

June 8, 2021

Environment and Climate Change Canada
Climate Action and Awareness Fund
Fontaine Building, 12th Floor
200 Sacré-Coeur Blvd
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
(Submitted with LOI)

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Reducing greenhouse gases at the intersection of natural asset management and agriculture

On behalf of The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I am writing to express our support of the *Reducing greenhouse gases at the intersection of natural asset management and agriculture* [hereafter called the Agriculture and GHG project], to be led by Mr. Thomas Bowers of the Greenbelt Foundation, in collaboration with the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities [hereafter called the project proponents].

OFA is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members across the province. OFA is the voice for our members and the agri-food industry on issues, and all levels of government legislation and regulations. We are passionate and dedicated to ensuring the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing research that impacts the sustainability and growth of our farm businesses.

OFA believes that agricultural activities make the best use of arable land, and that agriculturally managed landscapes provide ecological goods and services (EG&S) for public benefit in the process of normal farm practices to produce food, fibre and fuel.

Where economic valuation of EG&S is possible, OFA believes that farmers should be recognized for their efforts to manage and enhance these services for the public benefit. OFA also believes governments need to create a fair system of incentive-based policies and programs that recognize the significant environmental contributions that result from the adoption of beneficial management practices, and that this is far more effective than the use of regulatory instruments.

Climate Change is a global challenge and impacts Ontario farmers. OFA is committed to working with the government and industry to ensure a new carbon offset credit system recognizes agriculture's role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and includes a flexible, realistic and simple path to agricultural offset credits from farmers.

OFA believes farmers are part of the solution to climate change. As effective managers of the carbon and nitrogen cycles, farmers are in a unique position to provide further greenhouse gas mitigation opportunities. Continued research is needed to both develop and expand the scope of these opportunities and develop acceptable programs that will incentivise adoption.

The EG&S that farmers provide represent a significant opportunity for voluntary greenhouse gas emissions reductions if properly incentivised. OFA supports the creation of incentive-based programs to drive emissions reductions in our sector rather than through regulations. Cost-shared funding programs, carbon offset credit programs, and performance-based incentive programs have all proven effective at reducing greenhouse gases, and often result in added environmental co-benefits.

While the agriculture sector has already taken great efforts to create efficiencies and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there remains great untapped potential.

The approach suggested by the project proponents provides an opportunity to build on the success of the natural asset management and develop practical ways to measure and optimize greenhouse gas storage on agricultural land using a systems approach. Importantly, it also builds on evidence most recently compiled by the Royal Society that notes that climate change, biodiversity and human well-being are co-dependent and must be addressed together and that to try to maximise a single ecosystem service invited perverse consequences.

Through the Agriculture and GHG project we see an opportunity to advance outcomes including:

- Improving the state of knowledge and practice for land management and policy options at the municipal level that reflect the full range of EG&S provided by agricultural land.
- Improving the health of natural assets, which that in turn increase EG&S including greenhouse gas reduction.
- Increasing carbon storage and sequestration.
- Creating a scalable approach through focussing on solid projects in 3 communities and then creating a basis to expand the effort, using an asset management platform, which is common to all local governments.
- Expanding the practice of natural asset management, which has shown clear utility in communities across Canada.

We look forward to an opportunity to collaborate with the project proponents on this project. Should the Letter of Intent be accepted with an invitation for a full proposal for the *Agriculture and GHG project*, OFA would be keen to participate on the project's Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors