are top priorities for OFA.

This project is a great example of the farm and food community working together with a supply chain approach to streamline sustainable production and processing.

The SFFI project was funded in part through *Growing Forward 2*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council assists in the delivery of *Growing Forward 2* in Ontario. A generous contribution to the SFFI project was also provided by the Grand River Agricultural Society.

Project participants expect the SFFI project to continue as part of the new Canadian Agriculture Partnership Program, beginning April 2018.

# Wildlife damage compensation

**OMAFRA updated the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program in 2017 – know your eligibility requirements, responsibilities, government responsibilities and where to go for more information.**

Ontario's Wildlife Damage Compensation Program provides financial compensation to producers whose livestock, poultry or honey bees are damaged or killed by wildlife. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) recently reviewed the program and OFA encourages all members to make sure they are aware of key eligibility requirements for compensation and their responsibilities as Ontario farmers to prevent and manage wildlife damage.

## Ontario's Wildlife Damage Compensation Program responsibilities – who does what?

### Producers are responsible for:

- Demonstrating reasonable care of livestock, poultry, beehives, bee colonies and beehive-related equipment in relation to the prevention of predation
- Notifying their municipality within 48 hours of discovering the injury or death of livestock or poultry, or discovering damage to beehives, a bee colony and/or beehive-related equipment
- Preserving the injury or kill site and carcass (or carcasses) until the municipal or territorial investigator has investigated
- Disposing of all dead livestock and poultry in a manner that is acceptable under the Ontario Regulation 106/09 of the *Nutrient Management Act*

### Municipalities are responsible for:

- Appointing municipal investigators
- Reviewing and submitting completed applications and any additional evidence to OMAFRA's program administrator
- Paying an owner's approved application, in accordance with the program guidelines and values assigned by the program administrator
- Providing Statement of Farm Support Payments to owners who receive compensation
- Paying and reimbursing municipal investigators

### The municipal or territorial investigator is responsible for:

- Carrying out a full and impartial investigation within 72 hours of receiving the notification of the injury or death of livestock or poultry
- Taking three to six colour photos per eligible kill/injury incurred and collecting all necessary information to accurately complete the application
- Municipal investigators are responsible for providing a completed program application to the owner and municipality within seven business days of completing an investigation
- The municipal investigator has no role in setting a value on the dead/injured livestock

### The bee investigator is responsible for:

- Carrying out a full and impartial investigation within three business days of receiving notification of the damage to a beehive, bee colonies and/or beehive-related equipment
- Providing a completed program application to the owner and OMAFRA's program administrator within seven business days of completing an investigation

### OMAFRA is responsible for:

- Appointing investigators for territories without a municipal organization
- Posting the standardized pricing table containing the fair market values for all eligible livestock and poultry, and updating the table on a regular basis
- Reviewing applications to determine eligibility and assigning values based on the evidence provided
- Providing the owner with a written decision within 30 business days of receiving a complete application, reviewing and assessing appeals
- Reimbursing municipalities (plus a \$30 admin fee per application) in accordance with the program guidelines



# Wildlife compensation eligibility requirements

## Producer eligibility requirements:

- Have a valid premises ID (PID) number for the farm property where the damage or kill occurred
- Have a valid Farm Business Registration (FBR) number
- Demonstrate reasonable care of livestock, poultry and bees
- Ensure availability of evidence that damage/death caused by predation

## Eligible damages:

- Eligible livestock/poultry killed by an eligible predator
- Vet costs for eligible livestock/poultry injured by an eligible predator
- Bee hives, bee colonies and/or beehive-related equipment damaged by an eligible predator

## Eligible predators:

### Eligible wildlife species for damage to livestock and poultry:

- Bear
- Bobcat
- Cougar
- Coyote
- Crow
- Eagle
- Elk
- Fisher
- Fox
- Hawk
- Lynx
- Mink
- Raccoon
- Raven
- Turkey vulture
- Weasel
- Wolf

### Eligible wildlife species for damage to honey bees:

- Bear
- Deer
- Raccoon
- Skunk

## Who's farming our data?

In an increasingly digitized world, the ownership and security of agriculturally-generated farm data may be raising as many questions as it sets out to provide input on. Advanced monitoring systems and networked technologies are capable of gathering significant amounts of data about farm production and practices. And as every additional piece of information is collected, questions arise about the use, security and ownership of the data.

OFA stepped into the data arena to protect the privacy of members' farm data to develop the Ontario Farm Data Privacy and Security Project. We set out to investigate the potential for collaboration between Ontario and a US-based initiative called Ag Data Transparency Evaluator (ADTE).

ADTE provides third-party assessment of contracts between farmers and ag tech providers, creating an Ag Data Transparent seal to companies that meet the core principles of ag data transparency.

OFA's project involved consultations with ADTE administrators and representatives from all aspects of the Ontario agri-food value chain, including producers, distributors, academic researchers, veterinarians, commodity organizations and equipment suppliers and manufacturers. The project was completed during 2017

and concluded that it would be valuable to Ontario farmers to have an Ag Data Transparency Evaluator in Ontario, making this a North American wide initiative to certify data collection and use.

The project was funded in part through *Growing Forward 2*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council assists in the delivery of *Growing Forward 2* in Ontario.



OFA's 2017 farm data project focused on privacy and security of ag data.

# OFA's policy development process

To address concerns and issues impacting members, OFA develops policy positions and advocates on behalf of its members.

A successful policy development process is stakeholder oriented. That's why OFA member engagement remains crucial when developing OFA's policy positions. Creating policy positions that accurately reflect the collective view of 37,000 farm members across Ontario requires effort. The following five-step process helps guide OFA's policy development effort.

## 1. Understand the issue

There are multiple sides to every issue. OFA starts by fully understanding the perspective of the individual or group raising the issue. However, OFA also consults with others to seek their input on the issue.

In addition to OFA's board of directors, OFA also relies on its policy advisory council, county and regional federations, and direct member survey results for perspectives on the many issues.

## 2. Define the problem

Problems are easier to solve than issues. Issues are not always simple or clearly defined and they also tend to come in waves. Getting to a defined problem requires research to investigate and validate the problem. Problem definition is significant because it determines what OFA intends to resolve and, by omission, what OFA does not intend to work on. Given its significance, it is important to seek agreement on the problem definition before proceeding to the next stage.

## 3. Establish objectives and outcomes

Once a problem is clearly defined, establishing the objectives and the ideal outcomes OFA aims to achieve is key. Determining where OFA wants to end up helps to focus on possible solutions that will get us there. OFA relies on member input and feedback to be sure the ideal outcome is envisioned.

## 4. Develop and evaluate possible solutions

OFA uses research and analysis to look at the pros and cons of each possible solution. This step can include looking to other governments and jurisdictions to see how they are addressing similar problems. The key is focusing on developing and evaluating possible solutions to the defined problem which will achieve our objectives.

## 5. Recommend the best solution

The final step is making the policy recommendation. In making a policy decision, the OFA board of directors should be presented with the recommended solution along with the next best alternatives. Adequate context and rationale should be provided with each solution. OFA's key messages used in lobbying initiatives are based on board-approved policy positions. That means when OFA representatives speak to government, they are speaking on behalf of members. These policy positions cover a wide swath of topics including source water protection, trespassing on farm properties, farmland preservation and Ontario's emerging bioeconomy.



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# Ontario announces new Long-Term Energy Plan



**The 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan addresses electricity cost and concerns, but OFA is still pushing for more investments in natural gas infrastructure across rural Ontario.**

When the Ontario government announced the development of new Long-Term Energy Plan in 2017, OFA was at the table to ensure policy makers considered the needs of farms and rural Ontario communities. OFA participated in the consultation process. We asked the government for a strong rural focus, balanced with reliability, conservation and community considerations, and access to natural gas.

The Ontario government launched its first Long-Term Energy Plan in 2010. The latest version, released in fall 2017, included a consultation process with individuals, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and organizations like OFA. The 2017 plan provides a 20-year road map for the province's energy sector and focuses on making energy more affordable and providing more options for how Ontarians use energy.

Here are highlights of the 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan for Ontario agriculture and rural communities.

- Continued implementation of Conservation First policy in regional and local energy planning processes (an OFA initiative)
- Support for renewable natural gas including supply and expanding the use of lower-carbon fuels for transportation (an OFA initiative)
- Support for regulations to expand local distribution company distributed resources (an OFA initiative)
- Expanded net metering options

- Local distribution company support to pursue system efficiencies for customer cost and energy savings
- Electric vehicle integration into distribution grids and smart charging in homes

The Ontario government invested \$70 billion in the province's electricity system over the past 15 years, and Ontario electricity costs are still among the highest when compared to other jurisdictions. High electricity prices hurt competitiveness, including agriculture. The 2017 plan addresses some costs and promotes continued customer and system conservation, and normalized delivery charges across the province.

Despite the investments made into the electricity system, stakeholders noted Ontario needs new technologies and methods to manage energy use. This requires high speed internet access throughout Ontario. OFA also believes additional long-term strategic investments to expand natural gas infrastructure are vital to improve energy management choices and bring these new technologies to rural Ontario.

