

# 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*



**Keith Currie**  
President  
Ontario Federation  
of Agriculture

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Harvest is a hopeful time for the agri-food industry. Even after the challenging weather conditions we endured this spring, we are ever hopeful that our hardy crops will rebound and deliver productive and profitable results when harvest rolls around.

But agriculture has become about so much more than growing food. Never before has the agri-food sector faced so many challenges and opportunities. From basics around the need for the same services across rural communities as urban Ontarians expect, to trade disputes and illegal trespassing by activists. With the federal election in a few short weeks, OFA has also been focused on what our sector and rural communities need to continue to be the biggest boost to the provincial and federal economies.

In this fall issue of *From the Field*, you will find a review of the work we've been doing on behalf of our 38,000 farm family members. Our job is to advocate for legislation and regulations that will help Ontario farmers and their rural communities be more sustainable, competitive and prosperous. Please take a few minutes to read through, and we invite you to join our 2019 annual meeting in Hamilton on November 18 & 19.



## Rural communities suffer fallout from CRTC decision

It's been almost three years since the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Canada (CRTC) declared broadband internet access to be a basic service in Canada. And yet, there are many rural communities in Ontario still waiting for reliable, high-speed internet.

Bell Canada's recent announcement that it plans to cut back on wireless home internet expansion in rural areas by 20% is another blow to the competitiveness and connectivity in Ontario.

The telecom giant's announcement came after the CRTC ruled that smaller internet service providers would pay lower "wholesale" prices for Bell's infrastructure. And when you consider that Bell, together with Rogers and Telus, own the vast majority of the assets needed to bring reliable internet to rural communities...our communities are losing out.

OFA knows this is a complicated issue. We've been vocal advocates for the need for better broadband. Our businesses, schools and residents are at a distinct disadvantage without dependable broadband.

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## OFA welcomes new GM Cathy Lennon

Cathy Lennon is the new general manager of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. A long-time agricultural leader and advocate for the sector, Cathy brings more than 20 years of experience to lead Ontario's largest general farm organization.

Cathy's professional career has centred around working for farmers to make a positive difference in their lives and their farm businesses. "It's an exciting new era for OFA as we welcome Cathy into the organization," says Keith Currie, OFA president. "Agriculture has big opportunities and no end of challenges, and Cathy's experience in so many facets of the agricultural sector will be a tremendous asset for the entire OFA organization."

Before joining OFA, Cathy was the general manager of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers, a senior lender with Farm Credit Canada, a program manager with Agricorp – the provincial crop insurance organization, and the general manager of Ontario Sheep Farmers.

You can reach Cathy at [cathy.lennon@ofa.on.ca](mailto:cathy.lennon@ofa.on.ca) or 519.821.8883.

### Thank you, Neil Currie

As OFA welcomes its new general manager, we thank our recently retired general manager Neil Currie for his years of leadership, vision and advocacy for Ontario's agri-food sector.

## Producing Prosperity: Making agri-food matter

As we head to the polls on October 21, OFA wants to ensure provincial and federal governments understand what Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities need to continue to produce prosperity for all Canadians as a major contributor to economic growth. Here are the key issues we are addressing with all levels of government.



Rural Ontario needs affordable energy.



Access to reliable, high-speed internet will support farms and rural communities.



We need well maintained roads, bridges and drainage systems to keep our industry moving.



Tapping into markets for our agri-food products depend of smart regulations, fair access to global markets and a skilled, local workforce.

We're encouraging our 38,000 farm members to talk to local candidates and be sure that the importance of our agri-food sector and rural communities are on the minds of the candidates we choose for the next federal government.

For more information, visit [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca) and watch our short video on OFA's priorities for federal election candidates at [YouTube/OntarioFarms](https://www.youtube.com/OntarioFarms).

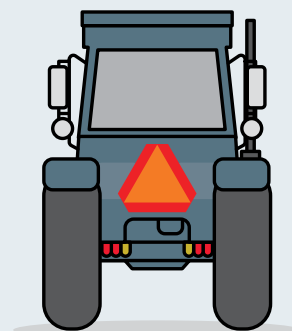
## Let's make it a safe harvest on the roads

Earlier this year, during the busy spring planting season, we launched a small campaign with drivers about slow moving vehicles. We targeted drivers to build some awareness around the increased activity of larger farm equipment on public roadways. And now that the fall harvest season is in full swing, we are stepping up efforts to encourage all drivers to slow down, share the road and practice some patience. You might see our campaign on social channels.

We conducted a survey with OFA members earlier this year, to gauge their experiences with drivers who may not know about slow moving vehicles. The results confirm the work that needs to be done to educate drivers, and our members, about safe interactions on the road.

