

## Breakout Session Summary

### 1. Are Stormwater Management Fees a current or developing issue of concern in your region? If so, please share how your region is approaching this topic locally.

- Dundas County – no pressures or conversations currently.
- Bruce doesn't have that on their radar
- Norfolk County – lots of self drainage. Small municipalities growing leaps and bounds – no real plan on development – growing too fast, faster than what our infrastructure will allow for these storm water. There will be a residual affect at some point that we all need to pay
- Ottawa City goes out far and they don't understand what the agriculture is and how rural it is. Builds relationship with municipality and suggest they show them how rural it really is
- Wellington Federation – Centre Wellington growth increase and doing storm water management study, just starting a public meeting
- Flamborough area – 63 % of Hamilton is agriculture – we collect cisterns
- Oxford—has not come up yet.
- Lanark, Renfrew—issues in City of Ottawa, farms were exempt in 2016, but now looking to include agriculture in the charges.
- Manitoulin does not have stormwater fee, but every 5 years municipal drains are cleaned out and every farmer is charged with drain clean out. Nothing in Brant yet, have proactively reached out to Councils and have open dialogue around this issue.
- Prince Edward County—not on radar yet. Raise agriculture's presence to urban cousins, PAC member would like to bring people to Kent to see a good example.
- Northumberland – yes
- Peel – yes
- Elgin – yes, developing
- Perth/Huron/Norfolk – No, but could see happening.
- Grenville – likely, Augusta Twp - not yet
- N. Ont. – lots of drainage happening and Municipalities are concerned as they have no infrastructure to deal with the current water being collected from newly drained lands.
- Note – the existence of Municipal Drains/use of Drainage Act to install a Municipal Drain is not consistent across the province, where they exist there is a common feeling that farmers are already paying for their Stormwater Management by installing/up keeping costs of a Municipal Drain.
- Hamilton: yes
- Middlesex-Thames Centre, fee on urban properties that are connected to water, just found out recently with no previous
- Kawartha-Haliburton, no.
- Durham, yes: applied to all properties in town of Ajax
- Fees relating to cleaning out drains, owners get a bill but no
- None in Nipissing
- None in Algoma
- 3 consultation firms that are doing the work, some have no experience in agriculture

- North Simcoe, Simcoe County. Municipal drains are owned by municipalities. In our area they are farmer-owned, assigned in percentages. The farmer/landowner takes responsibility for the acreage and the fees associated. Example of 5 farms in the lower part of a major drain, that need maintenance.
- Halton done storm water surveys but no action yet
- Lambton – delay on a building due to stormwater planning
- City of Sarnia doesn't have separate stormwater management fee. Urban system is covered by sanitary rates, rural rates would not be impact. Rural is funded through drainage act. Have considered a fee eventually but it's not likely to be implemented any time soon. Would likely exclude properties that are covered by the drainage act.
- *Wording from Sarnia: From: David Jackson (City of Sarnia) The City of Sarnia does not have a separate stormwater management fee. We fund the urban stormwater system through the sanitary sewer rates (which means the majority of agricultural properties would not be impacted). The rural stormwater infrastructure is funded through the Drainage Act. We have explored the idea of a stormwater fee at a high level and at some point we will likely need one but nothing is happening on the topic in the short term. When we were looking at it our thought was we would likely exclude properties that are under the Drainage Act which I would think generally addresses the concern being raised by the OFA. I would agree that agricultural land should be considered differently.*
- Elgin – no current concerns but aware that new battery plant (huge scale) may start more awareness and requirement for such systems in a rural area next to a city.
- Durham – issue just came to a head in Ajax. A more city-impacted area, only about 6 farm properties, edge of GTA. The Federation has sent a letter to take action, waiting to hear results.
- Peterborough. So far no issues but monitoring.
- In the winter of 2023, company reps met with provincial officials to discuss a storm water plan for the distillery.  
<https://www.thesarniajournal.ca/news/crown-royal-distillery-is-delayed-but-still-coming-to-st-clair-8390553>
- Huron – Soil and Crop did a big drainage project working with conservation authority did a huge demo of different styles of drainage and water management to increase awareness