Adding to recent energy consumer protection, greater bill clarity and winter disconnect strategies, and an appeal mechanism with Ontario Energy Board, the government will increase oversight of sub-metering companies. OFA believes the provincial government must extend these protections to farm and small businesses. And recognizing that not all customers are the same, the 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan will direct the Ontario Energy Board to examine innovative pricing plans for residential, business, urban and remote customers. This is a key opportunity to inform local distribution companies of unique challenges for farm businesses.






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# OFA gets involved with local federation events

2017 was another successful year for OFA's Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund. A total of 15 projects were funded through the program that enabled local county and regional members to participate in events and activities ranging from farm tours and leadership training to communications workshops and young farmer engagement.

Sponsored by Farm Credit Canada, the Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund sponsors new events to engage OFA members, and promotes increasing the visibility of local federations. The program also supports local events to encourage the involvement and mentorship of young and beginning, or previously uninvolved members.

## Oxford gets social



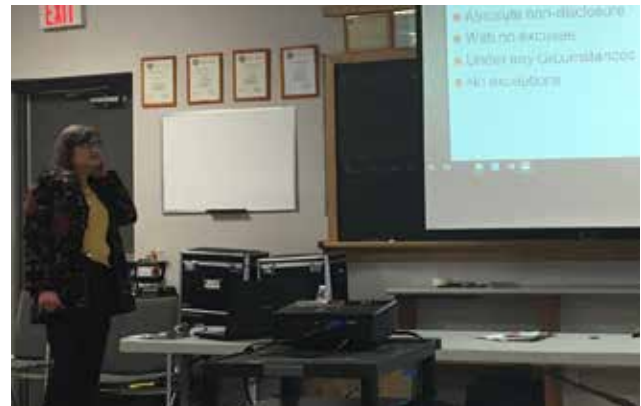
**Event participants discuss industry issues with Oxford County Federation of Agriculture members.**

Engaging young farmers and prospective members was the focus of an Oxford County Federation of Agriculture (OCFA) social event.

OCFA knew that building relationships with local members is crucial to the participation and continuation of the organization, and found the informal social event provided the right opportunity for them to foster new member connections. More than 40 people attended the evening event, funded in part by OFA's Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund, including local benefit partners, OCFA board members, young farmers and potential members.

The group recognized the need to provide an informal setting to help event attendees learn about the federation's role in the local agricultural community, get to know their local federation board members, understand the support the organization can offer on agricultural issues, the day to day operations of their farm businesses and the local community.

## Fostering community leadership in Middlesex



**Workshop facilitator, Elaine Graham talks board governance at Middlesex Federation of Agriculture's community training event.**

Governance and board training was on the agenda for the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture's (MFA) Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund event. The group recognized the importance of community leadership and opened the training session on sustainable board governance to anyone involved with a board of directors.

The one-day workshop was promoted to the Middlesex community and offered a facilitated training session on governance, board policies, guidelines and director obligations. The event focused on "what it means to be part of a board of directors," attracted 24 attendees and showcased the MFA as leaders in their community.

## Temiskaming takes a new approach to farm tours



**More than 400 visitors toured six farms through Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture's A Day in Farm Country.**

Organizers of “A Day in Farm Country” knew they were onto something when they included a volunteer training component to their public event. A few weeks before the event welcomed 400 visitors to six different farms, more than 30 volunteers participated in an advocacy training session hosted by the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA) to learn how to work with the public in an agriculture setting and address difficult conversations related to farming and farm practices.

More than 60 volunteers were on-site at farm tour locations for the event, many of them were new to volunteering for ag-related events. The training paid off for new volunteers who were comfortable with their roles and interacting with public visitors.

The goal of A Day in Farm Country was to connect visitors with local farmers. The feedback from public visitors was overwhelming. Visitor highlights included connecting directly with farmers, having face-to-face conversations and establishing relationships with local farmers.

The event and training were organized by the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture in collaboration with NOFIA with financial assistance from the OFA Proud to Lead “Involve” Fund.

### Dundas community launches Agricultural Hall of Fame



**Dundas Agricultural Hall of Fame  
2017 inductees.**

Celebrating the third year for the Dundas Farmers Charity Gala, organizers marked the event by combining two milestones – Canada’s 150 anniversary and the first inductees into the Dundas Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Gala participants celebrated an evening of recognition to honour the first five members inducted into the local hall of fame for their significant contributions to agriculture and the rural community in Dundas County. The new hall of fame awards received funding support from OFA’s Proud to Lead “Involve” Fund.

The event, hosted collectively by members from all Dundas County agricultural community groups hosted an evening of fun and fundraising. Proceeds from the event, including the live and silent auction, allowed the agricultural community to support the Dundas County Food Bank and other local charities.

### Leeds offers member workshops



**Chainsaw safety workshop participants  
learning in action.**

Leeds Federation of Agriculture hosted two workshops through the Proud to Lead “Involve” Fund, a social media ‘how to’ session and chainsaw safety event.

