

June 2, 2021

Brendan Byrne, Chair
Grain Farmers of Ontario
679 Southgate Drive
Guelph, Ontario
N1G 4S2
Via email: gfobrendan@gmail.com

Dear Brendan:

RE: GFO semi-annual meeting resolutions

Thank you for your letter and referral of two resolutions passed at the Grain Farmers of Ontario semi-annual meeting. We agree that resolutions about trespassing and farm taxes are issues of importance to all Ontario farm businesses and we are happy to take the lead on behalf of the industry and appreciate the support of the GFO in our efforts. Below please find an overview of recent activities the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has taken related to these issues and be assured of our ongoing commitment to these issues.

Trespass on Farm Property

The GFO resolution on trespassing resulting in property and crop damage is consistent with the OFA's longstanding policy position. OFA has regularly engaged in discussion with government, advocacy and awareness campaigns, resource development and member communications over the past decade on the issue of trespassing. We have created and shared helpful tips and information for farmers and rural landowners to help deter trespassing by unwanted visitors, trail users, motorized all-terrain vehicles, snowmobilers, hunters and rural residents.

Here is a link to our Fact Sheet on Trespass & Occupiers Liability Act and we'd be happy if GFO shared it with their members: <https://ofa.on.ca/resources/trespass-occupiers-liability/>

Here is a second Fact Sheet specific to The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act and also worth sharing with your members: <https://ofa.on.ca/resources/the-security-from-trespass-and-protecting-food-safety-act-2020/>

OFA continues our appeal to the public to respect private property, in addition to our advocacy efforts aimed at increasing enforcement of existing legislation regarding trespassing on farmland.

In recent months, to assist in increasing awareness of the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act* and promote the importance of trespass legislation enforcement, OFA has engaged local police and OPP departments throughout the past year. Introductory letters were sent on behalf of OFA to police detachments across the province outlining the impact trespassing can have on farmers, animals and the food system. We expressed our willingness to work with police services on reducing farm trespass as it related to animal health, security and property. This has resulted in some great conversations between the farm and police community and we seek to do more of this.

In an effort to raise public awareness, OFA released a Viewpoint article in March 2021 that urged snowmobile riders to respect farmland and Ontario's trail system and stated that without farmers and rural landowners, there would be no continuous trail network for snowmobiles and recreational vehicles. It received significant reach and engagement, resulting in being one of our most read Viewpoints of 2021. You can find it here: <https://ofa.on.ca/newsroom/ofa-highlights-trespassing-on-farm-property-as-ongoing-issue-for-ontario-farmers/>

If GFO has additional ideas, suggestions or actions that may help to reduce trespassing and associated crop damage, as well as compensation for damages, we would be happy to discuss further.

Farm Property Taxes

OFA is pleased to hear GFO passed the resolution pertaining to farm property taxes and is willing to provide continued support of our efforts. We look forward to continuing our work with GFO on farm property tax matters and we were happy to have you join us in discussion with the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA) in April to raise awareness of this issue.

OFA has engaged with municipalities across the province over the past several years discussing Ontario's farm property tax system. At the grassroots level, OFA has consistently worked to assist and support our local federations of agriculture with analysis and speaking points when lobbying their respective municipal governments for a reduction in the farm property tax ratio. As a result, we've had 18 county and single-tier municipal governments agree to lower the farm tax ratio (below 0.25).

To further support our local federations, OFA plans to conduct Cost of Community Services (COCS) case studies. The first study was successfully completed for Mulmur Township in Dufferin County. OFA has two key objectives with each COCS study; find the net fiscal impact of each land use in the chosen municipality in a particular year; evaluate the appropriate revenue source for government services.

OFA relies on a strong relationship between the local Federation and municipality to conduct these studies. OFA would be glad to share the results of Mulmur Township case study as well as the COCS methodology with your Board of Directors. Please don't hesitate to follow up and we will do our best to accommodate your request. Ben Lefort is our lead policy researcher on the Farm Tax file and he can be reached at ben.lefort@ofa.on.ca

We look forward to working together with GFO to address these important issues and priorities impacting Ontario farmers. Please feel free to reach out anytime for additional information or discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Brekveld". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature is a vertical line.

Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: Mr. Crosby Devitt, General Manager, Grain Farmers of Ontario
OFA Board of Directors
Danie Glanc, OFA Farm Policy Analyst
Ben Le Fort, OFA Senior Farm Policy Analyst