



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

February 12, 2021

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 and submissions@ontario.ca

Re: 2021 Budget Consultations

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

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

Key Recommendations:

1. Work to finalize a revised FPT agreement on AgriStability based on the federal government's current proposal.
2. Increase Ontario's local processing capacity.
3. Continue to expand rural internet access.
4. Expand farm-sector specific mental health supports.
5. Protect productive farmland across the province by focusing on brownfield redevelopment within settled areas.
6. Support stewardship efforts by farmers and researchers to monitor and improve soil health and water quality.

The global pandemic and resulting shift in food consumption have had significant impacts on our agri-food sector. Farmers and other agri-food entrepreneurs have proven to be resilient under strain while also highly adaptive to the new context and opportunities. However, there are some weak points. These include the need for changes to AgriStability, unmet labour demand on farms and in further processing, limitations in local processing capacity, and the importance of rural internet to farming businesses.

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

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

Farming is a stressful profession. The pandemic has added new challenges and uncertainty. Now more than ever, farmers need specific mental health supports that are appropriately accessible and are adapted to the realities of farm life.

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 government to better facilitate brownfield development within the existing boundaries of settled areas. This makes good planning sense and protects productive farmland.

Ongoing issues like soil health and water quality should not be neglected. The CFFO continues to participate in vital collaboration between government and industry on these issues.

Strategic investments are needed, such as the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), to support stewardship initiatives, research, mapping and monitoring efforts to improve soil health and water quality.

We thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario