



July 27, 2021

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Thompson:

Over the past week, the worries and concerns of the agriculture industry in Northwestern Ontario have escalated to a level of crisis. We sincerely appreciated the time that you took on Tuesday to listen firsthand to the experience of farmers facing a serious drought situation.

Farming in northern Ontario is a major driver of economic activity making significant contributions to the provincial economy. Farm level commodity have grown over the past 13 years from \$182 million in 2006 to \$199 million in 2019.

Timiskaming, Thunder Bay and Rainy River accounted for 55% of all farm cash receipts in northern Ontario with Rainy River, the hardest hit region in Northwestern Ontario representing approximately \$22 million of the \$199 million.

Since hosting a roundtable discussion of farmers in Northwestern Ontario on Tuesday this week, the industry has collaborated to discuss both immediate and medium-term actions that can be taken to try to address some of these needs.

Support for Feed & Livestock

Addressing the immediate emergency needs of livestock producers in accessing feed and water to ensure the proper care and handling of livestock is most urgent. Because adequate supply of hay and alternative feed sources are not available in the immediate vicinity, producers are forced to look far afield to source feed making it very difficult in terms of affordability.

Recommendation 1) A fully funded financial support program to offset *extraordinary transportation and freight costs* associated with:

- delivery of feed to the drought-affected regions of the province
- moving livestock to alternative locations where feed and water is accessible
- moving livestock above and beyond typical market/cull levels to processing

Recommendation 2) A fully funded financial support “feed need” program to offset *extraordinary costs associated with*

- forages/hay
- alternative feed sources
- pasture rental
- regeneration of pasture

Recommendation 3) A cost-shared program to assist members with *urgent and critical infrastructure* needs to enable farmers to adapt pasture, feed and water sources for livestock

- temporary fencing to allow livestock to graze non-traditional areas
- equipment for managing alternative feed sources
- water wagons, tanks, irrigation, well drilling

Recommendation 4) Enhancements to *existing Business Risk Management and Production Insurance* programs to

- expedite process and approvals required for crops to be designated for livestock feed or grazing purposes on an emergency basis
- provide incentives to grain and crop producers to access salvage benefit by increasing low yield appraisal triggers in order to ensure viability for grain and crop producers in providing poor yielding crops as an alternative feed source
- exclude 2021 production data from producers’ long-term individual yield or individual production index calculation where crop is designated as livestock feed or for grazing in order to eliminate longer term negative implications for farmer.

Recommendation 5) Development and delivery of technical resources and support for farmers in the following areas:

- altering feed rations to ensure adequate nutrition for livestock
- humane transportation of cows and calves in an emergency scenario

In addition to the above, the below noted actions are being undertaken by industry to support farmer members in drought-affected regions of the province:

- Advocacy for recognition and support of Ontario farmers experiencing drought in any and all federal programs and announcements (All)
- Enhanced development and distribution of existing forage and hay listings available to livestock producers assisting them in identifying possible sources of hay and forage from outside of the province. (Beef Farmers of Ontario)
- Delivery of a webinar to area producers on mental health and wellness, managing through a crisis and resiliency (Ontario Federation of Agriculture)

Sincerely,



Rob Lipsett, President
Beef Farmers of Ontario



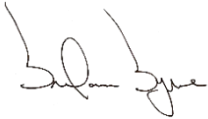
Don Ciparis, President
National Farmers Union - Ontario



Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario



Nadine Schwandt, President
Ontario Agri Business Association



Brendan Bryne, President
Grain Farmers of Ontario



Marc Carere, President
Sheep Farmers of Ontario



Peggy Brekveld, President
Ontario Federation of Ontario