



La Fédération
de l'agriculture
de l'Ontario



2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT







La Fédération
de l'agriculture
de l'Ontario



OUR MISSION

Farms and Food Forever

OUR VISION

- ➔ Farming is a science – sustainably producing food, fibre, flowers and fuel.
- ➔ Consumers trust the food system, which offers nutritious food across the province and around the world.
- ➔ Farm viability is supported by an effective and efficient legislative and regulatory framework.
- ➔ Farmers are proud advocates and leaders in adaptation and innovation.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- ➔ Land use planning and environmental sustainability
- ➔ Food value chain security
- ➔ Labour and workforce development
- ➔ Rural infrastructure and affordable energy
- ➔ Mental health and wellness

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Reflections on a year and a presidency



It's hard to believe another year has flown by. The last 12 months have been busy, but as I look back on them, I'm proud of the many places we've been able to speak, present, comment and testify to share the voice of agriculture and help make things better for farmers in Ontario.

This includes important discussions on food security, fertilizer, taxation, environment, farmland preservation and ensuring our ability to take care of animals, and although many of those conversations are ongoing, I'm also proud of the wins we were able to chalk up this year.

The provincial government announced funding for soil health, veterinary capacity and rural infrastructure; we were able to help ensure that federal fertilizer tariffs paid by farmers were returned back to agriculture; and a federal bill expanding carbon tax exemptions for farmers is close to fruition. As well, a broad-based coalition of farm and agricultural organizations joined together to convince the province to not proceed with its three-lot severance proposal, and farmland that was designated for development is now returning to agricultural zoning in the Greenbelt.

Another highlight is additional investment of significant federal and provincial dollars to continue the important work in promoting farmer wellness and the mental health services and supports that are now available to all Ontario farmers and their families for whatever issues they may be facing.

You can read about all these topics in more detail throughout this report, but I would like to emphasize that the OFA did none of this alone. We have worked closely with many different

partners in all these discussions, from commodity organizations to our own local federations of agriculture who helped bring, share, and solidify the messages. We've also found ways to engage with organizations and partners that we haven't in the past – working together makes all of us stronger. This is the way forward – bringing agricultural voices together with the same message.


As I reflect on the past year on a personal level, two things stand out for me as memorable moments.

The first: I had the opportunity to speak to a group of “leaders in the making” and have a conversation about what it takes to have leadership. As an organization, the OFA demonstrates leadership in many ways – focusing on issues that will make farming better and better instead of the people or politics behind it will get you much farther in the long run.

Leaders must ask themselves what the right way is forward, not just what is popular or what everyone else is advocating for. I strongly believe that we are on the right track if we are doing the right thing for farmers and farming in Ontario.

Second, in the midst of a very busy year, I had several personal conversations on mental health. This has long been a priority for OFA – ensuring that farmers know that they are not alone, and support is available when times are tough.

It highlighted to me how important this topic is. OFA continues to support and share mental health awareness in whatever ways we can, from a conversation with a friend or a member,



running a media campaign or working a booth at an event. If we can make a difference in some way, OFA will be there to do that.

As I step down from leading this organization, I can't help but reflect on the last three years of being a leader during both COVID and non-COVID times. I became president during a global pandemic, which brought tremendous change and challenge for all of us, but also pushed us to do things differently.

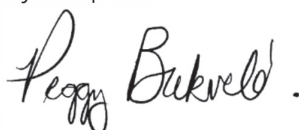
Finding new and different ways to connect with our farmers and our local federations and members was a priority and we tried new things. We introduced virtual president lunches during the pandemic as a way to keep our local federations engaged and connected when face-to-face interactions were impossible. It was and continues to be a great opportunity to have conversations with federations around the province, understand local challenges, share or develop resources if there was a need and ensure ongoing member engagement.

Although it's not the only way we like to com-

municate, it's reflective of our new reality. I've enjoyed these virtual meetings, which have become a successful initiative for the OFA, and hope to see this tradition continue.

I know I'm leaving the organization in good hands. The board and the staff are a strong team who are dedicated to our industry and our members and regardless of the issue at hand, our way forward will include conversations that are familiar and ones that are new in support of OFA's overall mission of ensuring *Farms and Food Forever*.

I'm very proud of the work we've done together, of the trust people have placed in me and of being chosen by my peers to lead the OFA. It's been an honour and a privilege to serve as your president.



Peggy Brekveld,
President, OFA
2020-2023

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



The end of another year is always a time for reflection and planning. We look back at the successes, challenges and activities of the past 12 months, and we look forward to the themes and issues that will be a focus of the year ahead.

Everything the OFA does is ultimately in support of our mission, *Farms and Food Forever*.

It's our job to make sure the needs and opportunities of the agriculture sector and rural communities are in front of decision-makers, stakeholders, media and the general public from all walks of life, and I'm proud of what our team has been able to accomplish this year.

Advocacy

Land use policy and farmland preservation dominated much of OFA's advocacy efforts this year and we didn't tackle it alone. There is much work ahead of us on this file and the decisions and direction taken today will matter for generations to come.

We saw positive outcomes for farmers with investments that will drive increased veterinary capacity, funding for soil health, improvements to the Advanced Payments Program, continued investment in farmer mental health and wellness, and made-in-Ontario solutions to increase the availability of fertilizer options, alternatives and technology for our members.

OFA continues to advocate strongly on behalf of farmers on a wide range of issues, including balanced and responsible land use planning policies, carbon tax exemptions for farm uses, investments in rural infrastructure, and support for achieving emissions reduction targets. We continue to look for 'red tape wins' in areas of the federal Underused Housing Tax and provincial commercial vehicle operator's registration certifications.

With the conference and event schedule back in full swing, OFA took the farmer voice to decision-makers by participating in many different advocacy events, from our own Queen's Park outreach day to the annual conferences of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Good Roads, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference and more. In partnership with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, our directors have had numerous opportunities to take your Ontario farm voice to Ottawa and beyond on both national and global food security issues.

Member relations

Often, the issues we tackle are broad, impacting farmers across a range of commodities and demographics, as well as being complex without easy answers.

We've been actively raising awareness on topics like cyber security, trespassing, and theft risks facing farm businesses. We are pleased to have been able to forge partnerships with organizations with similar priorities like Farm & Food Care Ontario, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, the Ontario Provincial Police, University of Guelph, and Crime Stoppers to tackle some of these important files.

We also continue to put the focus on the role of farmers and farming in local communities with the OFA Revive Fund. Over the past two years, OFA has invested more than \$200,000 into public outreach projects from farm and road safety campaigns and training for emergency responders to promoting local food, supporting food banks, and teaching people about farming.

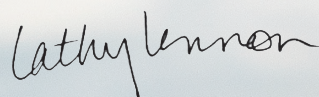
OFA's investment has been matched locally by federations and partners, and results in nearly half a million dollars being invested in projects spearheaded by local leaders all across this

province. Recognition of the success behind these Revive projects is to be given to the collective efforts of our federations and members, and volunteers who generously share their skills and passion for agriculture. Their time away from the farm, family and friends to contribute to building up the farm and agricultural sector have played a vital role in the growth and prosperity of this industry.

To our board, staff, policy advisory council members, county and regional federations and mem-

bers across Ontario, and to all of our partners both formal and informal, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and hard work on behalf of the OFA. You help make all of this possible and our successes are your successes.

Sincerely,



Cathy Lennon,
General Manager

Ontario agriculture by the numbers

In Ontario, farming means:



Nearly **50,000**
farms



11.7 million
acres of farmland



243 acres
is the average sized farm

Agriculture is one of the largest contributors to the Ontario economy:

Generates more than



\$47 billion
of economic
activity every year

Exports



\$20 billion
in agri-food products annually

Supports more than



750,000 jobs
10% of Ontario's labour force

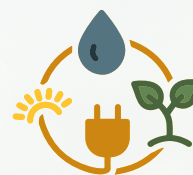
Fast farm facts:



31%
of Ontario farmers
are female



60%
of Ontario farms are small farms
(less than \$100,000 in annual revenue)

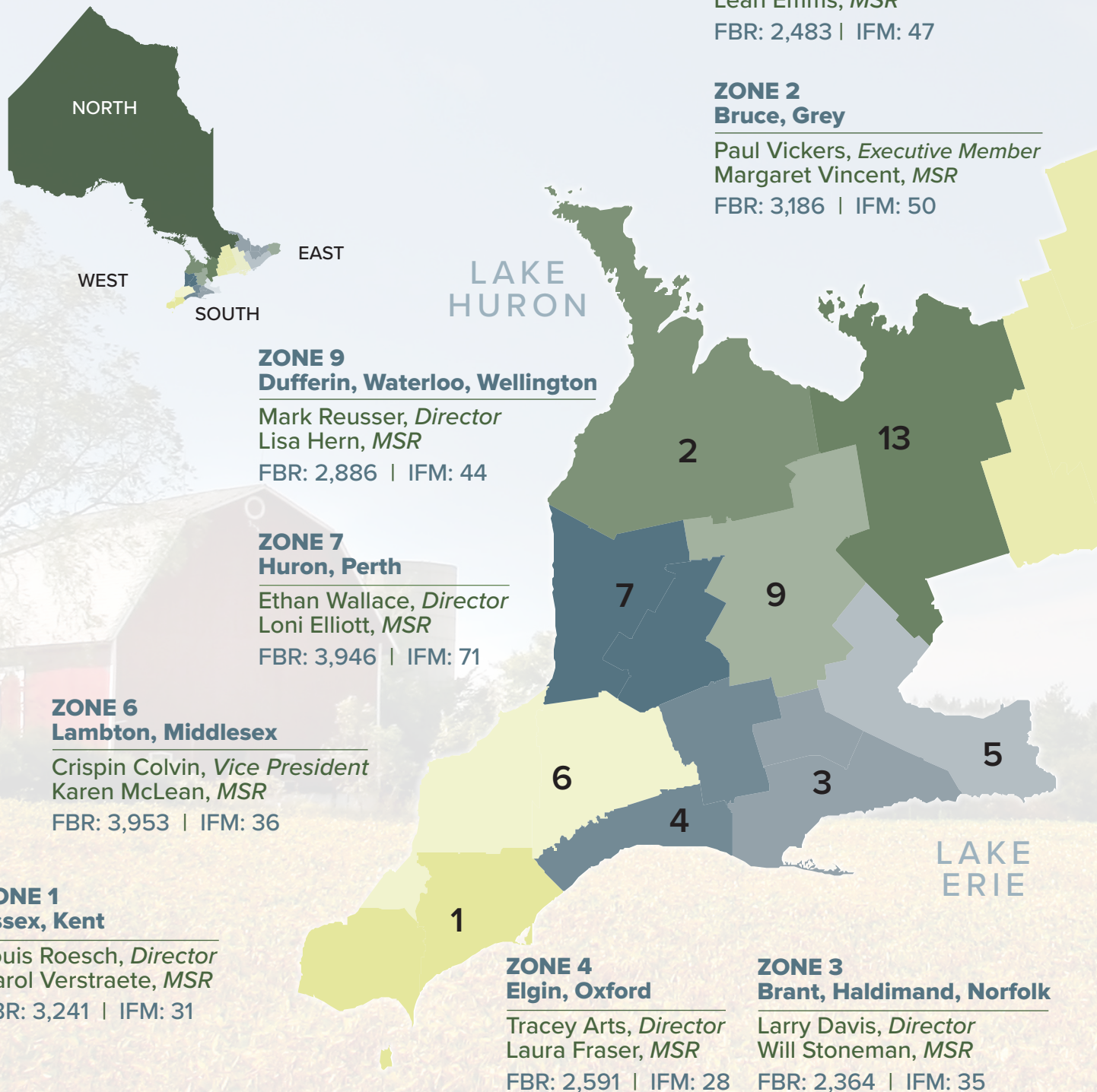


17.5% of Ontario farms
produce renewable energy,
including solar, bioenergy
and wind power

OFA REPRESENTATION ZONE MAP

LEGEND

MSR → Member Services Representative
FBR → Farm Business Registration
IFM → Individual Farm Membership



ZONE 10
Durham, Peterborough,
Kawartha Lakes/Haliburton

Steve Brackenridge, *Director*
Mark Torrey, *MSR*
FBR: 2,672 | IFM: 27

ZONE 8
Arnprior, Lanark,
Ottawa, Renfrew

Jenn Doelman, *Director*
(Acclaimed: Andrea
McCoy-Naperstkw, 2023-2026)
Angela Field, *MSR*
FBR: 1,957 | IFM: 23

ZONE 14
Glengarry, Prescott,
Russell, Stormont

Vanessa Renaud, *Director*
Sonia Dignard, *MSR*
FBR: 1,645 | IFM: 21



15
NORTHERN
REGION

ZONE 15
Algoma, Cochrane, Dryden,
Kenora, Manitoulin-North
Shore, Muskoka, Nipissing
East & West, Parry Sound,
Rainy River, Sudbury East &
West, Temiskaming &
Thunder Bay

Bill Groenheide, *Director*
Stephanie Vanthof, *MSR*
Bernie Zimmerman, *MSR*
Rainy River, Kenora, Dryden
Brody Marsonet, *MSR*
Thunder Bay, Kenora, Dryden
FBR: 1,499 | IFM: 18

14

8

11

10

12

LAKE
ONTARIO

ZONE 12
Hastings, Lennox &
Addington,
Northumberland,
Prince Edward

Bruce Buttar, *Director*
(Elected: Brian Crews,
2023-2026)
Resi Walt, *MSR*
FBR: 2,101 | IFM: 32

ZONE 5
Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Niagara

Drew Spoelstra, *Vice President*
Charlene Yungblut, *MSR*
FBR: 2,244 | IFM: 29

ZONE 11
Dundas, Frontenac,
Grenville, Leeds

Jackie Kelly-Pemberton, *Director*
(Acclaimed: Clint Cameron, 2023-2026)
Ruth Vogel, *MSR*
FBR: 1,476 | IFM: 13

Peggy Brekveld,
President / Director-at-Large
(Elected: Angela Cammaert,
2023-2026)

Teresa Van Raay,
Director-at-Large

Sara Wood,
Director-at-Large

Janine Lunn, *Manager*
Eastern & Northern Region

Paul Nairn, *Manager*
Western Region

Cole Woods,
Member Service Support
Representative



ADVOCACY

OFA gets action on issues that matter

Positive developments were made on several key issues this past year where the OFA identified a need for either government investment or action to ensure the ongoing resilience of our food and farming system.

ISSUE: Proposed land use planning changes threatening farming

Ontario boasts some of Canada's richest and most fertile farmland, and Ontario's farmers were vocal – and united – in asking the provincial government to pause and reconsider land use planning changes proposed under the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and Bill 97 that would threaten local farmland protection.

A broad-based coalition was formed that included all three of Ontario's general farm organizations, 11 commodity and agricultural groups and 30 of OFA's local federations of agriculture.

What OFA asked for: that the provincial government reconsider its proposed land use planning policy changes, particularly the proposal to allow up to three new severed residential lots on an existing farm property over concerns that this could make it difficult or impossible for farmers to manage and expand their farm businesses in the future.

What the government announced: the three-lot severance proposal was withdrawn, the consultation period regarding the PPS was extended to give organizations more time to respond, and the government agreed to work with the agriculture sector to develop solutions that balance both the need for housing and protection of agricultural land.

"In bringing a message, it often isn't about one voice. It is many voices, one message. This united coalition of farmers and agricultural leaders has spoken up with a single voice against legislation that could make it difficult or impossible for farmers to manage and expand their farm businesses in the future. That's why the news that the provincial government has heard our concern and will not be moving ahead with the three-lot severance proposal is so welcome."

- Peggy Brekveld, President & Director-at-Large

ISSUE: Protecting and nurturing soil health

Soil is one of our most valuable resources, and soil health is part of the larger OFA priority of promoting and protecting Ontario's capacity to produce food.

What OFA asked for: a soil health strategy that supports land stewardship and provides farmers with tools, like baseline soil health data and modernized soil health maps, to encourage even more widespread adoption of soil best management practices. This ask resulted from OFA's participation in an industry-government collaboration known as the Soil Action Group.

What the government announced: a \$9.5 million investment over three years for developing and implementing the Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy to improve soil data mapping, evaluation and monitoring in Ontario to 2030.

"Soil health has been a key priority for OFA for many years and although many soil best management practices are already widely used by Ontario farmers, better tools like modernized soil maps, will help us do an even better job at producing food as sustainably as possible."

- Drew Spoelstra, Vice President & Director, Zone 5 - Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth and Niagara

ISSUE: Critical shortage of livestock veterinary capacity

Together with our Ontario livestock commodity organization partners, OFA members have identified the critical shortage of veterinarians in the livestock sector, particularly those practising large animal medicine, as one of the biggest problems facing Ontario farmers.

What OFA asked for: a multi-faceted solution that combines increased veterinary capacity and opportunities with programs and incentives. This ask was also echoed by livestock farm organizations in Ontario.

What the government announced: an investment of \$14.7 million over two years to launch a new collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program between the University of Guelph and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, and a three-year, \$900,000 student loan assistance program for recently graduated veterinarians to practice livestock veterinary medicine in underserved areas.

"The announcement by the provincial government that they're funding expanded access to veterinary care in remote and northern Ontario communities is welcome news to farmers. It's particularly exciting for those of us who farm in the north. My family and I raise livestock and run a freezer meat business near Thunder Bay, and I know first-hand how challenging it is for farmers in this part of Ontario to access veterinary services – and for veterinarians to provide the care that livestock need."

- Bill Groenheide, Director, Zone 15 - Northern Ontario



ISSUE: Improvements to the Advanced Payment Program

Rising interest rates, increasing input costs and general inflationary pressure are making it harder for farmers to operate their businesses. The Advance Payment Program is a federal loan guarantee program that gives farmers access to low-interest cash advances and can help alleviate some of these financial stressors.

What OFA asked for: the 2022 temporary increase in the interest-free loan amount from \$100,000 to \$250,000 to be made permanent; administrative improvements to simplify the program and make it more efficient; and for 60% of the advance to be available in the fall when farmers make many of their planting purchases for the following year.

