

August 4, 2020

Hon. Jeff Yurek,
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Yurek,

On behalf of the over 38,000 members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I would like to express our interest in working with you and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) towards improving the quality of our agricultural soils. OFA would like to invite you to join us at our next Policy Advisory Council meeting on August 24th to discuss how we can move forward towards improving the quality of Ontario's farmlands.

The importance of agricultural soils to the lives and livelihoods of Ontarians, and the need to both promote soil health and encourage conservation efforts cannot be understated. OFA Board of Directors recently approved a resolution from the Halton Federation of Agriculture asking OFA to *pursue the development of a fully funded incentive/cost-share program focused on building soil health and increasing organic matter content in Ontario soils to enhance their carbon capture abilities and build capacity to adapt to a changing climate.*

Successfully creating a soil health program will require a multi-layered approach that takes into consideration the capacity and constraints on farmers to make changes over time; the roles of various agencies currently acting in this area; the intersection of existing programs and strategies; and the variety and variability of agricultural soils across the province.

As a farmer-led organization, OFA conducts quarterly meetings with our Policy Advisory Council (PAC) to discuss provincially significant issues affecting the agricultural sector. The role of our PAC is to monitor industry developments and identify emerging issues, and then provide grassroots advice to the OFA Board of Directors. The PAC consists of roughly 100 farmers from across Ontario, and represents the majority of commodities we grow or raise.

OFA intends to consult with our PAC and commodity groups on August 24th via virtual conference to develop environmental programming advice and provide realistic options for a Made-in-Ontario approach to building soil health. This advice will help drive recommendations for a program that will be flexible and practical for Ontario farmers, respectful of existing programs, and provide a valuable return on investment.

.....

OFA is excited to work with MECP, OMAFRA, and other associated Ministries to help advance soil health, reduce atmospheric carbon, and make Ontario's food production system more resilient to the potential impacts of climate change. We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you are able to attend our virtual PAC meeting in August.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

cc: Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs
Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Allan Ehrlick, President, Halton Federation of Agriculture
Nancy Comber, Secretary, Halton Federation of Agriculture
OFA Board of Directors