

Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Policy Advisory Council Meeting, Guelph

August, 2018

Welcome and Introductions:

Keith Currie, President and John Gillespie, Bruce County PAC member welcomed the PAC. John Gillespie volunteered to co-chair the meeting.

Agenda Review:

John Gillespie reviewed the agenda. No changes were made.

County Concerns:

Simcoe:

1. Re-designation of farmland without the owner being notified.

There can be a considerable time lapse between properties being re-designated from “agriculture” to some non-agricultural use. There are notification requirements in the Planning Act for changes to the Official Plan (OP) which would result in the properties being re-designated from “agriculture” to some non-agricultural use. In the case of amendments to an OP, notification would likely be through a notice in a locally-circulated newspaper, followed by at least 1 public meeting. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing publishes a series of “Citizens’ Guides, including one specifically on Official Plans; <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1759.aspx>

Where portions of a property are assigned a natural heritage designation, there is no requirement that the municipality formally notify the property owner. Over the years, OFA has repeatedly requested that property owners be notified when a natural heritage designation is applied to their property.

To ensure that county federations receive notice of all Planning Act-related changes (OP amendments, OP reviews, Zoning By-laws, etc.), county federation can request that they be notified of all proposed Planning Act-related changes for both upper tier and lower tier.

2. Driver’s licenses, and why some farmers are having difficulty finding drivers, especially at harvest. Also, is there a need for annual safety inspections for low mileage farm trucks?

For certain Driver’s License (DL) classes, there are renewal requirements that the license holder provide a medical report and pass a knowledge and vision test. The medical report requirements have been in effect for some time for holders of a Class A Driver’s Licenses. For the holders of a Class D Driver’s License, these requirements came into effect **July 1, 2018**.

Class D Medical Requirements:

- license holders under age 46 are required to submit a medical report every 5 years.
- between ages 46 and 64, license holders are required to submit a medical report every 3 years.
- license holders age 65 and older are required to submit an annual medical report.

Class D DL for a truck with a gross weight exceeding 11,000 kg (24,250 lbs) or the combination of a truck exceeding 11,000 kg and a towed vehicle or vehicles, where the towed vehicles do not exceed 4,600 kg (10,141 lbs.)

Class D license holders up to age 80 are subject to a Class D knowledge test and vision test every 5 years. Class D holders over age 80 are still required to complete an annual knowledge, vision and road test.

Class A Medical Requirements:

- license holders under age 46 are required to submit a medical report every 5 years.
- between ages 46 and 64, license holders are required to submit a medical report every 3 years.
- license holders age 65 and older are required to submit an annual medical report.

Class A DL for any combination of a truck and a towed vehicle or vehicles, where the towed vehicles exceed 4,600 kg (10,141 lbs.) If the truck & trailer(s) have air brakes, then the driver must have the air brake (Z) endorsement on their DL.

MTO also offers what is referred to as a “restricted A” or an AR Driver’s License. It entitles the holder to drive a truck/towed vehicle combination where the gross weight of the towed vehicle exceeds 4,600 kg, but it only allows for 1 trailer/towed vehicle and the towed vehicle cannot have air brakes.

Class G DL for a truck with a maximum gross weight of 11,000 kg (24,250 lbs) or the combination of a truck not exceeding 11,000 kg and a towed vehicle or vehicles, where the towed vehicles do not exceed 4,600 kg (10,141 lbs.).

Before lobbying for any changes to these requirements, we would first check with the Ontario Trucking Association for their perspective on these requirements.

With respect to Annual Safety Inspections for trucks or truck/trailer combinations with a registered gross weight over 4,500 kg (9,920 lbs.), anytime we’ve asked for changes for low mileage farm trucks, MTO has refused to consider this. They argue that critical vehicle components deteriorate while the vehicle is idle for extended periods of time.

*Peter Jeffery also noted that For Class D trucks with **FARM** plates; one can drive this type of truck with a G Driver’s License. If the D truck has air brakes, then the driver’s license holder is required to have the air brake or Z endorsement on the license. You can attach the air brake or Z endorsement to you G driver’s license.*

*A G2 driver can also drive a Class D truck with **FARM** plates, but in this situation the truck cannot have air brakes.*

3. Design problems when new roads and being built, too narrow, no shoulders, bridge design flaws.

MTO sets the design standards and criteria for roads, bridges, traffic circles, etc. There are different standards for different classes of highways. Highway classes are based on traffic volumes. For the most part, highway design standards serve the principle road uses, namely cars and trucks.

