
Policy Advisory Council Meeting Brief (complete meeting notes to follow)

Wednesday, August 10th, Orangeville (with simultaneous online meeting)

OFA update (a summary of President Peggy Brekveld's notes will be circulated)

- Highlights included farmland loss, fertilizer tariffs, railroad crossings, etc.
- Update on advocacy & lobby efforts

Rural Infrastructure – Russel Hurst, Ontario Agribusiness Association (OABA)

- 500 members in OABA
- Strategic focus areas: member engagement and communications, stakeholder relationships, safety, training, education and leadership, advocacy & government affairs and organizational excellence
- Labour is a significant issue across the sector
- Fertilizer challenges have been difficult to navigate
- 5 key priorities from Ford government; infrastructure being one of them
- **Four key issues:**
 - **Transportation.** Need long-term infrastructure improvements. Government works with local municipalities to identify key areas to improve
 - **Energy**
 - **Labour**
 - Focus on comprehensive sector strategy that addresses chronic labour shortages. Attract new skilled entrants to the sector
 - Showcase the benefits of living in rural Ontario
 - **Connectivity**
 - Agri businesses need to have connectivity to operate their businesses in the new digital economy
 - Connectivity is now an essential infrastructure
- **Other pieces**
 - Environmental protections, pandemic preparedness, agriculture research, health care, red tape reduction within government, coordinating with multiple layers of government

Municipal Engagement - Danielle Sharman, Policy Analyst, OFA

Ag Matters Guide

- One page document to highlight key agricultural issues taking place at the municipal/local level – synthesized from the 40-page version
- Provides an overview of issues affecting farmers today and identifies opportunities for local communities to support this untapped, and sometimes undervalued, economic sector
- Some new topics have been added ready to share components with new elected officials and staff at local municipalities

Municipal Election Kit

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- Every municipal election, OFA produces a kit for county and regional federations
 - The kit is complimentary to the Ag Matters Guide and provides key messages, questions to consider asking at All Candidates Meetings, and a sample letter for candidates. Not for distribution but provides sample wording to use in outreach.

Rural Infrastructure – Municipal Engagement Marcus Ryan, Mayor, Zorra Twp.

- Ag is an economic safety net for our community. As long as we protect lands, they will always be productive
- We don't maximize opportunities in agriculture that could boost economic development
- What does that look like:
 - Distributing economic development policy, don't put all eggs in one basket to ensure an economic safety net
- Building affordable communities
 - Affordable housing – farmhouse severances – what's reasonable?
- Affordable and safe food
 - We need a robust food system
- Internet
 - It has become essential in all locations. In the tractor, in the barn, etc.
- Need to maintain infrastructure to maintain and grow rural communities
 - Not receiving enough funding for hospitals, schools, etc.
 - Recognition that smaller scale services are
 - Responsibility of municipalities - roads and bridges, recreation
- Joint lobby efforts are needed; The healthier agriculture is, the more robust and sustainable a strong economy can be

Q&A

- Q: How can we support our local municipalities to help meet their needs?
- A: Implement effective communication methods. Responsible land use planning is essential; farms will continue when other industries leave town
- Q: In an ideal world, how would local leaders and federations support each other?
- A: Ag leaders who take the time to understand the roles and responsibilities of municipal leaders will get further with their requests
- Q: How do you handle air and water complaints from agriculture
- A: As a municipality we don't usually get them