What the government announced: an increase to the interest-free limit for loans under the APP from \$250,000 to \$350,000 for the 2023 program year. OFA continues to advocate for permanent enhancements and improvements to the Advanced Payments Program.

ISSUE: Financial compensation for farmers negatively impacted by federal fertilizer tariffs

In March 2022, the Canadian government imposed a 35% tariff on imports from Russia, which includes fertilizer. For many Canadian farmers, the tariffs added considerable extra costs to food production.

What OFA asked for: in the short-term, a reimbursement of fertilizer tariff dollars back to the farmers who paid them, and if that's not feasible, to establish a way that the funds are returned to the agriculture sector instead of staying with the government. Long-term, government investment in domestic fertilizer production is needed to reduce our reliance on imported products.

What the government announced: the addition of \$34.1 million to the federal On-Farm Climate Action Fund for fertilizer-related projects in Eastern Canada that is accessible directly to farmers. Additionally, there has been some progress in the return of a portion of fertilizer tariff dollars directly to farmers.

As well, the provincial government established its Fertilizer Accelerating Solutions & Technology Challenge, which supported 10 companies in bringing home-grown fertilizer solutions to market.

“We’ve been clear since day one that our preferred solution has always been the direct return of tariff dollars to farmers, and this announcement does make this money available to primary agriculture through a funding program with on-farm benefits, which is an alternative we had put forward in our dialogue with government on this issue.”

- Peggy Brekveld, President & Director-at-Large

ISSUE: Broadening fuel tax exemptions for farmers

Farmers depend on energy sources like natural gas and propane to heat livestock barns and dry grains to keep them from spoiling. The federal fuel charges for the price of carbon (the carbon tax) place a significant financial burden on farmers.

What OFA asked for: expand the federal fuel charge exemption for agriculture to include natural gas and propane for critical agricultural activities and expand the definition of eligible farming equipment to include heating agricultural buildings like barns and greenhouses and grain drying as there are currently no viable, affordable alternative technologies available to reduce consumption.

What the government announced: Bill C-234, a private member's bill currently before the Canadian Senate, would expand the list of farm fuels qualifying for exemption to include natural gas and propane and change the definition of farming machinery eligible for exemption to include grain drying activities under the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (GGPPA)*. OFA continues to advocate for inclusion of heating agricultural buildings in the exemptions and for speedy passage of this bill.

"These aren't optional activities and as we currently lack workable alternative energy options, the federal fuel surcharges for the price on carbon have placed a significant financial burden on farmers. Research has shown that the costs to Ontario farmers between now and full implementation of federal carbon pricing structures in 2030 are estimated at over \$890 million."

- Drew Spoelstra, Vice President & Director, Zone 5 - Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth and Niagara

ISSUE: Supports for farmer mental health and wellness

Research from the University of Guelph has drawn a lot of attention to the high levels of stress farmers face and the impact it is having on them and their families. This has highlighted the urgent need for resources and support for farmer wellness, particularly in rural areas.

Last year, OFA, with the support of the governments of Canada and Ontario through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Ontario Division to develop and launch the Farmer Wellness Initiative.

What OFA asked for: ongoing support for farmer mental health and wellness resources and programming. Early reports from the Farmer Wellness Initiative showed strong uptake of the service and anecdotal evidence has demonstrated the impact it is having in the farm community.

What the government announced: an \$8 million investment by the provincial and federal governments into the Farmer Wellness Initiative, the In the Know program and the Guardian Network so they will continue to be available to everyone who needs them.

"As awareness increases, so does the use of the Farmer Wellness Initiative. I attended various agricultural events and trade shows last fall and winter where I heard from people about how relieved they are that a program like this is available for farmers, especially in rural areas where healthcare and mental health supports and resources can be very limited. This shows that we're meeting a need and that the farm community is starting to embrace the help that is available."

- Sara Wood, Director-at-Large



The hot topics: Farmland preservation, rural infrastructure, taxation and emissions reduction

The OFA handles a full portfolio of issues that matter to Ontario farmers and rural communities. Many are complex, and can't be easily or quickly resolved for a variety of reasons, but OFA continues to work hard to make progress and ensure its members' concerns and perspectives are in front of decision-makers.

Farmland for food production

Agriculture matters to all of us. We all need to eat, but farming and food production also support every major aspect of life in our province, including priority issues for governments at all levels, like environment, climate change and food security.

None of that happens, however, without one fundamental ingredient: productive farmland and natural resources. Canada has some of the best in the world right here in Ontario and it's our responsibility to future generations to ensure we don't lose our ability to feed ourselves.

► **THE ISSUE:** We recognize that solutions must be found to address Ontario's affordable housing crisis. Ontario's farmers are not opposed to growth and development – we also want housing options to support youth, seniors, families, workers, and newcomers in our communities. However, we believe there is an opportunity to accomplish this by building within existing urban boundaries, utilizing underdeveloped areas, reclaiming abandoned industrial lands and building up instead of out. Our concern remains with land use planning approaches that threaten the future growth and profitability of farming businesses and our ability to produce as much of our own food, fuel, fibre and flowers as we possibly can right here at home.

► **THE ACTION:** OFA released countless statements in support of farmland preservation in collaboration with industry partners, stakeholders and the 51 county and regional federations across the province. OFA continues to advocate for responsible land use planning solutions that will help address the affordable housing crisis while also respecting and supporting the need to preserve farmland for farming and domestic food production purposes.

We strongly believe the answer lies with responsible land use planning that prevents further farmland loss and fragmentation and helps communities reach intensification targets – and that meaningful consultation with farmers, municipalities and rural landowners is critical. As always, OFA remains willing to partner with government to find workable solutions that will both address the housing crisis and protect Ontario's farmland.

Need for rural infrastructure investments

► **THE ISSUE:** OFA has long been encouraging the provincial government to invest in rural Ontario infrastructure. Transportation, energy, communication, schools and healthcare are key factors in determining where people choose to live and work, and where businesses choose to grow and invest. For rural communities to be successful in attracting new businesses and residents, they need long-term investments into transportation, broadband, and energy infrastructure, as well as social supports like healthcare, education and community services.

► **THE ACTION:** OFA was pleased to see the provincial government announce an investment of nearly \$4 billion to ensure every community across Ontario has access to high-speed internet by the end of 2025. OFA continues to advocate for investments into rural Ontario's physical and social infrastructure, which will support distributed economic development and offer practical, long-term solutions for provincial housing and transportation needs.

Addressing the Underused Housing Tax

► **THE ISSUE:** The federal *Underused Housing Tax Act* received Royal Assent in June 2022. Intended to help alleviate the high cost of housing, it places a one percent tax on the value of vacant or underused residential properties directly or indirectly owned by those who are not permanent residents or Canadian citizens.

It also requires residential housing owners who aren't Canadian citizens or permanent residents, as well as private corporations and partnerships – which includes farms – to file an Underused Housing Tax (UHT) return by April 30 every year for each property they own even if they qualify for an exemption from the tax. If that return isn't filed, the penalties are substantial.

► **THE ACTION:** the OFA, along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and other farm organizations, has been actively advocating for the federal government to exempt farmers from having to file an Underused Housing Tax return. We've also been meeting with elected officials and government staff to explain the issue of multiple dwellings in rural areas and the unintended consequences this legislation now has for the farming community.

In the November 2023 Fall Economic Statement, the federal government announced proposed changes that would exempt farm corporations and partnerships deemed to be Canadian owned (90% owned by Canadians) from filing a UHT return starting with the 2023 tax year. Non-filing penalties would also be reduced to \$1,000 for an individual and \$2,000 for a corporation from the current levels of \$5,000 and \$10,000 respectively.

The proposed changes still need to be introduced and passed through legislation in order to come into effect, and UHT returns must still be filed for the 2022 tax year by the April 30, 2024 deadline in order to avoid non-filing fees.

Support for achieving emissions reduction targets

► **THE ISSUE:** Fertilizer remains a hot topic for farmers with respect to the federal government's nitrous oxide emissions reductions target for agriculture announced last year. The stated aspiration of reducing nitrous oxide emissions to 30 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030 continues to cause deep concern across the sector, despite federal government assurances that the goal is not mandatory fertilizer use reduction and that all efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fertilizer are voluntary.

► **THE ACTION:** OFA continues to raise farmers' concerns on fertilizer emissions reduction targets in its meetings with elected federal and provincial officials, political staff and bureaucrats, as well as possible solutions. OFA believes strongly that measuring BMP adoption rates is a much more accurate approach than simply tracking fertilizer purchases, and we are advocating for government support for BMP implementation related to soil health, emissions reductions and climate change mitigation that will help farmers achieve these targets without compromising yield or profitability. As part of this ask, we are also asking provincial and federal governments for acknowledgement of the work farmers have already voluntarily put into improving environmental health.

Taking the farmer voice to decision-makers

Throughout the year, OFA is active at making sure farmers are where decision-makers are and that agriculture's perspectives are represented. The sector contributes \$47 billion annually to the provincial economy, employs 10% of Ontario's labour force, and exports nearly \$20 billion in agri-food products every year. Those are significant numbers that underline the critical importance of farming to the economic engine of Ontario – and why agriculture and rural communities need investments and distributed economic development to support continued strength and growth.

A few of the advocacy events OFA attended this past year:

Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) annual conference

Although its members are farmers and agricultural organizations, the OFA also advocates on behalf of strong rural communities, making the ROMA conference a key event on the annual calendar. It's where rural municipal leaders, rural stakeholders and government representatives come together to meet, network and discuss issues of importance to rural Ontario.



"We had many conversations on issues that matter to farmers and rural communities, including farmland preservation, agricultural policy and farmer mental health – but it was also a chance to be able to just generally talk about the agriculture sector and give people a greater understanding of what we're all about."

- Paul Maurice, Director, Zone 13 - Peel, Simcoe and York



Good Roads annual conference

This event is the annual gathering of Good Roads, whose members are Ontario's municipalities, First Nations organizations, and dozens of affiliated corporate members in the transportation and infrastructure sectors. A key advocacy message for OFA continues to be the need for provincial investment into rural Ontario's physical infrastructure, including roads and bridges.

"Attending the Good Roads Conference is a commitment to our members and rural communities to ensure their voices and concerns are heard with rural leaders. For Ontario's farming community, roadways are more than just pathways; they are lifelines, connecting us to consumers, markets, and economic prosperity. The discussions focused on prioritizing infrastructure, transportation and championing road safety for farm equipment."

- Paul Vickers, Executive Member & Director, Zone 2 - Bruce and Grey



Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) conference

This event is one of the most important public policy conferences in Ontario. This year, it attracted over 2,500 municipal leaders, government officials, civil servants, and other stakeholders including a wide range of companies and organizations who are connected to municipalities in some capacity.



The OFA is a key partner working with government and local municipalities to identify ways and means to prioritize, build and maintain critical infrastructure that is needed in rural communities.

“Many municipal delegates come from large, urban communities with little direct connection to agriculture and food production, for example, and are unaware of the many issues we have in common, from infrastructure, housing and healthcare to jobs, the food supply chain, and budgetary constraints.”

- Crispin Colvin, Vice President & Director, Zone 6 - Lambton and Middlesex



OFA's Queen's Park Advocacy Day

As Ontario's largest general farm organization, OFA is a conduit between the agriculture sector and the provincial government, representing and advocating for the needs of Ontario's farmers and rural communities.

Once a year, the OFA takes its messages directly to Queen's Park, spending a day meeting with elected provincial officials and their staff from all major political parties. This past year marked the first outreach day since the last provincial election, as well as a return to in-person meetings after two years of virtual events during the pandemic.

“We believe strongly in the power of building relationships and developing a two-way flow of information. Being able to meet face-to-face helps with making connections and building relationships in ways no Zoom call ever can, and the social aspect at the end of advocacy day lets all of us interact in a more informal way. Although the business of the day is important, it's not always just about business.”

- Paul Vickers, Executive Member & Director, Zone 2 - Bruce and Grey





INVESTING IN OUR INDUSTRY

Summer board tour valuable for director development

Farmers in Ontario have many things in common, from dealing with weather and labour problems to managing soil health and working to keep farm businesses profitable, but agriculture is also a very diverse sector and Ontario's various regions have very different strengths, opportunities, issues and challenges.

That's why a highlight on the board calendar every year is the annual summer OFA director tour, which this year was held in Dundas County and hosted by the Dundas Federation of Agriculture.

"It's an opportunity for my 18 member board and (OFA) staff to come to eastern Ontario and tour another part of the province to see various types of agriculture, conservation activities and industries they might not see in their regions. It's to showcase who we are and what we do in Dundas."

- Jackie Kelly-Pemberton, Director, Zone 11 - Dundas, Frontenac, Grenville and Leeds

The day-long tour included stops at:

- ➔ **New Care Farms and Upper Canada Creamery** serving farm fresh milk, cheese, yogurt and ice cream with on-site processing. The farm is home to an organic dairy herd that includes 10 different dairy cattle breeds and is 96% grass fed.
- ➔ **University of Guelph research station** at Winchester, home to testing, research and trials focused on managing soil health and growing conditions for a variety of crops, including winter canola.
- ➔ Dairy processor **Lactalis Canada** of Winchester who showcased not only their delicious cheese and butter products, but also their environmental sustainability efforts, which include biosolids and organic waste processing and a water treatment plant.
- ➔ **South Nation Conservation** at Cass Bridge who provided an overview of ongoing research and pilot projects, the Flood Forecasting Warning Program and the clean water program.
- ➔ **Thurler Farms** where Nick Thurler provided a presentation and tour of his family's innovative dairy farm, which includes investing in an on-farm environmental energy project that uses on-farm feedstock for its new biodigester.

"Our planning committee didn't want to just go to dairy and cash crop farms, we wanted to show what other ag opportunities there are in Dundas, like the largest cheese processor in Ontario and the research being done out here."

- Ryan Devries, President, Dundas Federation of Agriculture

Interested in being a host? County and regional federations wanting to welcome the OFA board to their region for a summer tour should contact Wendy Beaton, Corporate Secretary at wendy.beaton@ofa.on.ca.

Developing the next generation of farm leaders

A great way to give people a taste for advocacy in action is to let them experience the OFA's activities first-hand. That's why six aspiring farm leaders joined OFA board members and staff at the 2023 Queen's Park outreach day, where they played active roles in the day's meetings.

Jordyn Domio grew up on a fruit farm in Niagara Region and now works as a grower at a floral greenhouse. She's a director with the Niagara Federation of Agriculture and has a strong interest in agricultural policy.

"As a younger member of the ag industry, I feel that it is important to share our ideas and perspectives, and what we want to see out of the industry that we will be a part of for many more years to come."

- Jordyn Domio



Daniel VanderHout is a fourth-generation farmer who is part of his family's greenhouse cucumber business and a board member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture. He's deeply passionate about agriculture policy and being part of efforts to strengthen Ontario's agriculture sector.

"Not only has it increased my understanding of our government and how voices in agriculture can make themselves heard, but it has also heightened my appreciation for the OFA and the work they are performing."

- Daniel VanderHout

Other local leaders at Queen's Park included Andrea McCoy-Naperstkow from Lanark County (who is joining the OFA provincial board as director from Zone 8 in November 2023), Carson Wagner from Oxford County, Derek Brekveld from Thunder Bay, and Charlotte Huitema from Haldimand.



OFA puts the focus on local by supporting community projects

Two years ago, when many farming and rural communities were struggling under the burdens and impacts of the pandemic, the OFA created its **Revive Fund**. It's a program that provides funding to help our 51 county and regional federations plan, develop and launch projects and initiatives in support of agriculture and their local communities – and local organizations have stepped up with impactful ideas.

Over the past two years, OFA has invested more than \$200,000, matched by regional and county federations, to support projects in 36 counties and regions across Ontario. These run from farm and road safety signage and training for emergency responders to teaching people about farming, promoting local food, supporting food banks and more.

This year, projects focused on promoting food and farming to cottagers, agritourism, bus tours for local municipal leaders or food influencers, signage to help passersby identify crops, events that target the future of farming, and even a weather station program that helped the local community benefit from more detailed weather forecasting.

“I’m proud of how our local federations have embraced this fund and have identified needs in their communities that they can help address with their innovative project ideas. It’s also great seeing OFA as a provincial organization support more investment into initiatives like the Revive Fund that will help bridge the gap between urban and rural residents.”

- Ethan Wallace, Director, Zone 7 - Huron and Perth

OFA expands bursary program and selects five winners in 2022

The OFA continued its long-standing tradition of celebrating and supporting young people in agriculture by expanding its bursary program in 2022 and naming five award winners.

Along with offering three bursaries awarded to students in undergraduate programs studying agriculture, OFA added a bursary for an individual completing an apprenticeship, as well as one for someone completing a postgraduate or leadership development program. Each bursary is worth \$2,000.

“The addition of two new bursaries made it possible for us to recognize the importance of all levels of education in setting people up for success in our industry. We are proud to recognize five individuals who are dedicated to using their skills to better agriculture and Ontario’s rural communities.”

- Peggy Brekveld, President & Director-at-Large

POSTGRADUATE BURSARY WINNER:

Valerie Higginson, Vankleek Hill

Upon graduation from the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, Valerie Higginson intends to pursue a position as a food animal veterinarian working primarily with bovine species. She grew up on her family’s sheep farm and hopes to give back to the industry by volunteering as a 4-H leader, mentoring upcoming students, and joining industry boards.

APPRENTICESHIP BURSARY WINNER:

Andrew Kuiack, Ottawa

Andrew Kuiack is apprenticing through the Agriculture Equipment Technician program at Fanshawe College. He credits a friend for sparking the passion that has now grown into a career as a mechanic at a local dealership. Andrew is also dedicated to the herd of cattle he raises with his wife and kids and is proud to sell beef to his local community.

UNDERGRADUATE BURSARY WINNER, NORTH/EAST REGION:

Faith Emiry, Massey

Faith Emiry graduated from the University of Guelph’s Food, Agriculture and Resource Economics program as part of the OAC Class of 2023. Growing up on a dairy farm with a seasonal strawberry patch, she was accustomed to hosting school groups and community members, which fostered a passion for advocating on behalf of agriculture and now intends to work in a role that bridges the gap between farmers and consumers.