With the goal to help farmers become more comfortable using social media tools, event organizers hosted a hands-on workshop to help attendees understand and set up social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The chainsaw safety workshop was hosted in response to the number of local chainsaw related accidents.

Safety precautions and handling were discussed and all participants had the opportunity to practice. The event also provided an opportunity to inform participants about recent federation activities, advocacy efforts and opportunities within OFA, allowing members to get to know their organization better and encourage involvement.



### Farmers' market brings community together in Chatham-Kent



*Farmers' markets, like this one organized by the Kent Federation of Agriculture, are a great opportunity for consumers to meet local farmers and learn about local food production.*

A one-day farmers' market offered the Chatham-Kent community the opportunity to taste local food, learn about agriculture and food production and meet area farmers. Hosted by the Kent Federation of Agriculture and funded in part by the OFA Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund, the event is a model for bringing together community organizations and engaging consumers.

Farm organizations, individual farmers, agriculture education partners and vendors participated in the farmers' market set up outside the Downtown Chatham Centre. Organizers were pleased with the participation and community attendees. The federation also showcased their community work and promoted membership.

### On-farm education for politicians in Russell



*Russell Federation of Agriculture advocacy farm and processing tour participants.*

The Russell Federation of Agriculture combined advocacy with agricultural education when they hosted MPs and MPPs on a farm and food processing tour. Local politicians toured a dairy farm, Ferme laitière Sylvimarc in Casselman, ON to learn about dairy production and tour the progressive fourth generation farm with milking robots.

St-Albert Cheese Cooperative, one of the oldest cooperatives in Canada, highlighted the day with a guided tour and lunch. The event offered opportunities for local agriculture advocates and members of the Russell Federation of Agriculture to discuss the industry and issues impacting farmers in an informal setting. The successful day was made possible by funding through OFA's Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund.

### The Peterson Bros. entertain in Grey County



*Fans of all ages enjoyed entertainment by the Peterson Bros.*

Kansas agricultural entertainers, the Peterson Bros. travelled to Grey County to entertain and inspire local members. YouTube sensations, Greg, Kendall and Nathan Peterson shared their journey that has seen their musical parodies playing in 237 countries and generated 140,000 YouTube subscribers.

Approximately 300 people attended the presentation that included tips about advocating for agriculture. The three brothers also performed their songs for the full house that included fans of all ages and stayed for photos and autographs and conversations. The event also included a presentation of the "Building Careers and Futures in Agriculture" bursary winners, a new program that began in 2017.

Grey County Federation of Agriculture hosted the event with support from partners, including OFA's Proud to Lead "Involve" Fund to celebrate agriculture and everyone involved in the industry. Local board representatives were particularly impressed to see many young farm families attending together.





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## Local food showcase at IPM brings farmers together



*Local farmers and agricultural groups came together to feature Huron County's farmers and the food they produce at the 2017 IPM.*

Bringing people together is just one of Margaret Vincent's skills as OFA Member Service Representative (MSR) for Huron and Perth Counties. Vincent was one of the first contacts organizers of the 100th International Plowing Match (IPM) in Huron County made when they wanted to collaboratively showcase the county's farmers and local food at the 2017 event.

Together with the Huron County Federation of Agriculture (HCFA), Vincent joined with eight commodity organizations and countless volunteers to host a food court at the 2017 IPM featuring food from Huron County farmers. "We built a restaurant in a field," says Vincent. "County farmers, commodity organizations, local clubs and volunteer groups all came together to feature a one-stop food source for IPM visitors."

The food court featured beef, chicken, dairy, egg, grain, pork, sheep and turkey – all representative of types of farms in Huron County. Signature menu items like the Huron Sunrise Breakfast Sandwich were made from a selection of the featured commodities included eggs, cheese (dairy), bacon (pork) and English muffins (grains).

"We used the same model from previous IPM events

in Perth and Bruce Counties, featuring local food and engaging local commodity organizations and agricultural groups," she says. "HCFA started fundraising for this initiative in 2016 at their 75th anniversary gala and was proud to host this tribute to local farmers."

Vincent played a key role in the food showcase, working as a connecting link between the IPM organizers, commodity groups, HCFA and volunteers to make sure everything ran smoothly.

Organizing the food court was a significant undertaking, including staffing the five-day day event with a team of volunteers. "More than 9,000 meals featuring local food was served from the food court," she says. "Giving back to the community was part of the model and we even recruited local politicians to volunteer, and thanked them by donating to the local Food Distribution Centre on their behalf." Approximately \$7,000 worth of product from the event was also donated to the local Food Distribution Centre.

"So many people came together to make this event happen it didn't feel like work at all. We were all invested in making it the success that it was," says Vincent.

## Leading the local grassroots charge for change



**Deb Knapton, MSR for Arnprior, Lanark, Ottawa and Renfrew.**

When the local conservation authority in Lanark County proposed a bylaw to regulate non-Provincially Significant Wetlands, OFA members went directly to the Lanark Federation of Agriculture for help.

“A local member brought the proposed bylaw forward and the federation immediately recognized the difficulties the regulations could cause farmers,” says Deb Knapton, OFA Member Service Representative (MSR) for Zone 8 – Arnprior, Lanark, Ottawa and Renfrew. “The vague wording left much of the regulation open to interpretation, something that seriously worried our local members.”

As the local MSR, Knapton quickly became a resource, calling on OFA resources to assist with navigating the complexity of the bylaw and the process to influence the

final decision. Knapton knew the bylaw would negatively impact farmers and landowners in Arnprior, and engaged the Arnprior Federation of Agriculture to inform members of the concern.

With guidance from Knapton and OFA’s policy research advisor, Peter Jeffery, both federations wrote and signed a letter of recommendation to the conservation authority. The letter outlined concerns and referenced the Provincial Policy Statement that guides land-use planning. The recommendations pushed for specific and clear wording of the proposed bylaw to eliminate misinterpretation. The revised bylaw was passed in September 2017.

“By working together and being proactive we were able to have significant influence over wording of the bylaw,” explains Knapton. “The regulation is now more farmer-friendly and we’ve cemented a good working relationship between the local federations and conservation authority.” OFA’s team of 21 MSRs, including Knapton, are the local go-to when it comes to issues impacting farmers. “We’re all a team at OFA and it’s rewarding to see outcomes like the revised bylaw work in favour for Ontario farmers,” says Knapton.

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## OFA awards three post-secondary bursaries



*2017 OFA Student Bursary winners receive bursaries at OFA's 2017 annual meeting. Left to right: Mark Kunkel, Emily Potter, Cassie Allen, Rejean Pommainville. Absent, bursary recipient Julie French.*

OFA's bursary program began in 2016 to celebrate the organization's 80th anniversary. The overwhelming success led to the continuation of the program.

From 51 applications, three post-secondary students were selected to receive the 2017 bursaries. Julie French from Peel County, Emily Potter from Temiskaming and Cassie Allen from Prescott County each received a \$2,000 bursary at OFA's annual general meeting in November 2017.

Winners were selected from three regions – eastern, northern and southwestern Ontario. Applicants were judged on their volunteer and agricultural industry related accomplishments, community involvement, academic performance and interest in pursuing a career in agriculture. Bursary funds were raised through a silent auction and 50/50 draw at OFA's annual general meeting.

**Julie French** is a first-year student in the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program at the University of Guelph. Raised on a grain farm, Humberview Farms in Caledon, Julie is actively involved in her family farm and local community, volunteering with the Bolton

Agricultural Society and the Caledon Animal Shelter. A 4-H member, Julie shows dairy cattle and was a 4-H Ontario provincial ambassador. At school, Julie is a member of the OAC judging club, dairy science club, and plays hockey and soccer.

**Emily Potter** comes from a beef farm, Golden Meadow Farms, in Earleton. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at the University of Guelph, is currently president of the OAC beef science club, and helped organize the OAC northern Ontario ag tour. Emily is also very involved in promoting agriculture in northern Ontario by participating in local events.

**Cassie Allen** completed a high school skills major in agriculture and is now attending the University of Guelph in the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program. Raised on a dairy farm, Allensite Farms in Alfred, Cassie is very involved in 4-H and showing dairy cattle. Cassie volunteers with a number of community groups and participates in 4-H events across the province.

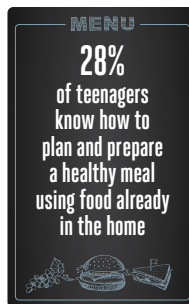
Visit [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) for information on the 2018 OFA bursary program.

# The state of food literacy in Ontario

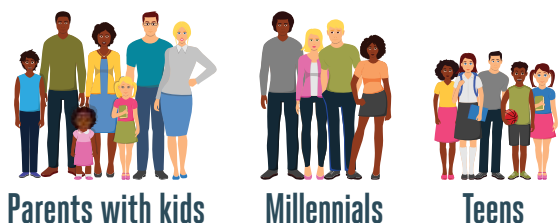
**Food literacy involves teaching the next generation how to make healthy and nutritious food choices that promote lifelong, healthy habits.**

As consumers continue to grow more interested in their food – including how and where it’s grown – the need to improve food literacy among all consumers must also continue. OFA set out to take the pulse on the current state of food literacy in Ontario, and use the insights to help guide the future development of consumer programs, resources and information.

