

ENGAGING MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND STAFF

BEST PRACTICES

Resources to Cultivate Connections

The only thing
we know for sure,
is that change is
a constant.



Bringing Agriculture to Municipalities

Engage with Municipal Councils and Staff:

Be Visible and Accessible

- Wear Federation branded clothing with distinct logo and a name tag
- Attend Council meetings
- Be available and have your contact information easily accessible
- Showing up demonstrates that agriculture is important
- Attend ribbon cuttings, Municipal events, opening ceremonies, etc.
- Sign up for Municipal newsletters and follow their key social media accounts



Build Relationships

- **Annual delegation** of agriculture updates only – do not ask for anything – remind Councils how important it is to work together and leave resources behind for their review
- **Have a yearly plan!** – a spring breakfast, annual spring delegations or annual mailouts of resources with a summer BBQ
- **Delegations on separate matters** – keep presentation to one subject; be specific on how Council can help. Lobbying is a long process, but it is worth persevering even if you don't get the desired response right away. *(see resource on Lobbying Do and Not to Do list)*
- **Get to know Municipal Staff** and educate them on agriculture! Invite them to do delegations to your Federation Board– Planning, Building, Drainage, By-law, Roads, etc.
- **Ask for a representative** from the elected council to attend county federation meetings – ex-officio
- **Send letters of support** for Municipal initiatives and congratulatory letters for ribbon cuttings and successes within the Municipality

Monitor Councils and their Agendas

- Identify who the influencer is around the Council table
- Recognize and learn the relationships around the table
- Encourage members to phone their politicians on issues
- Maintain a contact list of elected Council
- Send out information about farm safety, road safety, special bulletins or events
- **Assign directors from your board to monitor local Council agendas.** Watch for changes affecting agriculture and farming practices – bridge or road closures, new development charges, official plan review or amendments, severances and development impacting farmland
- Councils now do three readings of by-laws at one meeting which limits opportunity to comment

Partnerships / Memberships

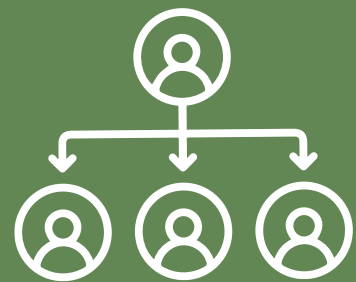
- Establish/encourage Agriculture Advisory Committees
- Serve on Municipal Committees such as Fence Viewers, Livestock Valuers, Committee of Adjustment, Official Plan Review, Workforce and Economic Development.
- Establish relationships with other members on boards/committees
- Local Chamber of Commerce, MainStreet committees, workforce development committees, local food policy councils, etc.
- Fundraising supports / donations to local food banks, etc.
- Workforce, Economic Development, Conservation Authority, Planning etc.

➔ Things to keep in mind:

- Councils have many groups and interests to balance – be respectful
- Never underestimate the power of the staff – they are interpreting the policies and can influence decisions!
- You may not always get the perfect response but keep the relationship professional and conversation open for future asks
- Explain the OFA/County Federation relationship – do presentation together County Federation/ OFA and MSR to show all supports available
- Encourage an Agriculture Advisory Committee
- Encourage availability to sit on Municipal Committees on Workforce, Economic Development, Resident Attraction, etc. *(MSR could help)*

Delegation Wins!

- Pre-determine a workable solution! What is your ‘ask’?
- Proven examples of why it will work – not just opinions
- Don’t be the spokesperson if the issue or challenge is personal
- Be concise; Prepare and leave an executive summary behind
- Be familiar with the Provincial/Federal Act your issue falls under
- Be patient – can take years to make change
- Encourage working together to solve these issues together
- Ask for a calendar commitment –get updates on projects, etc.
- Discussion with “the influencer on Council” prior to the meeting



Invite, Include and Educate Municipal Councils and Staff

- **Send personalized invites** to Regional Meetings, Annual Meetings, or Board Meetings – take the time to call them personally
- **Formal and informal** – conversations and networking can yield results
- **Send newsletters to Councils** – to provide local agriculture updates
- **Ask council to play federation promotional video** before meeting or during a break
- **Send OFA resources** to Clerk so it appears on the agendas on relevant topics (example OFA Today Magazine, Fact Sheets and Viewpoint and Real Dirt on Farming etc.)
- **Host politicians' events** – Politics and Pie; Summer BBQ, Politicians Breakfast; All Candidates Meetings
- **Invite Municipal Councils and staff to volunteer at public events** – Breakfast From the Farm, Farm Days, etc.

Unique Experiences

- **Farm Bus Tours** – visit local agri-businesses to show innovation, technology, environmental aspects and how valuable agriculture is to their municipality
- **Farm Educational Days** – touch and learn experiences for children or the general public on the farm or at an Agriculture Society
- **Dining Experiences** – highlight innovation in your community through dining experiences on farms, at greenhouses; craft breweries, cideries and wineries or at an agritourism location
- **Farm equipment rodeo** – a driving challenge for municipal people, perspective of roads, safety, roundabouts, etc. put them in the driver's seat

➔ Things to Keep in Mind:

- Invite a Council member and staff for a site visit – Show and Tell!
- Pictures and videos can clearly show issues or challenges
- Have a spokesperson on farm bus tours to give commentary and point out specific areas of interest or concern – the diverse crops, a patch of wild parsnips, a road that is too narrow; or hydro lines too low (have equipment placed to show the size)
- How municipal road work affects farm equipment - size of farm equipment versus width of roads, curbs, hydro lines and bridges
- Educational events are an opportunity to network, discuss initiatives and partner on projects

Topics to Emphasize to Municipal Councils and Staff

- Road depth changes – will farm equipment still pass under the hydro lines
- New roundabouts – will farm equipment fit around it
- Curbs/shoulders – can impede flow of farm equipment
- Ditching/drainage – impacts crop viability
- Sign placement – visibility from farm equipment, or traffic flow
- Tree trimming at intersections – visibility and road safety
- Loss of farmland – productive ag land cannot be replaced
- Sourcing local products – support local business and tourism
- Statistics of how much agriculture brings to the local economy
- Forest Conservation/Greening Strategy/Tree Cutting By-law
- Natural Heritage Designations – can impact farming practices



Municipal Elections

Assign Directors to attend All Candidates meetings

- Ask local questions or questions provided by the OFA
- Be visible so Candidates get to know the local federation
- Organize an All-Candidates Meeting
- Bring all candidates running for municipal election in the area together
- Presentations to all candidates by OFA Economic Development Advisors and OFA Director (ex. presentation on economic development; land use, equipment on roads, etc. – what's important in the area for agri-business, food or processing)
- Provide OFA resources to candidates (Agriculture Matters, land use, economic development)
- Show the contributions of agri-food, food processing and agri-businesses in area
- Explain how agriculture is a prime stakeholder

After Municipal Elections

- Do a delegation right after Municipal Elections with new Council in place – provide all resources available
- Congratulatory letters to all Members of Council signed by local federation President
- Develop an Agriculture Impact Infographic Page as a leave behind; Use Census Ag Statistics to create Economic Development Impact Statement

Agriculture in Parry Sound

\$5,020,000

2019 FARM CASH RECEIPTS



\$16,000,000

TO ANNUAL PROVINCIAL GDP



Jobs supported in Northern Ontario



of those jobs are in Parry Sound

252 farms
66,315 acres



263

ACRES

Average size

Ag in the
North



- [2,399 farms](#) in Northern Ontario
- [16% increase](#) in GDP contributions from 2012-2017
- [12% increase](#) in jobs from 2012-2019
- [\\$199 million](#) in 2019 farm cash receipts
- [\\$639 million](#) contributed to provincial GDP

Sample of an
Agriculture Impact
Infographic Page –
illustrates economic impact
of agriculture. OFA MSR
and Policy Analyst staff
can assist in creating
these visual tools.

Lobbying Municipal Councils Do's and Don'ts

Delegations to Municipal Council

Lobbying is about communication: persuading decision makers to hear and understand a different perspective or point of view

*From Gerry MacCartney, London Chamber of Commerce -
How to Effectively Lobby Municipal Governments*

The “**TO DO**” List

- Do be early and be first. It's cheaper and it's more effective
- Do get a firm date, time, and place for a meeting
- Do follow up and confirm dates and who will be attending
- Do huddle first with your group/delegation – practice the song sheet
- Do keep the agenda tight – 2-3 issues max
- Do keep comments brief
- Do stick to the community side of the issue – impact on members
- Do offer to follow up if you get questions you can't answer
- Do try to maintain control of the meeting – you asked for it
- Do try for a commitment but always leave the door open
- Do try for a photo if all agree to it

The “**NOT TO DO**” List

- Don't ask to meet about 10 issues
- Don't give speeches or lectures
- Don't refuse to take NO for an answer – you can always try again
- Don't argue or escalate even if you don't start it
- Don't show up with more people than you confirmed
- Don't deviate from your mission even if or when they try to divert you
- Don't try to be an expert if you aren't
- Don't get into the photo if there is a chance it will be misused
- Don't indulge in adult beverages or cannabis – even if offered