

November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Ontario AgriFood Innovation Alliance Research Program - Tier I  
1 Stone Road West, 2NW  
Guelph ON  
N1G 4Y2

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Connected Farms Ontario: An evidence-based awareness and action campaign**

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I would like to express our support of the application being submitted by Dr. Helen Hambly and the Regional and Rural Broadband (R2B2) team at the University of Guelph for funding from Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance Research Program - Tier I for the proposal titled, "Connected Farms Ontario: An evidence-based awareness and action campaign".

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 and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. 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 legislation that impacts the sustainability and growth of our farm businesses.

A reliable and robust rural broadband infrastructure is a high priority Ontario's agricultural sector. In 2020 and 2015, OFA collaborated with R2B2 on analysis of data and knowledge outputs on the topic of rural broadband in Ontario. Our findings indicate that there was some progressive change between 2015-2020 in Ontario farm connectivity, however, the majority of respondents to our 2020 survey indicated that farm-level connectivity was still insufficient to encourage the uptake of new Internet-connected agri-food technologies and feel entirely confident as producers within the evolving digital economy.

OFA membership continues to put broadband access in the top three priorities for agri-food business and family farms. When COVID-19 hit, farm businesses rapidly sought information for problem solving and action to improve their broadband Internet access. While some OFA members are aware of the new government and private-sector projects underway across the province, more awareness building is needed to support broadband deployment across rural areas. OFA intends to work with R2B2 to develop clear, targeted communications and strategies for improved connectivity for everyone in rural communities. Through this type of engaged action, and with the support of the KTT program, we anticipate that greater commitment and changes are possible.



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On behalf of OFA, we support this Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) application to bring broadband to rural Ontario, and request that you grant funding to R2B2 to fulfill this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peggy Brekveld". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Peggy Brekveld  
President