

## Federal election priorities for Ontario's farmers and rural communities

Farmers feed and fuel Ontario's economy:

- ✓ \$50.6 billion in annual GDP
- ✓ \$26.2 billion in annual agri-food exports
- ✓ 871,000+ Ontario jobs

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario's farmers and rural communities, proudly representing more than 38,000 family and farm business members across the province.

### Key food and farming priorities for the April 28 election:

- **Addressing trade issues**
  - Immediate support for tariff impacts
  - Reducing inter-provincial trade barriers
  - Long-term investment into agriculture's productive capacity
- **Support for farm business competitiveness**
  - Permanent increase to interest-free portion of Advanced Payments Program
  - Improvements to Business Risk Management programming
- **Permanently scrapping the carbon tax**
- **Preventing railways from downloading costs onto farmers and landowners**
- **Ensuring consistent access to labour**

### Priority: Addressing trade issues

Tariffs and other trade barriers threaten Canada's food system and the livelihoods of Canadian farmers. The agriculture sector needs immediate support to weather this uncertainty.

Government must also take a longer term view and make investments in the agriculture sector that will ensure we can continue to produce food, fuel, fibre and flowers right here at home.

#### This means:

- Providing immediate support to offset the scale and severity of sudden market disruptions, price declines and rising costs across the supply chain caused by tariffs.
- Working with the agriculture sector to find ways to reduce inter-provincial trade barriers so we can serve and grow potential markets right here in Canada.
- Designating agriculture and agri-food a national priority sector that is supported by investments into critical infrastructure and capacity.

**We hope we can count on your support for Canadian food and farming.**

### Priority: Support for farm business competitiveness

For farm businesses, factors beyond their control mean they can't always be profitable or competitive. This includes weather, current tariffs and trade challenges, political instability in other regions of the world, inflation, or rapidly rising input costs.

That's why government programs to help farms manage business risk and cash flow are so critical.

**This means:**

- A permanent increase to the interest-free portion of the Advanced Payments Program to \$350,000 per year so farmers can make their annual crop plans with stability and predictability.
- Improvements to the AgriStability program so payments to farmers will trigger when their margin drops below 85% (instead of the current 70%) of their five-year average.

**We hope we can count on your support for a long-term, sustainable local food supply.**

**Priority: Permanently scrapping the carbon tax**

Canada's carbon tax rate has been set to zero but has not been permanently removed.

The carbon tax on fuels used in farm production, including natural gas used for grain drying and barn heating, has cost farmers over \$100 million a year. There are currently no practical, cost-effective alternatives that farmers could use instead.

This means:

- the carbon tax places unnecessary costs on farm businesses who need these fuels to raise livestock and grow crops.
- the carbon tax needs to be permanently removed from fuels used in agricultural production.

**We hope we can count on your support for profitable, competitive farm businesses.**

**Priority: Preventing railways from downloading costs onto farmers and landowners**

Federally regulated rail companies are downloading infrastructure maintenance and safety upgrade costs onto farmers and landowners in two major areas: drainage and private rail crossings. These are costs that have always been their responsibility and are too high for farmers and landowners to pay.

Farms need proper drainage to grow crops and properly manage water on farmland. They also rely on private rail crossings to access their land when railway tracks run across their farms.

This means:

- Rail companies must pay for drainage costs as required under provincial drainage legislation.
- The federal government must provide funding through the Railway Safety Improvement Program (RSIP) to pay for maintenance and upgrade costs or legislate that rail companies are responsible for covering them.

**We hope we can count on your support against unacceptable actions by rail companies.**

## **Priority: Ensuring consistent access to labour**

Lack of labour across the entire agriculture and food supply chain — including planting, production, quality control, processing, distribution and research — is a critical issue. Filling vacant roles along the food value chain will create investment opportunities, job growth and help to secure a sustainable food production system.

For some segments of the industry, like horticulture, access to a strong and reliable temporary and seasonal international workforce through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program, is absolutely essential.

This means:

- Farmers need access to reliable, well-functioning labour programs that provide benefit to both employers and workers.
- A long-term strategy is needed to address workforce shortages, including doing more to encourage young people to consider careers in the sector.

**We hope we can count on your support for protecting our food system by addressing labour shortages.**