Here are the safety tips we'll be sharing. They might come in handy if you are driving around the countryside this fall to a local market or fall fair. When you come across farm equipment on the roadways this fall...

- Take a deep breath.
- When the path is clear, make sure the driver can see you before you pass.
- Don't expect the vehicle to pull over on the shoulder – as this could be dangerous for a large piece of equipment.
- Slow down and share the road.



# Agri-food requests at Federal Provincial Territorial meeting

Before Ernie Hardeman traveled to the Annual Conference of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture in Quebec City in July, OFA provided a summary of the issues we wanted to be covered. These are the most pressing issues OFA has identified that need to be addressed collectively by all levels of government.

**1. Investments in rural infrastructure.** Farming and the agri-food industry rely on transportation, access to services, labour and infrastructure. Our industry can continue to drive prosperity... but we need the support of adequate infrastructure.



**2. Business Risk Management.** We need short- and long-term improvements to BRM programs, and OFA supports the AgGrowth Coalition's request for immediate enhancements to the suite of programs to help farmers deal with increased market volatility and global trade disputes.

**3. Labour concerns.** Canadian farms can't find enough skilled workers, and that's impacting growth and value-added opportunities through the value chain. We need coordinated efforts for many programs that fall under labour including promoting careers in ag, seasonal and temporary work programs, as well as mental health support.

**4. Canada's Food Policy.** We must address food literacy in the new Food Policy for Canada. If young people are taught about food, how it is produced, how to prepare it, the plans for a new Canada Brand and Buy Canadian campaigns will better equip our next generation of buying consumers to make healthy lifelong food choices.

We will be following up with Minister Hardeman on the next steps stemming from the recent conference – and the opportunities for Canada's agri-food sector.

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## Fix it and be fair – farmers need government support on global market losses

Frustration among Canadian farmers is reaching an all-time high because of political meddling in our markets. Global trade disputes are putting farmers at a disadvantage and the loss of global markets for our export products is entirely out of our control. These market disruptions, caused by political leaders, are causing depressed returns for Canadian agricultural products.

Canola, beef, pork and soybean farmers have lost significant markets in China that can't be replaced. And China isn't the only country closing their doors to Canadian agricultural products.

Adding to the frustration farmers are feeling right now, is the Canadian government's approach to supporting farmers through all this uncertainty. A recent federal funding announcement saw

financial support for only one agricultural sector – dairy. OFA represents all types of farms in Ontario, and we thank the Canadian government for recognizing the market losses and supporting our dairy farmers, but what about the rest of our farming members that are facing the impacts from key international market closures that are out of their control?

OFA, together with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), are working with commodity groups to raise our concerns about the implications of global market losses, the looming financial crisis and the unfair support for one agricultural sector over others. We are working on behalf of all our members to ensure fair solutions and necessary support is extended to all farmers.

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The provincial government included \$315 million over five years in the 2019 budget to support cell and internet support in rural and northern communities. We are asking the federal government, provincial government and CRTC to work together with the big telecom players to fix this mess.

OFA is not in a position to assess the validity of the lower rates CRTC set for the large telecom networks – that led to Bell's announcement. But we know there is an urgent need to deliver high-speed service across rural Ontario.

# Ontario Agriculture Week – We're making a big impact!

There's a special week every fall during the harvest season that brings some extra attention to the agri-food sector – it's Ontario Agriculture Week – October 7-13. It's agriculture's time to celebrate and it's a great time for all consumers to make an extra effort to buy Ontario.



Ontario farms grow and produce more than **200 farm and food products**



The agri-food sector contributes more than **\$47 billion\*** to Ontario's annual GDP



More than **837,064 jobs\*** are generated by the agri-food sector



Ontario farms support **\$8.1 billion\*\*** in annual wages and salaries

\*Statistics Canada

\*\*Economic Contribution of the Ontario Farm Sector, October 2013, JRG Consulting Group



## Up close with ag at OFA Field Day

Every year, OFA invites MPP and staff to its Field Day event, hosted on an Ontario family farm. It's a chance to experience the innovation that's happening in the agri-food sector. This year, OFA hosted several MPPs at Gwillimdale Farms – an integrated vegetable farm that grows and packs a range of fresh-for-the-field vegetables for all the major grocery chains in Ontario.

Visitors toured the family farm operation, enjoyed a local food lunch and gained some insight into an industry that is a major driver of the Ontario economy – agriculture and food.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Here's what's happening in agriculture this fall.

### Ontario Agriculture Week

October 7-13, 2019

Stock up on Ontario-grown goodness this week!

### Royal Agricultural Winter Fair

November 1-10, 2019

Exhibition Place, Toronto

### OFA Annual Meeting

FARMING 2020

**ADAPT & GROW**

OFA Annual General Meeting

November 18 & 19, 2019

Hamilton Convention Centre

**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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