UNDERGRADUATE BURSARY WINNER, CENTRAL REGION:

Michael Jones, Midland

Michael Jones' passion for soil science goes back to elementary school and today, he's an undergraduate student in biochemical engineering at Queen's University. His goal is to be part of advances in agricultural chemical technology by working as a process engineer or development researcher.

UNDERGRADUATE BURSARY WINNER, SOUTHWEST REGION:

Lexi Johnston, Listowel

A University of Guelph student majoring in animal science, Lexi Johnston has a passion for agriculture and community. She is looking forward to returning to the family dairy and grain farm and maximizing herd production and cow comfort.



Farmer mental health and wellness supports making a difference

In recent years, research from the University of Guelph has drawn a lot of attention to the high levels of stress farmers face and the impact it is having on them and their families. It's traditionally been something that was kept quiet, but now, the industry is finally talking about it and working together to take action.

In January 2022, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, with the support of the governments of Canada and Ontario partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Ontario Division to develop and launch the Farmer Wellness Initiative.

It provides free counselling services virtually, in-person or on the phone by professional counsellors with agricultural backgrounds and training. The confidential helpline is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in English and French, as well as up to 30 other languages.

Counselling is available for any issue, not just farm-related matters, including financial pressures; health concerns; depression; troubles with family, friends, partners or spouses; feelings of stress or burn-out; bullying, trauma, abuse and other issues requiring support.



"I attended various agricultural events and trade shows last fall and winter where I heard from people about how relieved they are that a program like this is available for farmers, especially in rural areas where healthcare and mental health supports and resources can be very limited. Long-standing stigmas and perceptions can be hard to break, but we all need help at some point and recognizing that isn't a weakness."

- Sara Wood, Director-at-Large

OFA is very proud of the growing awareness and increased use of many farmer wellness options over the past year. OFA remains committed to promoting all aspects of wellness and mental health for its members and farm communities.

To access counselling through the Farmer Wellness Initiative, call 1-866-267-6255 or visit farmerwellnessinitiative.ca.

OFA hosts education sessions to help farmers with business transition

Many farm businesses will be changing hands in the next 10 to 15 years as older farmers retire, yet both Census of Agriculture data and surveys done by the OFA have shown that the majority of farmers don't have a written transition plan for their farm.

This data, along with many conversations with OFA members across the province show a willingness and a need for farm families to have these conversations around the future of their farm businesses.

It can be hard to know where to get started, though, and that's why OFA has partnered with Farm Life Financial through its member benefit program to make succession planning support more accessible to members.

Last winter, OFA worked together with Farm Life to prepare and deliver a series of farm transition planning workshops for OFA members across Ontario. The Farm Life team brought specific and extensive expertise and experience in farm transition and financial planning and the workshops were an easy way to become introduced to the topic.

Approximately 260 people participated in the in-person sessions and over 300 enrolled in an online version of the workshop. A recorded webinar is also available on the OFA website at ofa.on.ca/benefit/farm-life for farmers who wish to learn more about succession planning on their own.

Due to the high demand and success of these sessions, OFA and Farm Life will be continuing these farm transition workshops in 2024.

"These sessions have in particular focused on tax advantages and reaching the goals of both generations while maintaining family harmony. That's not always easy to achieve, and it was something that was very important to all of us in my own family as we were going through this process."

- Ethan Wallace, Director, Zone 7 - Huron and Perth



MEMBER & STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

RESEARCH

Research supports OFA's policy and advocacy work

OFA supports and invests in research that will help develop the policy positions the organization takes to government on behalf of its members. At its annual Research Day, OFA's Farm Policy Research Group shares outcomes on the various research initiatives OFA is involved with and presents updates on other key issues the team is working on. The 2023 event at the end of March engaged close to 200 people, including farmers, researchers, consultants, agricultural organizations, government and municipal representatives and media.

Highlights included:

- ➔ **Agri-tourism:** Last year, OFA partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario on the 2022 State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report. We also conducted a local food and agritourism survey. Overall, we learned that the Ontario farms engaged in direct-to-consumer sales range in size and scope but offer a diverse range of products – and that agritourism is an industry ripe for growth and economic opportunity.
- ➔ **Environmental practices:** Dr. Michael Drescher from University of Waterloo has been studying environmental best management practices – windbreaks, on-farm forests and buffer strips – and what motivates or hinders farmers from adopting these practices on-farm. He found that over 70% of farmers maintain forests or wooded areas on their farms, 64% have planted windbreaks and just under half maintain riparian buffer strips. Leading motivators were their own convictions, social pressures and government.
- ➔ **Agriculture in northern Ontario:** OFA has been a strong advocate for supporting agriculture in northern Ontario and OFA senior farm policy analyst Ben Lefort gave an overview of how agriculture's economic footprint in the north has changed in the last decade. The number of farms has increased, and the revenue per acre of farmland has almost doubled, with much of the growth coming from field crop production.

Speakers also provided updates on deadstock, cybersecurity, OFA's slow moving vehicle road safety campaign, mental health research, fertilizer use and soil health benchmarking in the Greenbelt.

It's a matter of when, not if, a farm business will face a cyber security problem

Breaching incidents of all kinds, whether compromised information, financial fraud or data that is held hostage until a ransom is paid are on the rise, and agriculture is not immune to these threats. When they happen, business is severely interrupted and the path to regain access to data, and the trust and confidence of customers, employees or other stakeholders is a long and costly one.

Outdated, unmaintained systems running old software no longer being updated is one of the most common vulnerabilities and is widespread. Lack of data backup leaves a business particularly vulnerable in a security breach, and can also be a serious problem in case of computer or server failure, or a virus, for example.

People also represent a cyber security risk. Lenient approaches to who has access to on-farm systems, such as sharing passwords, using a single login for all users or not removing system access from employees who no longer work for the business can leave a business vulnerable.

As well, a lack of awareness amongst farmers, their families or their employees of scams like phishing emails, where fake messages encourage users to click on potentially damaging links or share information, is also a challenge.

There is no such thing as 100% security, but with cyber criminals looking for weak or vulnerable targets, experts suggest taking steps to minimize risk as much as possible. A few simple steps include:

- ✓ **Making a checklist** of all your current technology and ensuring that you're using current software versions and systems.
- ✓ **Establishing basic rules** for your team to recognize where threats come from and what to do – or not do. Free online videos are available to help with training.
- ✓ **Ensuring new systems or devices are set up properly** and asking suppliers what security the devices have and whether data is encrypted.
- ✓ **Not sharing passwords**, making sure passwords are strong and updating login credentials when an employee leaves the business.
- ✓ **Backing up data and installing valid anti-virus software**, firewalls and malware detection systems that are kept up to date.

“Ultimately, we need to think about cyber security on the farm like we do biosecurity – an investment into a best practice that, while not foolproof, will go a long way to minimizing or even avoiding risk.”

- Cathy Lennon, OFA General Manager

OFA continues search for sustainable deadstock management solutions

When animals die on the farm, it's important that they're handled and disposed of responsibly and properly, and without impact on human or animal health, or the environment.

Unfortunately, escalating costs have made on-farm pick-up of carcasses for rendering uneconomical across large parts of Ontario, and steadily increasing regulatory requirements – which span five provincial acts and 12 different organizations – are making it harder for rendering companies to operate profitably.

That's why the OFA joined with provincial livestock organizations to request help from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to address this issue with both short- and long-term options that will result in practical and sustainable solutions.

OMAFRA provided funding for Livestock Research Innovation Corporation to complete a report that summarizes the current deadstock issue in the province and makes recommendations for a path forward.

The study recommends:

- ➔ setting up a coordinating body, ideally led by an existing organization, to ensure ongoing development and implementation of solutions that respect geographic differences and the needs of the various livestock sectors in Ontario.
- ➔ continued investment in sustainable deadstock management is another recommendation, particularly ensuring ongoing, uninterrupted collection, and building a business case for the value deadstock could offer a circular economy, including to waste management companies.
- ➔ a review of existing deadstock regulations to ensure they're based in science, avoid overlap and allow the industry to take advantage of new opportunities presented by sustainable circular economies.

This past winter, OFA hosted a presentation of the initial study results to farmers and industry stakeholders as part of our annual Research Day.

Following that, OFA also took part in a stakeholder meeting, where farm organizations, government, renderers, waste disposal companies and others discussed the study's findings and formed a working group that is now working on next steps resulting from the study.

"As a former dairy farmer and now a chicken producer, I know first hand how hard it is when livestock die unexpectedly on the farm and how important it is to have safe, practical and economically feasible disposal options. Deadstock is a serious concern that our agri-food system needs to deal with collectively so we can avoid impacts on human health and the environment and minimize risk to Ontario's livestock herds."

- Paul Maurice, Director, Zone 13 - Peel, Simcoe and York

Ongoing push for action on stray voltage

For decades, Ontario livestock farmers have been struggling with stray voltage or ground current. Livestock exposed to even low levels of electrical current may experience tingling sensations that impact their behaviour and health.

Stray voltage is a phenomenon that is often highly misunderstood and misidentified. On the farm, ground tests for stray voltage show the problem is often caused by levels of current lower than one-volt, which humans can't feel but animals can. Current legislation places the threshold for utilities to take action at one-volt or higher, which makes it difficult for farmers to work with the electrical sector to find solutions.

OFA has been pushing for a solution for many years, including working with Hydro One to develop their Farm Rapid Response Team, a group of knowledgeable staff that farmers can reach to respond to on-farm electrical problems.

“Meaningful change has been slow to come, however. Stray voltage problems remain undiagnosed or unresolved because the level of current causing the issue falls within the existing standards of the provincial electrical code. Lowering that code threshold from one-volt to a quarter of a volt, for example, would be one way to help encourage action across all electrical stakeholders.”

- Larry Davis, Director, Zone 3 - Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk

Ontario's energy minister, Todd Smith, has formed the Stray Voltage Working Group to focus on this issue. Members include the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Energy Board, Hydro One Networks, Electrical Safety Authority, Electricity Distributors Association, and Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario as well as observers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Government and Consumer Services.

After a series of meetings, the working group released a report that includes recommendations for the government on next steps that it believes will help find ways to address this issue. This includes:

- ➞ better communication and information sharing, including the participation of veterinarians;
- ➞ reducing likelihood and frequency of stray voltage, including reviewing and updating relevant codes and standards;
- ➞ identifying and addressing instances of stray voltage, including enhanced testing protocols and a formalized, one-stop escalation protocol for affected farmers.

The Stray Voltage Working Group must continue to collectively encourage the government to act on these recommendations. Solving the stray voltage issue will ensure better animal welfare, reduce farmer stress, and ensure a strong and resilient food supply system for Ontario that is equipped to meet growth goals.



Protecting against farm trespassing and theft

Farm theft and trespassing incidents are on the rise and crops and livestock are easy targets for thieves, along with equipment, fuel and other high value farm items that may not always be protected.

OFA has been engaging with the OPP and the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers to help raise awareness of this growing problem. A new fact sheet was also developed and released that focuses on securing farm assets and protecting properties against theft and trespassers.

- ✓ **Posting clearly visible “no trespassing” signs** is the best way to let people know they are not welcome to roam your property without your consent. Although signs won’t necessarily keep intruders out, having them clearly visible at every entry to your property will help build a case with police if you do have an incident.
- ✓ **Be vigilant** and watch for unknown tire tracks, discarded cigarettes, garbage, or alcohol containers on or near your property, as well as drones flying overhead that may be collecting information for theft or activism. Locations can be scouted before they are targeted, whether for theft or even anti-agriculture activist activity, so keep an eye out for people who look out of place or who are taking photos of vehicles or people.
- ✓ **Control or monitor entry** through a single main entrance and exit on your property if feasible. Use a gate or chain to limit access or install a surveillance camera – and for entrances that you seldom use, a heavy item that can’t be easily moved without a tractor is a good deterrent.
- ✓ **Invest in lights and alarms**, keep key areas of your property, as well as building exteriors, well-lit and maintain clear, free sightlines wherever possible. This makes it harder for intruders to hide the shadows. And if practical, consider an alarm system in your barn or other important farm buildings that will create noise and send you alert notifications.
- ✓ **Lock up and put keys away**. Install good quality locks on your buildings; the cheaper the lock, the easier it is to pick or break. Don’t leave keys in your vehicles, tractors, ATVs or forklifts, and make sure they’re locked overnight. Also lock farm fuel tanks and storages.
- ✓ **Be careful what you post on social media** about where your farm is located, or if you’re going to be away etc. While farmers try to be transparent online about farming and helping people understand where their food comes from, it’s important we don’t become targets or inadvertently place our families or our farms in jeopardy.

“Our farms are our businesses, so trespassing is an important issue for farmers and our livelihoods. Our farms are also where we live, however, so it’s also an issue of safety and security for us and our families.”

- Tracey Arts, Director, Zone 4 - Elgin and Oxford





BENEFIT PROGRAM

Exclusive partner benefits and programs

OFA's partnerships with leading brands and service providers offer benefits and incentives to OFA members. Special promotions, discounts and services for OFA members are available from the following partners:

Scotiabank®



Find all of the exclusive offers for each partner on the OFA website at ofa.on.ca/benefit.

Limited time offers

OFA's Limited Time Offers are temporary services exclusively for OFA members that deliver additional value to your farm business. Every limited time offer partner is carefully selected and promotions negotiated on behalf of OFA members.

Visit the OFA website to see our current list of limited time offers:
ofa.on.ca/benefit/limited-time-offers



Meeting your local OFA reps and benefit partners

This past summer, OFA launched a new outreach initiative for its member benefit partners - a series of six membership appreciation barbecues co-hosted with local benefit partners.

The goal was to help member benefit partners find new and engaging ways to meet and interact with OFA staff and members. The events also gave members the opportunity to meet their local OFA member service representative, provincial director and local member benefit partners in an informal, casual setting.

The line up of these well-attended events included:

- Hanover, in partnership with Scotiabank
- Brantford, in partnership with TELUS Business
- Casselman, in partnership with GM Canada
- Orangeville, in partnership with Peavey Mart
- Lindsay, in partnership with Co-operators and Peavey Mart
- Shedden, in partnership with Scotiabank



Engaging at events

Over the past year, OFA was visible at many industry and consumer-facing events across Ontario. This active engagement included:

- ➔ Exhibiting at 17 events and farm shows across Ontario
- ➔ Sponsoring 18 industry partner annual general meetings and events
- ➔ Developing a new relationship with Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers with the intent to work together to develop and share resources to protect members against rural crime
- ➔ Increasing the profile of Ontario agriculture at four consumer-facing events, including the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and Farm & Food Care Ontario's Breakfast on the Farm events



MEDIA RELATIONS & PUBLIC OUTREACH

Getting agriculture's messages out

Agriculture isn't always top of mind with consumers, politicians and other decision-makers, so it's part of OFA's job to ensure the concerns and needs of Ontario farmers and rural communities are brought forward.

In addition to the government, industry and event work covered in other parts of this publication, OFA is also active in the media, both reacting to evolving news stories and proactively encouraging our own through regular news releases and weekly Viewpoint opinion columns.

This past year, OFA distributed:

- 1 OFA Today publication
- 2 Joint Statements alongside Ontario farm leaders
- 18 News Releases
- 52 Viewpoint columns

This resulted in coverage on a variety of topics by a wide range of outlets from general media to specialty publications. Here are some highlights:

- CBC News - farmland preservation, seed regulations, rural broadband
- CTV News - Provincial Planning Statement, local food
- Windsor Star - Federal-Provincial-Territorial meetings, energy costs
- CityTV - Local Food Week
- London Free Press - weather
- Toronto Star - Provincial Policy Statement, weather
- Hamilton Spectator - rural broadband
- Pelham Today - fall fairs, mental health, environment
- Barrie Today - mental health, Federal-Provincial-Territorial meetings
- Kingston Whig Standard - fall fairs
- AM 800 CKLW Windsor - mental health
- iPolitics (national political news site) - Provincial Planning Statement
- The Narwahl (online environmental magazine) - farmland preservation



FRESH
LOCAL
PRODUCE

Providing more resources in French

Over the past couple of years, the OFA has been making a concerted effort to provide more resources, services and communications in French.

In the past year, this has included six Viewpoints on topics like mental health, cyber security, and transition planning, various member updates on issues including Farm Business Registration and fertilizer tariffs, and French language biographies written and posted for OFA's three bilingual directors.

Fournir davantage de ressources en français

Au cours des deux dernières années, la FAO a déployé des efforts concertés pour offrir davantage de ressources, de services et de communications en français.

Au cours de l'année écoulée, on a notamment publié six points de vue sur des sujets tels que la santé mentale, la cybersécurité et la planification de la transition, diverses mises à jour à l'intention des membres sur des questions telles que l'enregistrement des entreprises agricoles et les tarifs douaniers sur les engrais, ainsi que des biographies en français rédigées et affichées pour les trois administrateurs bilingues de la FAO.