The *Food Literacy Attitude and Awareness Research Project* was a joint project with OFA and an advisory committee including the Nutrition Resource Centre – Ontario Public Health Association, Ontario Home Economics Association, AgScape, and Farm and Food Care Ontario.



According to survey results, the way we are currently reaching teenagers with food literacy messages doesn’t seem to be as effective or impactful as it could be. Dietitians generally target their message to parents, but it’s time to revise those messages to target teens directly.



**Participating in meal prep at home is the most common way for teens to learn kitchen and cooking skills**

During 2017, three distinct consumer groups were surveyed to measure their level of food literacy and provide baseline information that could be built upon in future surveys – parents with children at home, teenagers (age 13-17) and millennials (ag 18-26).

Information gathered in the survey serves as a guide to OFA and other partners to identify future needs – including public policy – to develop strong food literacy components in curriculum and through other programs and resources. As a result of the survey, OFA is working with a registered dietitian to develop a meal plan for teenagers – as part of its [SixbySixteen.me](http://SixbySixteen.me) program – to help them understand how to put together properly balanced meals.



**>50% of millennials use YouTube videos to learn information and cooking skills**

The complete Food Literacy Attitude and Awareness Research Project is available at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca)



**Almost 25%** of all respondents couldn’t name any of the food groups



**<50% of parents** know safe cooking temperatures for meat and poultry

The project included two in-person consumer focus groups to gather qualitative information on food literacy, and helped direct content for an online survey. More than 1,000 consumers completed the online survey providing quantitative information on local food, meal planning, purchasing, preparation and consumption in the home, and sources of information.



**OFA asked more than 1,000 consumers about their knowledge of food, food production, nutrition and consumption to learn more about the state of food literacy in Ontario.**



# OFA Member Service Representatives

## Farmers Working for Farmers

Access to Member Service Representatives (MSRs) is one of the most unique aspects of OFA membership. OFA's team of 21 MSRs represent on-the-ground advocates for members, their families and Ontario's agriculture industry. Every OFA member has access to the MSR team, ready to take your call to help with issues affecting your farm or region. MSRs are a great benefit and important part of every OFA membership.

## Find your MSR

### South and Western Region

Paul Nairn

**Manager**

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Toll free: 1-844-272-5533

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Zone 5 – Henry Swierenga

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# OFA Member Service Representatives

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Muskoka, Temiskaming**

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Zone 15 – Sandra Meyer

**Thunder Bay, Kenora/Dryden,**

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# Collaborating for cleaner water and healthy waterways

Ontario farmers need access to safe water, proper drainage and healthy waterways to feed our provincial landscape. And OFA takes water issues seriously. Over the years, OFA has been involved in numerous water quality projects, led research projects, and advised on water policies and legislation. OFA's latest focus on the Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative demonstrates our commitment to addressing phosphorus in Ontario's Great Lakes and surrounding waterways, and finding ways to reduce the nutrients to maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Phosphorus levels in the Great Lakes, especially Lake Erie are a serious concern. Algal blooms that can be harmful to human health and the environment are occurring when phosphorus enters Lake Erie. The western basin of Lake Erie has experienced several incidents in recent years, disrupting the ecosystem, causing the closure of beaches and triggering a two-day ban on city drinking water in Toledo, Ohio. Lake St. Clair, which is an indirect pathway to Lake Erie, has also been experiencing problems with near-shore algal blooms.

Phosphorus sources include runoff from cities and towns, agricultural sources, sewage treatment plants, airborne particles, septic systems and industrial discharges. Climate change, altered hydrologic patterns, changes in land use and the arrival of invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels also add to the algal bloom problems.

## New working group established to reduce phosphorus

In 2017, OFA partnered with the Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative to develop innovative tools, practices and technologies to help farmers and municipalities reduce phosphorus and algal blooms in the southwestern Ontario watershed that feeds into Lake Erie. The collaboration is working with farmers, drainage engineers, conservation authorities, Indigenous people and universities to develop practical, cost-effective water management and drainage solutions for both urban and agricultural areas.

Working with such a diverse group is valuable, and the participation of drainage groups is already proving to be beneficial. The group has already shared considerable knowledge and openly discussed potential solutions.

OFA Vice President Mark Reusser is co-chair of the collaboration's steering committee, bringing representation of Ontario agriculture and all local county federations. OFA acknowledges excess phosphorus can enter waterways from farm drainage and is committed to resolving the problem and finding effective on-farm solutions.

Research and on-farm water management implementation projects are already underway. The first objective is to focus on the removal of phosphorus from drainage water. On-farm projects have been identified to treat water going through field tile systems and before being discharged into municipal drains. Two farms in Chatham-Kent are already testing this design and it's hoped that eventually, the project design would become a Best Management Practice (BMP) for drainage contractors.

