

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.

continued on page 3

INSIDE...

Meet the new OFA general manager
Vote for agri-food on October 21
Let's make it a safe harvest on the roads
Agri-food requests at FPT meeting
Agriculture caught in the trade wars
Ontario Agriculture Week
OFA Field Day recap

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.

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.

continued from the cover



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.

Keith Currie, President

Ontario Federation of Agriculture
705.441.3362

Cathy Lennon, General Manager

Ontario Federation of Agriculture
519.821.8883