ATTENTION À
LA BOUE
SUR LA ROUTE

WATCH FOR
MUD
ON ROAD

OFA on Social Media

OFA also maintains an active presence on four social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X/Twitter. Over the past year, this has resulted in:

14,507,513

Impressions

2.4%

Engagement Rate

44,431

Followers Across All Four Platforms

1,248,481

Video Views

88,279

Post Link Clicks

343,217

Engagements

Here are a few highlights from OFA's social feeds this past year:

Facebook | OntarioFarms

A November 25, 2022 post about farmland loss

IMPACT:

12,513

Impressions

11.1%

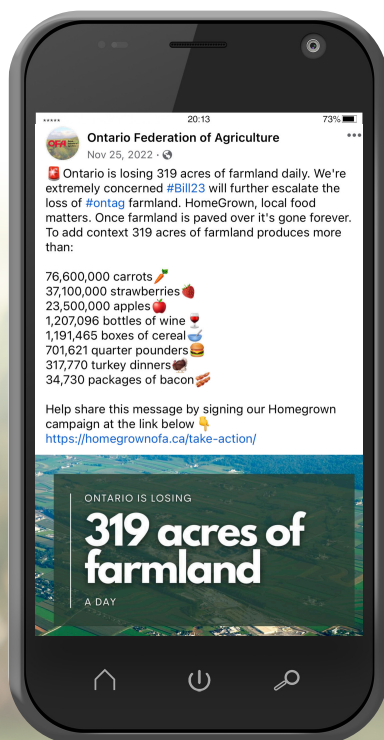
Engagement Rate

204

Shares

1,394

Engagements



194

Post Link Clicks

11,556

Average Reach

361

Reactions

100

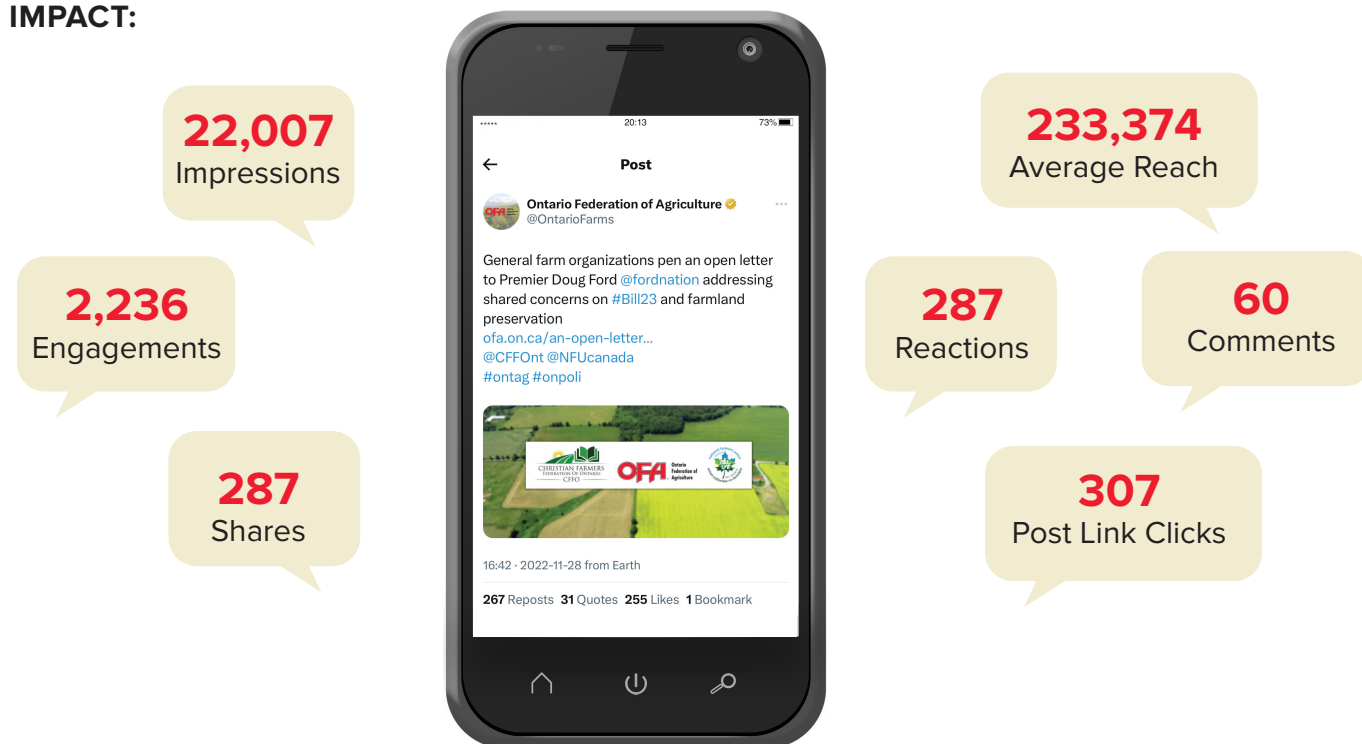
Comments



Twitter/X | X @OntarioFarms

A November 28, 2022 post about Ontario's farm organizations writing an open letter to Premier Doug Ford about Bill 23 and farmland preservation

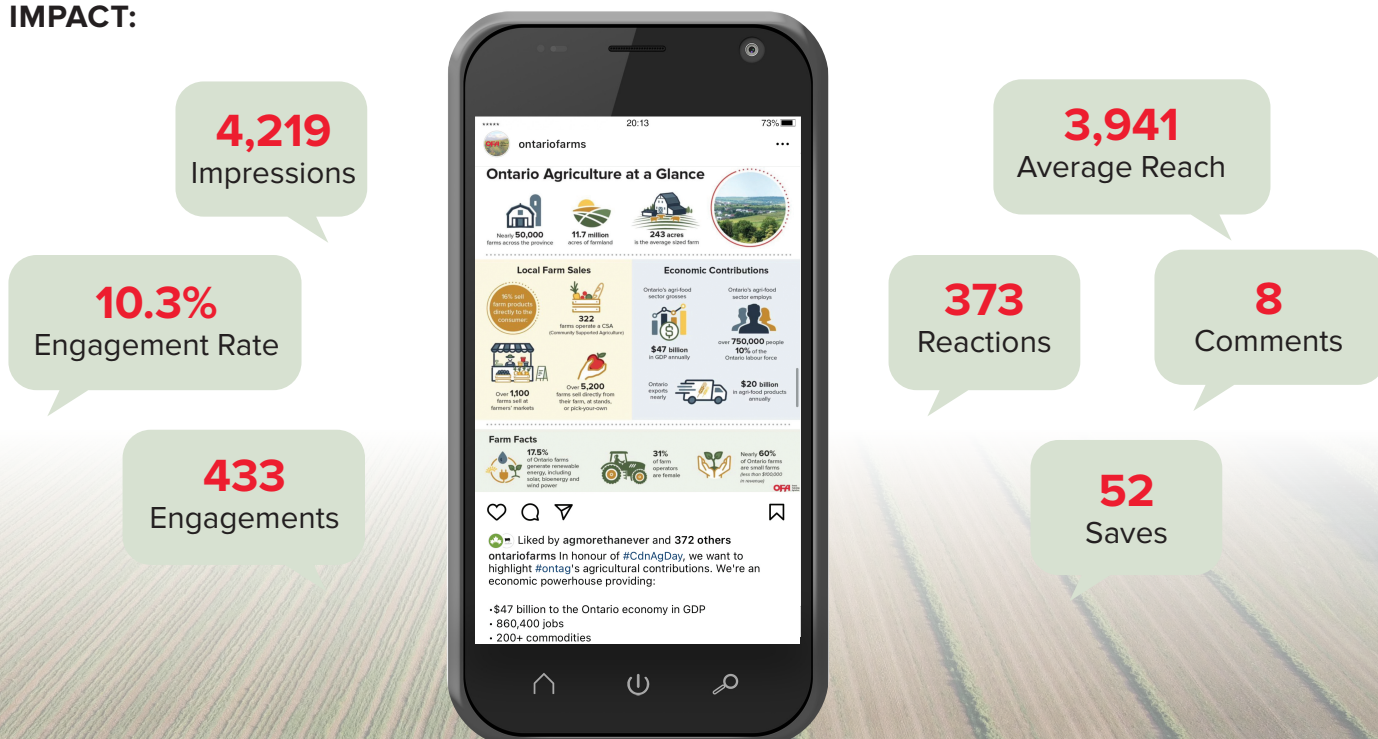
IMPACT:



Instagram | @ontariofarms

A February 15, 2023 post on Canadian Agriculture Day about Ontario's agri-food sector

IMPACT:



A note of thanks

OFA is a strong believer in the power of partnerships and in working together to achieve common goals. Many of the accomplishments in this report are the products of partnerships with other members of the agricultural sector, and we appreciate the support we receive from all of our member organizations. These include:



Financial Statements

The following is a snapshot of the 2023 audited financial statements of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture for the period ending August 31, 2023.

For the full report, please visit ofa.on.ca/about-ofa/financial-statements.

Ontario Federation of Agriculture Statement of Operations

For the year ended August 31	Budget 2023	2023	2022
Income			
Revenue	\$ 9,127,044	\$ 9,135,239	\$ 9,051,690
Project management revenues	0	368,211	584,107
Other	2,212,979	3,040,297	1,984,387
	11,340,023	12,543,747	11,620,184
Expenses			
Organizational	2,710,347	2,765,479	2,217,185
Departmental	7,504,000	6,270,320	6,128,128
Grants, dues and projects	1,053,917	951,641	1,083,882
Project management expenses	0	368,211	584,107
Pension top-ups	19,000	6,405	69,908
Employee future benefits	330,000	348,300	14,500
	11,617,264	10,710,356	10,097,710
Excess of income over expenses	\$ (277,241)	\$ 1,833,391	\$ 1,522,474

Ontario Federation of Agriculture Statement of Financial Position

As at August 31

2023

2022

Assets

Current

Cash	\$ 1,087,717	\$ 1,398,881
Short term deposits	4,800,000	2,500,000
Project funds receivable	35,437	183,010
Receivables	132,305	107,258
Employee future benefits asset	395,600	28,500
Prepaid expenses and other assets	91,691	82,243
Current portion of investments, at fair value	424,086	869,554
Current portion of investments, at amortized cost	488,300	893,000

7,455,136 6,062,446

Capital assets	4,729,651	4,280,034
Investments, at fair value	2,986,791	3,601,191
Investments, at amortized cost	3,269,450	3,747,750
Cash surrender value life insurance	295,507	288,007

\$ 18,736,535 \$ 17,979,428

Liabilities

Current

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 811,071	\$ 906,267
Current portion of long-term debt	0	1,178,093
Project funds received in advance	333,566	495,205

1,144,637 2,579,565

Pension liability	80,600	88,700
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1,225,237 2,668,265

Net assets

Net assets invested in capital assets	4,729,651	3,101,941
Unrestricted net assets	12,781,647	12,209,222

17,511,298 15,311,163

\$ 18,736,535 \$ 17,979,428

Ontario Federation of Agriculture Schedule of Income

For the year ended August 31, 2023

	Budget 2023	Actual 2023	Actual 2022
Revenue			
Registration income	\$ 9,782,055	\$ 9,973,245	\$ 9,860,925
Registration refunds - 860 refunds (2022 - 929)	(254,235)	(219,375)	(239,655)
Registration administration fee	(613,776)	(792,257)	(760,310)
Individual farm members and associates	200,000	160,626	177,730
Commodity, Co-operative, Educational	13,000	13,000	13,000
Total membership fees	\$ 9,127,044	\$ 9,135,239	\$ 9,051,690
Other Income			
Insurance finders' fee	45,000	60,105	40,353
Co-operators group limited loyalty program	871,641	1,505,536	1,314,481
Project management fees	12,000	12,000	12,000
Cash surrender value of life insurance	5,000	7,500	7,500
Convention revenue	138,750	114,337	24,827
Member benefit programs	737,000	722,017	593,383
Rental Income	0	867	0
On Line Store Sales	3,600	6,421	2,937
Investment income	209,988	252,417	40,042
Dividend income	150,000	353,749	383,106
Realized loss on investments	0	(189,870)	(21,932)
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	0	159,058	(428,038)
Miscellaneous	40,000	36,160	15,728
Total Other Income	\$ 2,212,979	\$ 3,040,297	\$ 1,984,387

Ontario Federation of Agriculture Schedule of Expenses

For the year ended August 31, 2023

	Budget 2023	Actual 2023	Actual 2022
Organizational			
Convention	\$ 330,585	\$ 326,448	\$ 87,451
Canadian Federation of Agriculture meetings	46,692	64,428	32,333
County Funding	1,307,740	1,342,845	1,343,405
Executive Members	390,872	383,943	319,589
Board of Directors	538,698	605,496	389,985
Policy Advisory Council meetings	95,760	42,319	44,422
	\$ 2,710,347	\$ 2,765,479	\$ 2,217,185
Departments			
Farm Policy Research Group	\$ 1,159,647	\$ 1,001,623	\$ 880,581
Member Relations and Systems Group	202,900	200,987	149,245
Communications	873,380	740,690	817,689
Government relations	120,000	120,000	120,000
Finance and administration	2,380,725	1,681,084	1,618,165
Building costs	310,000	306,583	255,850
Field services	1,934,748	1,660,713	1,584,633
Overhead	522,600	558,640	701,965
	\$ 7,504,000	\$ 6,270,320	\$ 6,128,128
Grants, dues and projects			
Canadian Federation of Agriculture	\$ 345,000	\$ 332,976	\$ 332,986
L'Union des Cultivateurs Franco-Ontariens	142,917	162,917	135,497
Agriculture Leadership Trust	20,000	20,000	20,000
Farm and Food Care	30,000	30,000	30,000
Natural Science and Engineering			
Research Council of Canada Project	25,000	0	25,000
4R Program	10,000	10,000	10,000
AgScape - Grant	5,000	5,000	5,000
Donations and contributions	26,000	19,900	53,740
County Special Project Fund	100,000	90,148	141,319
Small Federation County Fund	0	0	1,500
Canadian Ag Human Resource Council	10,000	10,000	10,000
Research Grants	80,000	49,115	10,000
L.I.C.C. Grant	10,000	5,000	10,000
Public Trust Campaign	250,000	216,585	298,840
	\$ 1,053,917	\$ 951,641	\$ 1,083,882

REGIONAL ROUND UP:

Northern Ontario

(Algoma, Cochrane, Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Timiskaming)



1,782
farms



711,263
acres of farmland



\$238 million
in farm cash
receipts



- Dairy
- Grains & oilseeds
- Cattle

Western Ontario

(Bruce, Dufferin, Grey, Halton, Huron, Peel, Perth Simcoe, Waterloo, and Wellington)



16,483
farms



3,716,594
acres of farmland



\$6.6 billion
in farm cash
receipts



- Grains & oilseeds
- Cattle
- Dairy

Southern Ontario

(Brant, Chatham-Kent, Elgin, Essex, Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton, Lambton, Middlesex, Niagara, and Oxford)



17,031
farms



3,865,918
acres of farmland



\$8.8 billion
in farm cash
receipts



- Grains & oilseeds
- Greenhouse vegetables
- Hogs

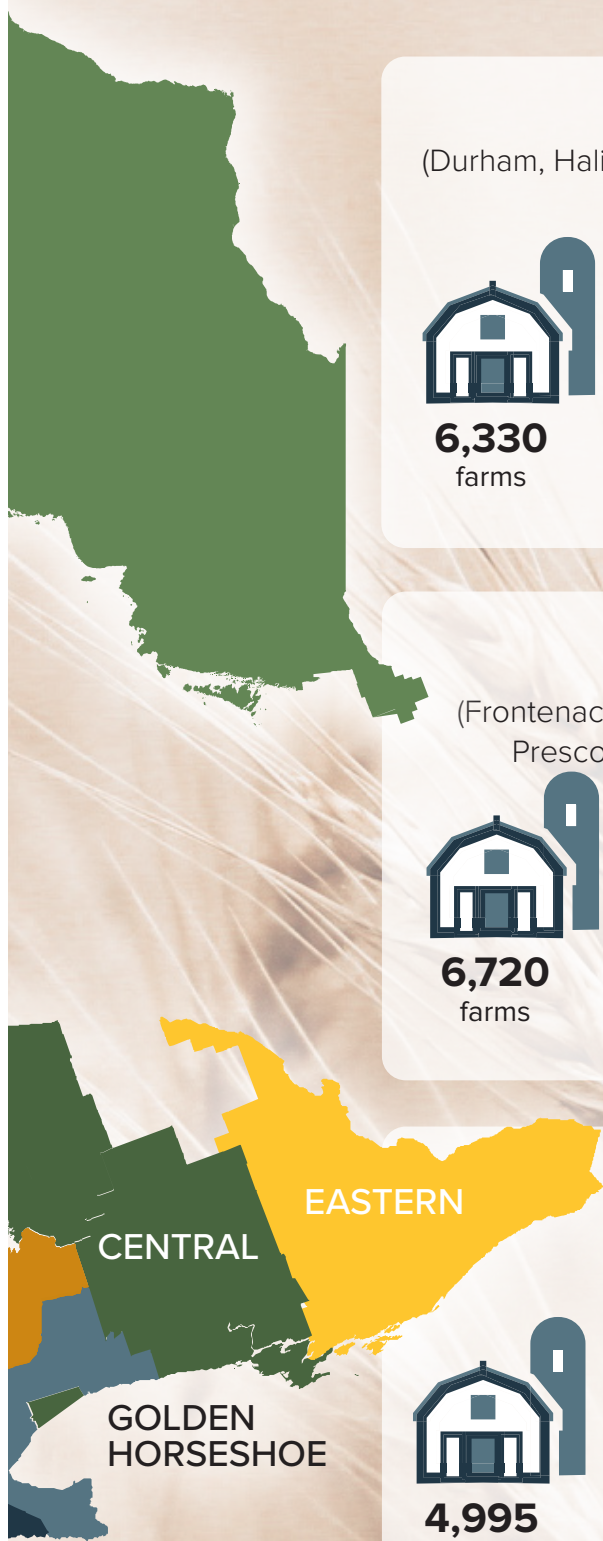


NORTHERN



WESTERN

SOUTHERN



Central Ontario

(Durham, Haliburton, Hastings, Kawartha Lakes, Muskoka, Northumberland, Parry Sound, Peterborough, Prince Edward, and Toronto)



6,330
farms



1,475,250
acres of farmland



\$3.1 billion
in farm cash
receipts



- Grains & oilseeds
- Dairy
- Floriculture & sod

Eastern Ontario

(Frontenac, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Lennox and Addington, Ottawa, Prescott and Russell, Renfrew, and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry)



6,720
farms



1,997,046
acres of farmland



\$7.1 billion
in farm cash
receipts



- Grains & oilseeds
- Dairy
- Poultry & eggs

Golden Horseshoe

(Durham, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara, Peel and York)



4,995
farms



900,308
acres of farmland



\$2.0 billion
in farm cash
receipts



- Floriculture & sod
- Grains & oilseeds
- Poultry & eggs

Note: This content was taken from the 2021 Census of Agriculture and calculations using economic attribution modelling from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Learn more here: statcan.gc.ca/en/census-agriculture and here: ontario.ca/page/agriculture-and-food-economic-indicators

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