The collaboration is expected to facilitate several demonstration projects to measure the benefit of drainage designs and new technologies. If successful, this work will become part of a multi-barrier approach to complement on-farm BMPs.

## Part of a bigger solution

Research and collaborative groups on the U.S. side of Lake Erie are also addressing phosphorus entry into waterways, including agriculture practices, drainage and researching treatment technologies.



**Ontario's Great Lakes Basin includes 95% of Ontario's agricultural land. Maintaining healthy waterways and reducing nutrient losses like phosphorus entering the Great Lakes is a top priority for OFA.**

### OFA partners with Grow Ontario Together

A collaboration of agriculture organizations, Grow Ontario Together (GOT) recognizes the need to work together – with each other, with the public, with environmentalists, with municipalities, concerned citizens and with governments. OFA has partnered with GOT and is currently working in collaboration on phosphorus reduction in the Great Lakes.

Together, OFA and the GOT collaborative partners are working to address ways and means of reducing the agricultural risk of phosphorus entering the Great Lakes and surrounding waterways through the work on the draft Canada-Ontario Domestic Action Plan. The Action Plan will be finalized in 2018 and aims to achieve phosphorus reductions in Lake Erie from Canadian sources. Although farmers are only one part of a complex problem, we can provide solutions. Adoption of best management practices and 4R nutrient management guidelines are already making positive changes.

OFA works with government and industry within the GOT collaborative working group to address issues like phosphorus management. OFA has been working with the GOT coalition, The Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative and the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative to ensure success and address water quality management.

For more information, visit [growontariotogether.ca](http://growontariotogether.ca).

Among the initiatives aimed at resolving the phosphorus problem is a commitment made in 2016 between Canada and the U.S. to a 40% reduction in the total phosphorus entering Lake Erie. There is also a commitment among Ohio, Michigan and Ontario to reduce phosphorus by 40% by 2025.

## OFA Board of Directors



**Back row (left to right): Pat Jilesen, Brent Royce, Debra Pretty-Straathof, Mark Wales, Larry Davis, Bruce Buttar, Crispin Colvin, Jackie Kelly-Pemberton, Peter Lambrick, Steve Brackenridge, Louis Roesch, Mark Kunkel**  
**Front row: Drew Spoelstra, Peggy Brekveld, Keith Currie, Mark Reusser, Rejean Pommainville.**



## OFA Benefit Program

### Benefits that work for your farm

OFA's Benefit Program is one advantage of membership in Ontario's leading advocate for Ontario agriculture. The Benefit Program offers a wide range of services and promotions exclusively for OFA members, delivering additional value to your farm business.

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.

For more information on OFA's Benefit Program, visit [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) and click on "Benefit Program" and follow @OFABenefits.



## OFA announces new succession planning benefit partner

OFA's newest benefit partner, Farm Life Financial Planning Group (Farm Life), offers a new farm management service to our members – succession planning.

Farm Life specializes in empowering farm families to have courageous conversations about the future of their family farm. The company's mission is to keep farmers farming and to work with families through the succession process in a way that protects family harmony. Farm Life works with families across the province to build continuity of the farm through succession, transition and tax efficient estate plans.

Offering members preferred rates on succession planning services, Farm Life has a team of professional experts ready to collaborate with existing farm advisors to build a succession plan for Ontario farm families. Through this process, Farm Life provides financial assessment, business planning, financial sustainability and a succession plan that protects both the family harmony and the legacy of the farm. Farm Life educates farm families and motivates the next generation of farmers.

Farm Life founder, Darrell Wade knows first-hand the unique challenges facing Ontario farmers today, including the importance of succession planning. Wade's own family faced the consequences of the right things not being planned for on his family farm. His father, like many farmers today, didn't take the time to plan for the "what ifs" with his professional team and he didn't communicate his intentions. With the sudden passing of his father at the age of 65 there was no legacy for the family farm business.

Farm Life has partnered with OFA to help farmers start the conversation about succession and continuity planning. Farm Life follows a proven process – the company keeps family first, taking the time to understand family dynamics, vision, goals, history and every member's interest in the farm and future direction. Through family and individual meetings, Farm Life figures out how these perspectives translate into the vision and legacy of the farm for future generations.

The company has also committed to educating Ontario farmers, including OFA members on succession planning because it's not a one-time event. Farm Life believes proper succession is more – it is continuity. A continuous process that includes transition, training and mentorship, transferring leadership to the next generation and ensuring the proper roles, training and knowledge is in place for them to succeed.

### Farm Life OFA member offer:

- A complimentary consultation on the farm for qualified OFA members
- A 10% reduction in their succession planning fees
- Access to a workshop held annually on continuity, transition and farm finances
- Each OFA member who completes a succession plan would be offered a complimentary annual check-in for the first two years after plan completion

For more information on Farm Life and exclusive OFA member benefits with this new partner, visit [farmlifefinancial.ca](http://farmlifefinancial.ca) or follow @FarmLifeFPG.

