

# FROM THE FIELD

From our field office to yours – timely information for MPPs about Ontario's agri-food sector, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture



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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

A new season brings new energy and opportunities in agriculture. And for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), this season brings increased focus on the upcoming spring budget, and then the provincial election in June.

Ontario's agri-food industry is a vital part of the provincial economy, contributing \$13.7 billion to the annual GDP and generating 158,000 jobs. And that means the agriculture sector and the rural communities that support our businesses must be a significant factor in discussions about what the province needs to continue to drive growth.

In this issue of From the Field, we are focusing on our pre-budget submission, the various issues for which we have generated EBR submissions, and on our Producing Prosperity in Ontario election campaign.

When you live and work in agriculture, you already know the value of community and the strength of supporting your neighbours. OFA will be sharing those messages with the rest of the province to demonstrate the tremendous value and opportunities that await Ontarians when we support our rural communities with investments in infrastructure.

We look forward to meeting with you over the coming weeks and months to inform, discuss and remind you of the innovative possibilities and opportunities that Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities offer for the entire province, whether you live in Cornwall or Kenora.



## BUDGET 2018

### OFA urges government to build a budget to support bigger rural growth

In its pre-budget submission, OFA advised the government to shift spending to distribute economic investments and spending around the province. Ontario's rural communities offer tremendous potential for the entire province, and are vital to an agri-food sector that contributes 158,000 jobs in the province and adds \$13.7 billion to the GDP every year.

OFA believes that public investment in our rural communities will further strengthen and grow the economy, and provide new economic opportunities for families. Stronger rural communities also opens up solutions for distributing population growth around the province to help solve the growth pains of urban centres with transportation and soaring home prices.

OFA is recommending that the Ontario government help grow rural Ontario in its 2018 budget. Infrastructure investments including widespread broadband, access to affordable natural gas energy and increased social infrastructure for schools and medical care will attract new businesses and create jobs for new residents to rural communities.

OFA has developed a campaign to secure distributed economic development through public investment in our Producing Prosperity in Ontario initiative (see story on page 3). And that's the same advice we're reinforcing with government for the 2018 budget.

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## EBR SUBMISSIONS SUMMARY

# Adding agriculture's voice to government activities

One of OFA's key roles and responsibilities to our 37,000 farm members is to provide strategic and thoughtful input on government Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) submissions. In January of this year, we produced EBR submissions for seven issues that impact the agri-food industry and our rural communities.

### 1 Climate Change Adaptation

OFA recommended that the new not-for-profit Climate Change adaptation organization would benefit from agricultural representation on its Board of Directors. OFA requested that significant resources should be dedicated to supporting the resilience of agricultural production and continued food security. OFA also recommended that the new organization and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change regularly engage with Ontario's farm and commodity organizations to assist in building awareness and acceptance of adaptation priorities and opportunities.

### 2 Province-Wide Implementation of Green Button

OFA supports implementing Green Button by utilities as an appropriate step towards smart grid data management. Green Button, as the common standard for energy data and data transfer, will facilitate significant improvements in efficiency and conservation technologies, and improve management of Large Building Reporting requirements. However, OFA believes rural access to high-speed internet must exist before mandating smart grid data management.

### 3 Tire Regulation under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act

OFA recommends that small volume farm equipment manufacturers or retailers be exempt from this proposed regulation. OFA also believes that farmers who source farm vehicles or farm equipment from outside Ontario should not bear the burden of responsibility to ensure that used tires are appropriately recycled. OFA recommends that methods of promotion and education should be left to the tire producer's discretion. In addition, OFA believes that any added costs, fees, etc. should be clearly and separately noted on a tire invoice or bill of sale.

### 4 Proposed Amendments to Net Metering, or new regulation under the Ontario Energy Board Act

OFA supports plans to enhance net metering as part of a smart grid system, including third-party ownership and virtual net metering. Regulations should allow for a broad range of generation technologies, including biogas, biomass, storage, micro and combined heat and power projects. OFA recommends reviewing the Distribution System Code Net Metering capacity limit, maintaining a small FIT component to sustain growth of projects with at least 50% community-owned participation, and exploring financing options.

### 5 Amendments to Ethanol in Gasoline and Greener Diesel – Renewable Fuel Content Requirements for Petroleum Diesel Fuel

OFA supports amendments to the regulated ethanol fuel requirement increase to 10%, and the accompanying amendments to require ethanol to emit fewer GHG than petroleum, and to incent renewable fuel technologies through compliance options.

### 6 Proposed Amendments to the Energy Consumer Protection Act

OFA supports the proposed amendments designed to ensure customers entering into third party ownership (TPO) electricity retail agreements can make informed decisions and can understand the impacts of associated contracts or agreements not covered under the *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010*.