We have raised the issue of highway design, and the need for highways in agricultural areas to be able to accommodate today's farm equipment. MTO's standards specify differing lane widths, based on highway speeds, traffic volumes and highway type (rural King's Highways, secondary highways, etc.). for example;

- Lane widths for rural King's Highways range between 12ft.4in and 9ft.
- Lane widths for Secondary Highways range between 11ft.6in and 9ft.

Current standards for traffic circles focus on their ability to accommodate a 53 ft tractor trailer combination. For farm equipment trying to negotiate their way through, the width of the equipment is more limiting than length.

At the USDA Conference earlier this year, Jason was able to contact someone from John Deere who provided him with some equipment widths and lengths for roundabouts. We'll be seeking a meeting with MTO staff on this as soon as possible.

MTO and municipalities routinely post notices of their intention to rebuild roads, bridges and roundabouts, which include public open house sessions. These public open house sessions provide local residents and county federations with opportunities to inform MTO or municipal staff of the unique needs and concerns of farmers.

Dufferin:

Emerging seed issue. Recent articles in the Western Producer by Brian Cross (July 26, 2018) suggest the seed industry is exploring ways of extracting fees from farmers who save their own seed. Note the following:

First article gave some details on the discussions happening among the CSTA, CSGA and associated groups to amalgamate into a single Seed Synergy organization. While this might create some economies of scale, the comment was made about creating new sources of revenue.

The second article is entitled "Trade eyes royalty scheme for farm-saved seed." Here is a quote from the article: *"I can report that our board passed a resolution, and the CSTA,s standing policy now states that we support the farm-saved seed trailing contract royalty model for tabling with our Seed Synergy partners," said CSTA executive director Dave Carey.*

OFA was not previously aware of these discussions.

CFA has done extensive work on Plant Breeder Rights and will engage on this issue.

Wellington:

1. We would like an update as to how many County Federations have been successful at reducing the farmland tax ratio, as well as how many Counties use a farmland tax ratio under 25%

Current list of municipalities with a farm tax ratio below 0.25:

Oxford 0.235
Lambton 0.226
London 0.1752
Brant 0.24
Chatham- Kent 0.22
Lennox and Addington- 0.23
Kingston- 0.2375
Region of Durham- 0.20
Hamilton 0.1767
Ottawa 0.20
Caledon 0.1689
North Bay 0.15
Halton Region 0.20

2. We had an issue in Wellington County regarding a new comprehensive zoning bylaw. It came to our attention that it appeared that the consultant was 'cutting and pasting' from other zoning bylaws. This cutting and pasting was from municipalities that weren't agriculturally based. Counties need to be vigilant in looking for these changes and we would like to make everyone aware.

Prince Edward:

Prince Edward has concerns that the reduced load restrictions imposed here from February to May are posing serious difficulties for farmers who need to move stored corn and beans to market.

Detail from OFA:

The issue is more complex than simply a provincial or municipal issue.

Firstly, the weight limits and exemptions are in the Act itself, which makes changing it harder than if they were in regulations. Secondly, the provisions are dated. They've been unchanged since at least 1990. Trucks have become much bigger over this period of time.

Subsection (2) a & b refer to 2-axle fuel and feed trucks. I doubt there are any 2-axle fuel and feed trucks in service in Ontario. In addition to these two configurations, live poultry trucks [subsection 2 c] are also allowed more weight/axle during the reduced load (1/2 load) season; 7500 kg versus 5000 kg. Subsection 4 grants outright exemptions to 5 types of trucks; 4b exempts milk trucks.

While the province and municipalities have the authority to impose seasonal load limits on roads under their jurisdiction, many provincial and municipal roads are not subject to seasonal load

restrictions. Some number of roads have been built to allow for full loads year round. But it costs more to do so.

We find some municipal roads built to carry full loads year-round; others are not. In the case of municipalities, it becomes a financial decision to upgrade some or all of a particular road to carry full loads year-round. Given the financial demands on municipalities, its understandable that they'll be reluctant to undertake widespread road upgrades. Perhaps the county federations where this is a problem can make a business case for upgrades to specific sections of roads, to facilitate the movement seed, feed, fertilizer throughout the year.

Algoma:

At our local meeting it was noted that a lot of the population has little regard for the slow-moving vehicles. Our local federation buys some time on the Radio in June to remind people it is the season for farmers and the large equipment on the road, but many still pass on hills and corners. The government does a lot of media messaging for several other things, perhaps they should do some for farm vehicles.

Comment from Barclay Nap, Wellington PAC - asked OFA to consider approaching driving schools to educate new drivers on large vehicles and farming equipment.