## **2. Which types of Stormwater Management Fee Calculations should municipalities be discouraged from using?**

- In my municipal drain outlets end at the edge of rapidly expanding residential areas that are taking over more of the drainage system and the potential exists for municipal drainage to be converted to stormwater drainage. This could come with lots of fees.
- Consistency in fees throughout the province.
- Levy tied to tax class – could be a way for consistency
- Only fair way if they are going to charge would be based on water leaving farm like a municipal drain is designed

- All fees should be exempt. No calculations should be required, especially since there is no understanding of agriculture and any calculations would be screwed up anyways so a complete exemption has less probability of administrative failure.
- We need to find a way to build a business case that we should be exempt plus examples of why farms should be exempt and facts.
- Austin added that easier to get exemptions at local level then at a federal or provincial level. We should encourage municipalities to understand that we are already paying drainage and water management fees through municipal drains, etc.
- Flat Rate per acre and Coefficient model were specifically mentioned to be discouraged – with overall feeling that ag lands need to be exempt or credited for the storm water mgt they provide.
- Agriculture is swept in with the rest with no consideration
- The fees that don't take ag into account should be discouraged from using, might be considered on a case-by-case basis (when not many farms in municipality)
- Any property that is not enclosed in a municipality drain system shouldn't be charged
- Farms should be exempted from paying stormwater management fee
- Ag should be given a credit in areas where there is a stormwater fee
- Elgin, want to bring attention to panel comments. If there is no benefit to agriculture from the process, avoid a system where agriculture is paying for a service that doesn't in turn benefit the farm business.
- Obviously if it doesn't benefit doesn't us we shouldn't pay for it. A flat rate per acre as was discussed in the panel should be discouraged – looking for pro-rated fees, and benefits or discounts based on on-farm practices
- No fees of any type without offsets. We want to be able to allow farmers to implement their ideas to mitigate any costs being assigned.
- Elgin – important to know the flow of where the water is going. If it's going to a municipal drain, should be covered by drainage act. If it's going to a natural water way; we shouldn't be charging taxes for water to flow in its natural course. Make sure there is mapping and ground truthing. We don't want farmers charged for rain and watercourses to do their natural work.

### **3. How should the following farm property areas be treated in a Stormwater Management Fee calculation?**

- a. Roof runoff from farm buildings**
- b. Tile-drained farmland**
- c. Farmland without tile drainage**
- d. Farm ponds, wetlands and other on-farm stormwater retention measures**

- On most farms roof runoff would be a very small percentage of the water that could leave a farm. Greenhouse would be different but a livestock barn on 100 acres the roof isn't really much volume
- Don't get much runoff. Demonstrate you are not letting the water leave – containment ponds, need for irrigation purposes. Is it up to the municipality to tell us our water is leaving, or do we have a chance to say how much water we keep to use
- How much water is leaving our farms. That's what municipalities can base it on is what has left the farm. Not what the farm is retaining for use

- Basic fee for house. Farm buildings exempt with EFP
- Can validate the runoffs – the farms best practices – based on valid water coming off farm
- What is not being considered is that we should have a credit for what we are already doing, none of these things should even be charged there should be an exemption. We need to push back on these charges. Agriculture is already doing its part and has BMP's. Some people in the US have metering on municipal drains, but do not like it either.
- Very difficult to separate these property areas out from each other – especially if farmers are already paying for Municipal Drain infrastructure.
- More likely to be in a credit scenario for the services ag land provides (infiltration and water collection/retention (ponds/wetlands)
- Roof runoff from farm buildings: might be closer to industrial/commercial properties if there is no mitigation measures
- Tile-drained farmland: it allows more water to be absorbed when there's a heavier rainfall by lowering the level of surface water
- Farmland without tile drainage:
- Farm ponds, wetlands and other on-farm stormwater retention measures:
- Question about if OMAFRA has info on the rate that water falls and is drained out of field, depends on many factors
- When storm drains need repairs, who are the main contributors? They should be charged, not those that aren't on those drains
- Should be based on where the water actually goes. Important to be able to measure and quantify. If there does need to be a fee, farmers could potentially know the concern and measurement and apply their own mitigation process to prevent excessive storm water leaving the farm. Should be able to factor in soil type, available stormwater retention resources – a credit to members who have a process or a system in place. Don't want arbitrarily assigned taxes
- Upper Thames CA: <https://thamesriver.on.ca/incorporating-green-infrastructure-into-municipal-drainage-systems-utrca-weekly-march-4-2022/>
- Did a proactive stormwater and field drainage demo. Would think the farmer worked w the CA to do so. Instead of hickenbottoms they did full field drainage to prevent storm surges.
- For farmland, if you know where the water is going in the watershed, as long as it's not going into a storm drain, it's taking a natural course. It eventually crosses impervious land and takes its natural course. How can we charge for that? Are we charging for nature

#### **4. What types of farm management practices and/or BMPs should be considered for an Agricultural Stormwater Credit Program?**

- Valid runoff – don't include what farms use
- Farm Management practices
- Constructed wetland, holding ponds, controlled tile drainage, water recycle uses being able to have best management practices – commit to the best practices for the next 5 years – use by farm and be reactive

- The other work already being done with conservation practices – need for case by case
- Environmental practices we are already doing should take into account too.
- EFP, Nutrient Management Plans, Wetlands, Systematic tiling, water recycling systems, woodland, cover crops, tree planting, ponds, sizing of manure/water storage.
- Cover crops, reduced tillage, pasture
- Source water protection looks at risk management and farms should be credited for Environmental Goods and Services doing already.
- Looking at EGS that we are already doing for development
- Outlets – receiving lots of neighbours flow – where are they capturing information from. All three farms contribute to that.
- Opportunity to engage with councils
- Members don't want to get engaged by complain about it. Need all members to engage when it affects them.
- Good to remind municipalities that sometimes farms are downstream from stormwater and receive stormwater from development and we don't just create stormwater
- Incentives – ability to access – should be there to give credit for what they already are doing,
- Not penalize and then credit
- Leeching bed, settling ponds. There was a list in the presentations that listed the stewardship items that should be considered, and maybe that is what we should include.
- EFP and NMP cited – an enhanced EFP to include enhanced section on Stormwater Mgt be developed.
- Rather than a “tax/fee” alone - look at incentive programs and partnerships – e.g. ALUS/Ducks Unlimited/OSCIA = the payment for providing environmental goods and services.
- Specific BMP's cited – filter strips to collect yard runoff; water recycling used at greenhouses could be developed for other sectors; capturing water within ponds/wetlands for alternative use.
- Need to educate all farmers of BMP's – e.g. 4R's; pay farmers who provide public goods when correct practices are used.
- Environmental farm plan
- Tile drainage
- Cover crops
- Talk about control gates on tile drainage to control when the water flows, might open discussion on when farmers can drain their land
- A lot of the suggested BMPs are already considered as part of the Environmental Farm plan. This would be a tool to prove that some of these things are already being done and could be applied in a program.
- Heard that the EFP and other things farmers are doing are good. It's not enough to talk to the municipality when they have already started making decisions about applying these fees. We need to engage NOW with the consultants to demonstrate where best practices are in play and what current farms and real farm practices are doing. Important to cut off the problems at that level before reports are written and the imaginary 'easy money' for council is already considered
- Has a suggested 2-pronged approach. The municipalities that have not encountered this are going to be heavily influenced by consultants

- Challenge from municipal point of view, only taxation and fees are ways to raise funds. Fees will be rearing up more and more in future

### **Additional Comments**

- Better farm assessment should be done, farms delay stormwater and that should be reflected.
- At a time when cost has increased so much for food, we should make sure that no level of government is doing anything to cause that cost to increase.