With the close of feed-in-tariff (FIT) programs at the end of 2017, net metering remains the sole program for procurement of renewable energy in Ontario. OFA supports plans to enhance net metering as part of a smart grid system, including third-party ownership. This proposed amendment under the *Energy Consumer Protection Act* ensures that under proposed TPO net metering legislation, consumers have sufficient protection.

### 7 Proposed New Regulations to the Electricity Act

As part of 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan commitments for net metering, the Ministry of Energy proposes a new regulation to ensure certain non-rooftop solar and wind generation facilities are sited appropriately. Restrictions for connection to the electrical system will include property setbacks, wind and non-rooftop solar connection to a residence and facilities over 10 kW located on properties within prime agricultural areas. Compliance includes signoff by a relevant professional, Association of Ontario Land Surveyor for setback and Canadian Institute of Planners member for prime agricultural area requirements.

The proposed regulation essentially mirrors the terminated Large Renewable Procurements (LRP) and Feed-In-Tariff (FIT) siting restrictions, OFA recommends energy take this opportunity to address siting failures that arose under those programs.

Read OFA's complete EBR submissions at [ofa.on.ca](http://ofa.on.ca)

# We've got a plan for Producing Prosperity in Ontario

OFA is focusing our spring 2018 election messaging around the theme of *Producing Prosperity in Ontario*. We believe Ontario can do better for all its citizens by distributing the economic growth and development across the province.

Distributing development dollars across Ontario is the solution to ongoing challenges facing rural and urban communities.

## Spreading economic investments around Ontario will:

### Create jobs

New investments in Ontario's rural communities will grow existing businesses, attract new companies and boost opportunities for residents and regional economic development.

### Build affordable communities

Improving infrastructure in rural Ontario can ease the urban housing strain and open new opportunities for working and living in smaller and mid-sized communities across the province.

### Secure a sustainable local food system

Strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector by investing in our rural communities — sound roads and bridges, reliable broadband and affordable energy will guarantee our local food system. Proper public policies with thoughtful land-use policies will protect our land and resources for future generations.

## Ontario's agri-food sector is the leading economic engine for the province



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



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



158,000 jobs are  
generated by the  
farm sector



**\$8,100,000,000**

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

## Ontario's rural communities need these investments:



### Natural gas

Access to more affordable energy will give farms, businesses and rural residents the competitive edge to drive growth and save more than \$1 billion in annual energy costs.



### Transportation

Sound roads, bridges and proper drainage are needed to support the growth and transportation of our goods and services.



### Broadband

Reliable internet supports farms and rural communities — without it, our businesses, residents and schools are at a disadvantage.



### Schools

Rural schools are essential to attract and retain local employees by providing quality education and local community hubs for the next generation of Ontarians.

We look forward to talking to you about our ideas for *Producing Prosperity in Ontario*. Please visit [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca) to read more.



**PRODUCING  
PROSPERITY**

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## BUDGET 2018

Sound investments in rural Ontario will jumpstart farming and overall rural growth...and in turn, help stimulate the entire economy. Rural Ontario holds the potential to deliver economic and social returns to the entire province.

Working with other organizations in Ontario's agri-food sector, OFA is asking

the government to earmark investments in the next budget and beyond to support rural communities. This investment will pay dividends by relieving the strain on the GTHA housing market while delivering long-term economic growth.

OFA is urging the government to develop a cost-effective infrastructure program

to address roads, bridges, drainage and broadband, and provide funding directly to municipalities.

It's time for Ontario to adopt a new approach. It's time to boost our rural economy with a planned program of distributed economic development that will produce greater prosperity across Ontario.

# What's on our mind?

OFA regularly polls its member to see what's on their mind, and keep in touch with grassroots issues and ideas. Here are the results of some of our latest member surveys.



Will the minimum wage increase negatively impact your farm business?

**73% YES 27% NO**

OFA online poll questions – July 2017

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



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

**58% YES 42% NO**

OFA online poll survey – July 2017



## BRINGING ONTARIO'S FARM VOICE

OFA is the largest general farm organization in Canada. When we bring our ideas, requests and concerns to Queen's Park, we're representing the voices of more than 37,000 farm members.

Our members are the backbone of a robust food system. They grow the more than 200 different commodities produced and raised in Ontario. They are family farms that run the gamut of single person operations to multi-generational families. They are innovators, planners, hard workers and they are helping drive the Ontario economy forward.

OFA's responsibility to our members is to represent and advocate for their shared interests and concerns with government and policymakers.



## COMING EVENTS

**Queen's Park  
OFA event**  
February 21, 2018

**Liberal Caucus  
breakfast**  
March 6, 2018

**PC Caucus  
breakfast**  
March 7, 2018

**NDP Caucus  
breakfast**  
March 20, 2018

Do you have questions about Ontario's agri-food sector or want to learn more about issues impacting our industry? Contact OFA for insight and information.

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