Oxford & Middlesex:

High Speed Rail Proposal Update: As an alternative to the proposed High-Speed Rail project announced earlier this year by the Government of Ontario, Oxford County Federation of Agriculture and Middlesex County Federation of Agriculture are supporting the Oxford County SouthwestLynx proposal.

More information on SouthwestLynx can be found on the Oxford County Website:
www.oxfordcounty.ca

Keith Currie commented that the new government has committed to completing the Environmental Assessment that was started by the Liberal government. This will be a valuable tool for municipalities to use when planning future infrastructure.

Niagara North:

Horticulture is losing crop protection materials, products not being renewed their registration. This is hurting the industry.

Brian Gilroy, OFVGA commented that many fungicides are gone as of the past couple of weeks. Reprieve for some other products. Methods that pest regulatory management use must change. Horticulture Council working with CFA.

Provincial Priorities:

Keith Currie overviewed OFA's short term priorities and goals with Ontario Ministries with the PAC. He spoke about helping the new government accomplish regulatory reductions on wildlife damages, property class tax rebate program, ag impact assessment, rabies vaccination

regulatory changes, high speed rail, Algonquin wolf recovery strategy and protected species protocols migrating to the ministry of the Environment, Conservations and Parks.

Keith will be meeting with the new Minister, Ernie Hardeman on August 23.

AGM Update:

Margaret Vincent, OFA Member Service Representative provided details on the upcoming AGM in November. Reminding the PAC that the event will be in Hamilton. She introduced the theme “Prosperity Grows Here” and announced that the keynote speaker will be Doug Griffiths, author of 13 Ways to Kill Your Community.

Margaret encouraged counties to recognize and encourage young farmers to attend the Ontario Young Farmers Forum. The event takes place at the same time as the AGM.

Agri-Food Management Institute Project – Regional Opportunities:

Bronwynne Wilton of the Wilton Group presented a project her firm is working on to identify regional opportunities for local production. Specifically, identifying barriers that are holding back the agricultural economic sector.

She solicited input from PAC members on the project.

See attached ppt presentation.

OFA Member Survey:

Colin Siren from Kynetecs reviewed survey results from an OFA member survey conducted in March of 2018. There were 2099 survey participants.

See attached ppt presentation.

Agri-Foods Initiatives Directory:

Danielle Collins, OFA Policy Analyst explained that on the OFA website is a directory of online projects, programs and policies to help support agriculture and food, called the Agri-Foods Initiatives Directory. It can be found at www.ofa.on.ca/GrowAG

Input is welcome for projects, documents or initiatives that would help others.

See attached ppt presentation.

Municipal Election Kit:

Danielle Collins, OFA Policy Analyst overviewed the Municipal Elections Kit handout. The kit was developed by OFA for county federations to work with their municipal election candidates. It contains background of top issues and questions to ask candidates.

Danielle surveyed the PAC with a series of questions relating to economic development in their communities.

Keith commented that the kit is meant to be tailored to your own region. Do not go to your municipality or candidate and talk to them about all the issues listed in the kit. Pick your top priorities.

Danielle will create a short template that each county can use to tailor the kit to their region.

PAC Administration:

Janine Lunn, OFA Capacity Coordinator asked for input from the PAC on an orientation PAC meeting on the Sunday afternoon before the AGM. It was concluded that a meeting on Sunday should be held with the first portion dedicated to new PAC orientation and the second half getting together as a full group to work on team building and voting in a new steering committee.

Charles Regele, PAC from Temiskaming thanked the current three-member steering committee for their time and input.

Farm Transition Workshops:

Janine Lunn reminded the PAC about three upcoming workshops on farm transition. She explained that OFA has partnered with The Co-operators, Farm Life and Scotiabank to present a free, half-day workshop on a successful transition plan. Locations and dates are as follows:

- **Wednesday, November 28:** Cookstown Curling Club, Cookstown
- **Thursday, November 29:** Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, Kingston
- **Monday, December 3:** Ramada Inn, London

Pre-registration is required. Register at: <https://ofa.on.ca/transitionplanning/>

PAC Evaluation:

Janine Lunn conducted an interactive PAC evaluation. She asked PAC to suggest topics for a possible October webinar meeting. Two suggestions offered were insurance and reviewing not well-liked legislation that was imposed by liberal government.

Other Issues:

Dundas:

With the new government is this a good time to ask for capital gains exemptions?

This is currently on the agenda for CFA and is being looked at by the finance office.

Simcoe:

What is being done on the issue of 911 numbers on vacant land? To have a 911 number the vacant land must have an entrance which requires permits.

Keith is aware of an initiative that Peel Region has under taken. Best advice is to get in touch with your municipality and have the conversation.

Adjournment