

November 17, 2020

Dr. Wayne Caldwell, RPP, FCIP
University of Guelph
School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
Guelph, ON
N1G 2W1

Dear Dr. Caldwell,

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is pleased to offer this letter of support for the proposed research project: **Assessing the Capacity of Municipalities to Respond to Evolving Rural and Agricultural Issues**.

OFA is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members across the province. OFA has a strong voice for our members across rural Ontario and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations at all levels of government. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

Several provincial priorities, such as farmland preservation, local food, on-farm diversification, and rural economic development require the support of effective and successful policy implementation to promote a thriving agricultural economy in Ontario. All these issues rely on municipal involvement and the plans and policies to support these priorities on the ground. For example, land use planning policies related to urban expansion or natural heritage often raise challenges for agricultural businesses located in those areas. It is essential for municipalities to understand and acknowledge the needs of our agricultural communities.

Success in responding to agricultural needs depends on the capacity of municipalities to do so. We have observed the varying levels of expertise that municipalities have in responding to agricultural issues across the province. Some have qualified staff with a background in agriculture, while others do not. There appears to be a relationship between the capacity of municipalities (e.g. numbers of staff with a background in agriculture, connections to the agricultural community) and the impacts of their decision-making on the ground. Certain municipalities tend to develop policies with agriculture in mind, while others need to be reminded of the unintended consequences of their proposed policies.

We understand that your research will assess this capacity and identify best practices and training opportunities which can better prepare and support municipal stakeholders to make more informed decision-making in supporting the success of our agricultural and agri-food sectors.



Please accept this letter as OFA's enthusiastic support of your proposal. We wish you all the best on this endeavour and look forward to working with you to ensure the project's success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Currie', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Keith Currie
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors