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LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

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February 10, 2023

The Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
3rd Floor, Frost Building North  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1Z1  
Via email: [Minister.fin@ontario.ca](mailto:Minister.fin@ontario.ca) and [submissions@ontario.ca](mailto:submissions@ontario.ca)

Re: 2023 Budget Consultations

Dear Minister,

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario who are called to the vocation of farming. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

Our recommendations for the Ontario budget 2023 focus on the economic, social, and environmental commitments necessary to support the ongoing vitality of the agri-food sector.

**Key Recommendations:**

1. Ensure provincial taxes that contribute to energy costs are kept low.
2. Ensure continued funding through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to support agricultural and agri-food sector success in Ontario.
3. Increase Ontario's local processing capacity.
4. Continue farm-sector specific mental health support.
5. Continue to support stewardship efforts by farmers and researchers to monitor and improve soil health and water quality.
6. Protect productive farmland across the province by focusing on brownfield redevelopment within settled areas.
7. Continue to expand rural internet access.
8. Ensure ongoing farm access to necessary agri-food services when designing new or improved transportation infrastructure.
9. Improve fiscal responsibility by reducing provincial deficits and debt.

**Energy Costs and Taxation**

Energy costs are foundational to the cost of living for Ontarians, affecting the cost of heating homes, transportation, and food. It is vital that the Ontario government keeps energy costs as

low as possible for all citizens, especially those energy costs related to the production of food. **The CFFO asks that provincial taxes that contribute to energy costs are kept low.**

The CFFO also strongly encourages the Ontario government to continue to voice concerns to the federal government on the negative impacts of the federal carbon tax on all Ontarians and to ask that this tax be removed. In particular, this tax is negatively impacting the cost of food and food production. The CFFO continues to ask that fuels used for drying grains, both on-farm and at commercial grain dryers, be exempt from federal carbon pricing.

### **SCAP and Other Support for Agri-Food Sector Success**

The Ontario government has successfully supported ongoing expansion and innovation across the agri-food sector, both through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) and through many provincially funded programs. We strongly encourage the government to continue support for ongoing sector success with **continued funding under the new Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) and to province-specific programs** as well.

Farmers and other agri-food entrepreneurs have proven to be resilient while also highly adaptive to changing market demands and new opportunities. This includes the opportunity for more processing capacity in Ontario.

The CFFO supports Meat and Poultry Ontario's Growth Strategy. **We encourage the government to enable expansion of local processing capacity and market opportunities, both for meat and other types of processing.**

Farming is a stressful profession, constantly facing new challenges and uncertainty. Now more than ever, farmers need specific mental health supports that are appropriately accessible and adapted to the realities of farm life. We strongly encourage the government to **continue efforts to support farmers' mental health.**

Ongoing issues like soil health and water quality should not be neglected. The CFFO actively participates in vital collaboration between government and industry on these issues. **Strategic investments are needed, through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) and elsewhere, to support stewardship efforts.** These include research, mapping, and monitoring to improve soil health and water quality.

### **Housing and Infrastructure**

The CFFO recognizes the need for increased housing in Ontario. *Where* these homes are built must be carefully considered. Development must not come at the cost of our most productive farmland, which is vital to our food security and to the success of our agriculture and agri-food sector. Once we develop on our farmland, it is lost forever.

**The CFFO strongly encourages the provincial government to facilitate development, including brownfield redevelopment, within the existing boundaries of settled areas.** This makes good planning sense. It makes the best use of municipal and provincial tax dollars invested in infrastructure, including for transportation. It also protects our limited productive farmland for farming.

We also encourage ongoing initiatives to **build rural infrastructure such as natural gas and internet**, to support thriving rural communities and businesses, including farms.

When expanding or improving highways and other transportation infrastructure, it is vital to **ensure ongoing farm access to necessary agri-food services such as input suppliers and processing**. Agricultural Impact Assessments should be required for transportation infrastructure expansions or improvements to ensure this access is in place.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

Farmers see the Ontario government continue to carry debt levels and a debt-to-GDP ratio that are clearly unsustainable. They want to see the government reduce debt and set conditions for sustainable provincial finances. This will ensure prosperity for the province long into the future. **The CFFO calls on the government to improve fiscal responsibility by reducing provincial deficits and debt.**

### **Conclusion**

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input on the Ontario budget 2023 and thank you for your consideration of our concerns and comments.

Sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario