

Ontario farm leaders come to Queen's Park

JUNE 2024



The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) spent last week's Local Food Week celebrating farmers across the province, and encouraging everyone to support Ontario grown products by visiting local farmers' markets, buying directly from the farm, and looking for the Foodland Ontario logo at the grocery store.

Members of the OFA's board of directors and young farm leaders were at Queen's Park earlier this spring to meet with MPPs and talk about food and farming in Ontario.

Thank you to all ministers and MPPs who took the time to meet with us and discuss how the farming sector can offer solutions to the critical issues we are facing – from housing and food prices to climate change, jobs and healthcare.

OFA congratulates all of the MPPs who were appointed to the new cabinet. We welcome all Ministers, Associate Ministers and PAs, and look forward to working together to grow Ontario's vibrant agriculture industry.

Here are some highlights of our day at Queen's Park on April 16 – and we invite you to visit our online photo album for more impressions of the day.



Premier Doug Ford and Lisa Thompson, now Minister of Rural Affairs, met with Ontario farmers.



OFA leaders had an opportunity to meet with Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Graydon Smith.



OFA congratulates Lisa Thompson on her new appointment as Minister of Rural Affairs.



Associate Minister of Small Business Nina Tangri sat down with Ontario farmers Sara Wood, left, and Vanessa Renaud, right.



Opposition Leader Marit Stiles addressed attendees at an end of day reception hosted by Ontario farm leaders.



Ontario farmers met with Rob Flack, now Minister of Farming, Agriculture and Agribusiness.

FARMERS FEED AND FUEL ONTARIO'S ECONOMY

\$48.8 billion
in annual GDP
contribution to
the provincial
economy



Almost
50,000
farms

\$20 billion
in annual
agri-food
exports



836,000
jobs – more
than 10% of
Ontario's
workforce

What matters to you, matters to us

Urban issues are rural issues – and food and farming touches all of us in some way.

As the agriculture sector, we can come to the table with solutions to the big issues facing our province and we welcome the opportunity to work closely with members of government and all provincial parties to do so.

Land use, jobs and growth

Responsible land use planning and municipal growth across the province can relieve urban housing market pressures, offer solutions to gridlock and associated emissions concerns, and attract new economic investment.

Ontario has an incredible and irreplaceable resource in our fertile soils and productive farmland, giving us the remarkable ability to grow, raise and process over 200 different food and farm commodities. This keeps our supply chains short, protects our food security and creates jobs – we already employ 10% of the provincial workforce, with the potential for much more.

OFA position:

We strongly support rural economic development balanced with the need to minimize the loss of farmland and protect our precious and limited agricultural resources wherever possible.

Connecting to provincial priorities:

housing, jobs, municipal growth, food security

Supporting local food

Long-term protection of our domestic food production is essential to Ontario's economic and social health. Simply put, food is health, and a balanced diet can reduce or prevent the risk of illness and relieve pressure on the healthcare system.

It is estimated that if every household in Ontario spent an additional \$10 a week on local food, we would add an additional \$2.4 billion to our local economy annually.

Ontario agriculture supports more than 836,000 Ontario jobs – and unfilled jobs are causing estimated annual lost sales of \$591 million. We have to plan now to address labour shortages and ensure we have enough workers with the right skills to continue growing this vital sector.

OFA position:

Local food matters and with the right investments and legislative supports, Ontario agriculture can meet or even exceed the goals of the provincial Grow Ontario Strategy.

Connecting to provincial priorities:

health care, food security, jobs, economic development.

Investing in physical and social infrastructure

Infrastructure is an essential part of Ontario's economy and a key factor in influencing where Ontarians live and work, and where businesses choose to grow and invest.

Investments into physical and social infrastructure across the province supports growth and keeps businesses economically viable. This includes:

- Affordable energy
- Improving roads and bridges
- Highspeed internet
- Rural health care, education and community supports

OFA position:

Rural infrastructure investments support growth of Ontario's rural hubs and attract new businesses and residents to those areas – the only practical, long-term solution to relieving pressure on housing and transportation.

Connecting to provincial priorities:

health care, transportation, jobs, housing, municipal growth



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