



Updates on 2019 Annual General Meeting Resolutions

Algoma Biomass

Motion: Simpson/Reusser ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture encourage the Ontario government to fund development and adoption of new technology to use surplus biomass from Ontario farms as an alternative energy source to replace fossil fuels."

CARRIED

CLOSED

At the 2019 OFA AGM, Minister Hardeman announced the government will look to ease regulations surrounding natural gas and wood biomass CHP systems to encourage small scale CHP system installation and operation.

In June 2020, OFA sent a letter to the Minister recommending regulatory improvements to ensure farm-based systems were fairly and not overly regulated to help save time and money for farms looking to use CHP technology.

Large scale CHP technology was used to supplant coal use in OPG's Thunder Bay Generating Station. Advances in technology should be encouraged to help ease the operation of small-scale CHP for local rural needs.

Northern Ontario farm crop diversity can realize bioeconomy opportunities with crops like camelina, Russian dandelion, Jerusalem artichoke, hemp, switch grass, and miscanthus have industrial uses such as bioenergy and biomass.

The Northern Ontario food processing industry has indicated it would benefit from government initiatives to reduce regulatory burden. The high costs of doing business in the North are frequently discussed, such as those for transportation and energy. Greater access to funding and capital through programs better tailored to northern conditions could strengthen northern businesses.

Oct 13, 2020, Ontario is proposing to amend regulations to ease and streamline regulations for certain natural gas and wood biomass CHP systems. OFA recommends ensuring farm biomass fueled systems are also considered.

Regulatory amendments would save time and costs to install such systems in addition to mitigating environmental impacts. Ontario proposes to include new exemptions to ECA requirements for micro-systems.

OFA also continues to work with Canadian Biogas Association, ROMA and AMO to advance rural RNG production. Northern Ontario farmed biomass should be used to meet the energy needs of Northern Ontario business.

Arnprior Staffing of Retiring OMAFRA Extension Personnel

Motion: Van Raay/Pemberton ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture lobby OMAFRA to hire replacements for retiring OMAFRA extension personnel."
CARRIED

PENDING

OFA included this request in OFA's Budget submissions in January 2020 and October 2020. Staff is planning to survey commodity and agricultural organization staff to establish the role of OMAFRA extension services, research and information in serving the farm community. Should OFA become aware of the existence of gaps in the delivery of specific extension services to farmers due to OMAFRA staff position vacancies, OFA will advise the Minister and the Deputy Minister and will request that OMAFRA address those situations.

Arnprior Farmer Mental Health

Motion: Pommerville/Royce ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture support the expansion of the L&A Farmer Wellness Program province wide."
LOST

Motion: Currie/Pretty-Straathof ... "THAT a letter be written to Arnprior to inform them that OFA likes the concept of the L&A Farmer Wellness Program but not in the way the resolution is worded and the OFA will advocate for expansion of farmer mental wellness programs province wide."
CARRIED

CLOSED

Letter sent to Arnprior Federation of Agriculture

OFA hosted a meeting with staff from the office of Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions during OFA's lobby day at Queen's Park on December 9, 2020 and discussed key issues and priorities for Ontario's agri-food sector, including support for mental health to ensure the unique needs of agriculture and rural Ontario wellness are covered.

- On March 12, 2020, OFA met with Minister Tibollo's Chief of Staff, Director of Policy, and Director of Stakeholder Relations to discuss how OFA, OMAFRA, and Ministry of Health can work together to champion farmer mental health.
- OFA is working with our insurance company, The Co-operators, to investigate and develop potential insurance-based services to help meet the mental health needs of Ontario farm families
- In Spring 2020 OFA continued with a pre-COVID-19 arrangement that had been made for a mental health focused campaign for June 2020. In order to maintain distancing protocols but ensure farm voices were heard, 4 farmers agreed to have their voices used (through phone interviews) and overlaid on a video reel to reinforce the messages of maintaining mental wellness and help-seeking. These farmers spoke about the times that they were overwhelmed, isolated and facing high stress. They all spoke about the decision to speak about their struggles to another person and ultimately to seek help from a medical professional which has made the difference in keeping them healthy. The videos are saved to OFA's YouTube channel.

Talk radio 1290 in London offered 4 live radio spots through June and July for an interview with their host on the issues of mental health and farm stress during COVID-19. These interviews featured: Keith Currie, Deb Van Berkel and Lauren van Ewyk (both are aligned with OFA, farmers themselves and certified mental health care providers), Janine Lunn.

The ads ran on social media, TV and radio, and both the ads and the radio spots were shared with members using OFA's social media platforms.

- On October 7, 2020, OFA signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario Division, to leverage our collective expertise to provide mental health services to farmers and those who support them. The MOU outlines how the OFA and CMHAO will work together to deliver the University of Guelph's In the Know Farmer Mental Health and Awareness Training to the farm community in Ontario.

Arnprior Compensation for livestock losses due to predators

Motion: Davis/Colvin ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture lobby OMAFRA for improvements to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation program."

CARRIED

CLOSED

Letter sent to Min. Hardeman on March 9, 2020 joint with Ontario Sheep & Beef Farmers of Ontario. OFA/OSF/BFO met with OMAFRA staff on September 30, 2020 to review our requests for further changes to the OWDCP. A summary of our requests and the points discussed in the meeting will be provided to the Minister by OMAFRA staff.

Far and away the biggest issue members have with the program is when they have a predator kill and little or nothing is remaining of the livestock remains by the time they can take photos, they get denied.

- That is why our primary request we focused on was: **to have secondary evidence that help show predation was the cause of death such as scat & tracks be considered primary evidence when OMAFRA staff evaluates a claim.**
- We also had a number of proposed changes in the program guidelines that were aimed at reducing the amount of time between when the farmer discovers the kill, and they receive their payment.
- OFA also pushed funding for “preventive measures” for things like fencing and guard dogs to help prevent predation from happening in the first place.
- Also, BFO/OSF had some recommendations around the formula for the pricing of cattle and sheep, which OFA supported.

Those were the major items outlined in the letter and in the September meeting with OMFARA with the inclusion of secondary evidence so that more farmers can get an approved payment being our primary ask.

Elgin Land Registry System

Motion: Pemberton/Simpson ... “THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture continue to lobby the Ontario Government to change the Land Registry System under the Planning Act so that the practice of automatic merging be discontinued, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OFA provide a letter of support for Bill 88, Planning Amendment Act, 2019 with the additional recommendation that if abutting properties will be merged, then a requirement to notify the landowner should be mandatory, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OFA issue a yearly “buyer beware” reminder to the OFA membership containing the appropriate information members need to know to prevent these mergers.”

CARRIED

ONGOING

Letter sent to the Editor of Ontario Farmer on November 27, 2019 and included in the OFA e-newsletter. Also, a Private Member’s Bill, Bill 88, would address this. Bill 88 has received Second Reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on May 30, 2019. Bill 88’s sponsor is MPP Doug Downey, the current Attorney General.

Glengarry Woodlots

Motion: Pommerville/Roesch ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture lobby the Province to enhance the Farm Forestry Exemption provisions in the Assessment Act to increase the portion of woodlands exempt from property tax assessment as a way to incentivize property owners to keep woodlots on their property."

CARRIED

PENDING

Letter sent to Finance Minister of Ontario on February 13, 2020, awaiting response.

Grey Member Engagement

Motion: Brekveld/Brackenridge ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture strike a committee to investigate and deliver a strategy on membership engagement and volunteerism for Provincial and County Board positions."

CARRIED

CLOSED

Letter written to Grey county explaining OFA's recent initiatives. Grey County Federation has indicated an interest in a targeted, local coaching process. This is available to other interested Federations as well and a process along with a committee will be determined once the immediate, urgent needs of the COVID crisis have been met.

Halton Natural Heritage

Motion: Buttar/Brackenridge ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture develop a "best practices" Natural Heritage System interpretation for municipal Official Plans that Region or County Federations of Agriculture can consider when their respective municipal Official Plans are under development, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OFA take the proactive approach and lobby the Ontario Government to change Natural Heritage policies where the effects create unacceptable constraints on agriculture."

CARRIED

ONGOING

OFA has enlisted the help of University of Guelph's Rural Planning and Development Graduate Co-ordinator to identify an ideal University of Guelph graduate student to conduct a study, as part of their graduate degree requirements, to help guide municipalities on Natural Heritage provisions that would be beneficial to the farm community.

Rainy River Assistance Programs

Motion: Brekveld/Pemberton ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture advocate for assistance programs to offset costs related to feed and straw shortages affecting farmers in Ontario."

CARRIED

PENDING

Letter sent to Min. Hardeman on January 24, 2020, awaiting response.

Rainy River Abattoir Audits

Motion: Brackenridge/Brekveld ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture lobby OMAFRA to take a more practical approach to auditing abattoirs and use clear and concise language in audit reports, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture lobby OMAFRA to make financial assistance available to abattoirs for food safety upgrades to maintain the high standards for food safety."

CARRIED

CLOSED

Letter sent to Min. Hardeman on August 25, 2020

Local federally and provincially inspected abattoirs are essential to the marketing chain of Ontario's livestock production. The agri-food system depends on the sustainability and viability of our meat processing supply chain.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) believes the Ontario government plays a key role by providing financial assistance to small-scale abattoirs. In response to the resolution, OFA requested financial assistance for abattoirs for food safety upgrades to maintain the high standards for food safety in Ontario in our provincial pre-budget submission in January 2020. Compliance with government regulations has put a significant financial strain on many small local abattoirs in Ontario. OFA again reiterated the need for financial assistance for abattoirs for food safety upgrades in our recent fall 2020 pre-budget submission. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, and previous Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agricultural Policy Frameworks, governments have made application-based cost-share funding available to abattoirs. Funding is critical to assess vulnerabilities affecting local abattoirs, maintain high food safety standards, and to create a competitive and healthy marketplace. OFA believes that governments must continue to target funding for these initiatives given the importance of small-scale abattoirs to livestock farmers, rural economic activity, as well as supplying local food to our communities.

OFA also submitted a letter to the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, asking that OMAFRA consult with abattoir operations to further enhance

communications and encourage suggestions on how processes and safety measures could be improved. OFA also requested that OMAFRA work with OFA to investigate the vulnerabilities facing small-scale abattoirs to ensure that provincial inspections remain of critical importance. On November 4th, Minister Hardeman responded to our letter indicating that there will be the opportunity to discuss these opportunities next steps for engagement with OMAFRA's Assistant Deputy Minister, Kelly McAslan in an upcoming meeting. OFA will continue to advocate for practical and concise abattoir audit reports and facilitate discussions regarding the vulnerabilities facing abattoirs.

In addition to these requests from the government, OFA has, and continues to advocate for measures aimed at addressing the challenges faced by local small-scale abattoirs to ensure their viability and will continue to advocate for financial assistance, reduction in regulatory burden and red tape, clarity of audit reports, and the overall viability of abattoir and the meat processing sector.

Renfrew / Beef Farmers of Ontario Retirement Staff at OMAFRA

Motion: Brekveld/Buttar ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture advocate for filling gaps in OMAFRA staffing and lobby the Ontario Government to hire and retain a full complement of OMAFRA staff in Ontario."

CARRIED

PENDING

OFA included this request in OFA's Budget submissions in January 2020 and October 2020. Should OFA become aware of the existence of gaps in the delivery of specific extension services to farmers due to OMAFRA staff position vacancies, OFA will advise the Minister and the Deputy Minister and will request that OMAFRA address those situations.

Northern Caucus Bill 132

Motion: Simpson/Royce ... "THAT the Ontario Federation of Agriculture work with agricultural commodity groups to prevent the repeal of the Line Fences Act."

CARRIED

CLOSED

The Provincial Government introduced legislation, Bill 132, on October 28, 2019. On November 27, 2019 OFA responded to EBR #019-0774 – Bill 132. Schedule 2 of the Bill would have repealed the Line Fences Act. The Provincial Government withdrew Schedule 2 of the Bill following its review at the Standing Committee on General Government.