

July 21, 2021

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

Dear Minister Thompson,

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I wanted to thank you for your July 16 letter to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Marie-Claude Bibeau outlining the risks faced by farmers in Northwestern Ontario because of the drought conditions that have persisted this season.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture fully supports your request to Minister Bibeau to initiate a formal AgriRecovery assessment and to prescribe the Livestock Tax Deferral to the areas in Ontario significantly impacted by the drought.

The situation in Northwestern Ontario, particularly around Rainy River, persists and concerns and worry are escalating. Farmers are in crisis, but there are not a lot of solutions that they can apply on their own. Their fields are drying out and, in some cases, are literally burning up and dying.

There are not a lot of places where they can move their cattle or sheep, and there is not a lot of feed elsewhere that can be moved into the region.

We need help.

The OFA is calling for a State of Emergency to be declared, and all actions expedited to ensure Ontario farmers impacted by the drought are supported to ensure they don't lose their livelihood, and that Ontario's food supply is not compromised or disrupted.

This is also an opportunity for the government to invest in water infrastructure for rural Canada, ensuring farms have the resources they need both for irrigation and for providing water to livestock.

OFA, along with Beef Farmers of Ontario and Grain Farmers of Ontario are hosting a roundtable on Wednesday, July 21st at noon to hear from our members and better understand the situation at hand, and explore any options available to producers and identify immediate needs and gaps that we can help with. Topics will include status of the drought, forage availability and quality, livestock inventory and management strategies, emergency hay/grazing options, crop insurance and water infrastructure needs.

The drought situation is complex, affecting both grain and livestock farmers in Northern Ontario and across Western Canada. No single organization, government agency or group has all the answers. We are committed to working together to find the best ways to bring local solutions to help affected communities deal with the immediate issues at hand. We would be more than happy to have you and/or members of your staff attend this meeting to hear from our members in Northwestern Ontario about their experience and look for ways that we can support them in this time of need.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: Richard Horne, Beef Farmers of Ontario
Crosby Devitt, Grain Farmers of Ontario
Ron Campbell, Ontario Agri-Business Association