

Engaging with municipal councils and staff

The purpose of this guide is to assist county and regional federation directors with how to effectively build relationships with local municipalities. Local federations are the closest agricultural contact to their municipalities and with the proper tools, federations can work with municipalities and ideally become a great source of information for the growth of the local community.



1 Educate yourself

Get to know your municipal councillors and their understanding of agriculture.

Identify local leaders and organizations that can be advocates for agriculture.

Monitor Councils by familiarizing yourself with upcoming agendas, events, activities and municipal resources.

Be aware of any potential policy or program changes that may affect the agricultural community (e.g. upcoming road or bridge closures, new development charges, official plan review or amendments, severances, new developments, etc.)

Join, follow and subscribe to municipal communications, such as social media and email lists.



ofa.on.ca/GrowAg

2 Provide resources

OFA's Municipal Resources webpage (ofa.on.ca/GrowAg) has a wide selection of resources for local federations to share with municipalities, including:

Local snapshots: One-page statistical snapshots of Ontario's Census Divisions and Census Agricultural Areas.

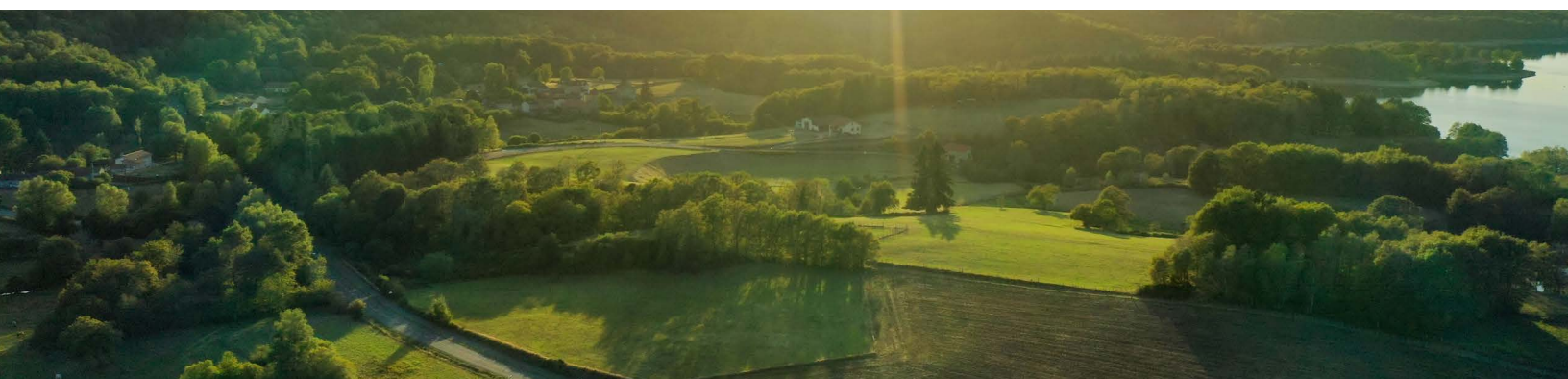
Agriculture Matters guide: An overview of issues affecting farmers today and identifies opportunities for local communities to support agriculture.

Guide and checklist to support agriculture in your municipality: Two complementary resources with information and an easy-to-use checklist for municipalities aspiring to foster a more agriculture-friendly community.

Welcome to rural Ontario: Learn more about farming in Ontario, how to share the road with farm equipment, how to respect farm property, normal farming practices and more.

Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Community of Practice: Join OFA and the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs as they virtually bring together economic developers and land use planners for quarterly webinars highlighting timely agricultural issues.

...and so much more!





3 Build relationships

Invite elected officials and municipal staff to your projects and events (e.g. social events, education days, bus tours, etc.)

Ask for a Council representative to attend county federation meetings as an ex officio.

In return, also attend municipal functions to show your support and interest.

Offer resources and advice on agricultural issues.

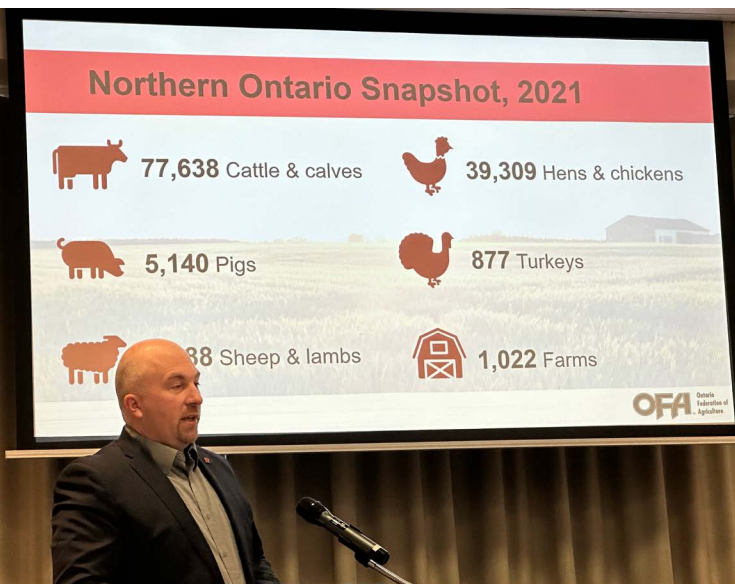
Volunteer to serve on municipal committees (e.g. Committee of Adjustment, Official Plan review, workforce, economic development, etc.)

Establish/join an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Encourage fellow farmers to phone elected officials about agricultural concerns. Hearing directly from the farmers can have a huge impact!

4 Engagement tips

- ✓ **Scheduling delegations.** Schedule annual delegations, including introductions and updates, with no ask. Follow up with delegations that cover one topic at a time.
- ✓ **Check local delegation procedures.** These can vary from community to community.
- ✓ **Work together.** Work with your OFA Zone Director and MSR and show/explain the relationship between OFA and the local federations.
- ✓ **Dress for the occasion:** Farmers are professionals and business owners. Dress formally at council meetings, and casual (but clean and professional) for field visits and farm tours. Wear federation branded clothing if available and/or name tag.
- ✓ **Be respectful.** Address the Mayor as 'Chair' or 'Your Worship', even if you know them personally.
- ✓ **Stay focused.** Have a clear ask and offer a solution.
- ✓ **Keep it simple.** Slideshows should be less than five slides. Use pictures and clear, concise wording.
- ✓ **Show appreciation.** Recognize and thank Council for their time and support.
- ✓ **Leave behinds.** Leave handouts and resources for each councillor and staff member.





5 Resources

OFA's municipal resources

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has created many resources to assist municipalities, regions, and community organizations in supporting the agricultural sector.
ofa.on.ca/growag/

The Ontario municipal councillor's guide: Chapter 11 land use planning

Use this guide to help you understand municipal councillor responsibilities with respect to land use planning.

www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-municipal-councillors-guide/11-land-use-planning

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA)'s Agricultural land base webpage

Learn about Ontario's agricultural land base including prime agricultural areas, specialty crop areas and rural lands.

www.ontario.ca/page/agricultural-land-base

OMAFRA's Agricultural land use planning staff

OMAFRA staff are available to discuss agricultural land use planning matters.

www.ontario.ca/page/agricultural-land-use-planning-staff

Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA) Economic and business advisors

MRA's Rural Economic Development Unit provides support for rural communities.

<https://onregionalecdev.com/who-we-are/>