## Financial



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

Bring your OFA member card to your local Scotiabank branch or Commercial Client Relationship Manager to access these services.

For full details of the OFA member exclusive Scotiabank banking package, visit the Benefit Program page at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca).



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Contact your local Co-operators Advisor to confirm your membership and learn more, visit: [cooperators.ca/MemberBenefits](http://cooperators.ca/MemberBenefits).



Benefits | Retirement | Consulting

Preferred pricing on comprehensive health and dental plans for OFA members and their employees.

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Establish a lease line of credit and receive \$200 off your first lease payment of new or used farm equipment.

[rapidfinance.ca/ofa](http://rapidfinance.ca/ofa)

Call Natalee Pollard at 1-877-242-2202 x 5898

## Transportation



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OFA members are entitled to exclusive savings on the purchase of select new 2018 Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram and Fiat fleet vehicles. These discounts are only available for fleet purchases under the OFA Chrysler Fleet Discount Program.

For full details, visit the Benefit Program page at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) or call 1-800-668-3276.



Save thousands of dollars on purchases of select new 2018 Chevrolet and GMC models.

For full details, visit the Benefit Program page at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) or call 1-800-668-3276.

## Farm supply, hardware, clothing



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[marks.com](http://marks.com) 1-800-668-3276



- Look for exclusive savings during OFA Days at your local TSC store
- 10% every day discount for OFA members with TSC Discount Card
- Exclusive online deals available every month for OFA members
- Access to the TSC AgriCard program

[tscstores.com](http://tscstores.com)

## Farm publications



Complimentary annual subscription to Ontario agriculture's business magazine.

[betterfarming.com](http://betterfarming.com) 1-800-668-3276

## Communication



Exclusive mobile service packages and promotions for all OFA members on Canada's fastest mobile network.

[telusmobility.com](http://telusmobility.com) 1-844-884-9100  
[communicationzone.ca](http://communicationzone.ca)

## Travel



Access a worldwide inventory of hotels and car rentals at exclusive OFA discounted rates.

Take advantage of average travel savings 10% to 20% below the best available rates and up to 50% savings on any hotel, any car, anywhere, anytime.

[ofa.on.ca/travel](http://ofa.on.ca/travel) 1-800-668-3276

## Farm Management



OFA members have access to an exclusive energy and fertilizer outlook report twice a year.

[riskmanagement.farms.com](http://riskmanagement.farms.com)  
1-877-438-5729 x 5040



- A complimentary consultation on the farm for qualified OFA members
- A 10% reduction in their succession planning fees
- Access to a workshop held annually on continuity, transition and farm finances
- Each OFA member who completes a succession plan would be offered a complimentary annual check-in for the first two years after plan completion

705-775-800 [info@farmlifefinancial.ca](mailto:info@farmlifefinancial.ca)  
[farmlifefinancial.ca](http://farmlifefinancial.ca)

## OFA Priorities for 2018

There are several priorities that are on OFA's list for 2018 – activities and projects that drive our advocacy work. Some of these are long-term projects, and others have shorter timelines for us to advocate for the best interests of our 37,000 members.

**Minimum wage** – we're monitoring the impact the increases to the provincial minimum wage are having on the agriculture industry.

**Employment Standards Act** – as part of our labour file, we'll be working through the review of the exemptions to this legislation.

**Federal tax changes** – we're waiting to hear about the amended changes to the 2017 proposed private corporate tax issues.

**Wildlife compensation** – we're expecting a review of this program in 2018 and will be watching for details.

**Soil strategy** – we'll be working through the details of a new draft strategy.

**Phosphorus** – continuing to work with our partners at Grow Ontario Together to help craft the draft domestic action plan for phosphorus reduction.

**Producing Prosperity** – our provincial election campaign to focus attention and advocate for agricultural and rural economies leading up to the June election. See full story on page 6 and visit [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca) for more information.

Watch for updates on all these issues at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) and through all our social media channels.

## OFA launches new website



OFA's newly designed and redeveloped website – [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca) – offers members a modern web experience with improved accessibility, functionality and navigation. The new site is mobile responsive and socially integrated to give members more online engagement opportunities.

The updated look provides a platform that will enable more efficient and effective communication of OFA's key messages to our members, government and agricultural

industry. The site will be used as a primary tool for communicating key messages as part of our ongoing advocacy activities and 2018 provincial election campaign.

Input from across the organization was gathered to help establish a new direction and design to meet member needs more effectively.

OFA is proud to share this fresh, innovative website with you – experience OFA's new site at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca)



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