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LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

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June 21, 2021

The Honourable Lisa Thompson, M.P.P.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
11th Floor, 77 Grenville Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1B3

Delivered via email: [lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org](mailto:lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org)

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations on your appointment as the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We are so pleased you have been selected for this role.

As you know, 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.

Experts have identified agriculture as perhaps Canada's most promising industry, *if* adequate supports are put in place.<sup>1</sup> These supports include research and development, increased processing capacity, extension to farmers, and more.

We encourage you in your work as minister, particularly as you negotiate the Next Policy Framework with your federal and provincial counterparts. We see four major issues that will be vital for the long-term viability of the industry.

### **Agri-Food Sector Success**

The CFFO believes that the agriculture and agri-food sector can be a cornerstone of the Ontario economy and economic recovery. In order for our province to seize this opportunity, we need policy that focuses on economic success for Ontario's farms, food processors and rural communities.

Labour continues to be a primary issue for farmers and processors. Previously existing labour shortages have been exacerbated by issues related to the pandemic. We strongly urge greater promotion of opportunities for workers across the agri-food sector and of the tremendous value of these essential

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Carmichael, "Food Is the New Oil, Even if Most of the World — Including Canada — Hasn't Realized It Yet," *Financial Post*, June 7, 2021, <https://financialpost.com>.

jobs to Ontario. We also encourage you to work with the federal government to improve foreign worker programs to ensure job opportunities in Ontario are filled, benefiting others globally as well.

We have recognized the hard work your ministry has put into improving business risk management tools during the pandemic and encourage further work on these programs to ensure that they accommodate the increasingly erratic weather and market conditions we face as farmers.

### **Farmland Preservation**

We urge you to promote the long-term success of the industry by fighting for farmland preservation. With increasing development pressures due to Ontario's growing population and low-density targets within urban and suburban areas, among other causes, we are deeply concerned that the alarming rate of farmland loss will lead to food insecurity for future Canadians and significant lost economic opportunities.

If we've learned anything from the pandemic, is it that we must maintain robust supply chains. Ontario can supply the food our people need, but only if we protect our precious productive farmland. That's why the CFFO has recommended that all prime agricultural land (as defined by OMAFRA) be given Greenbelt protection.

### **Soil Health**

Vital to the success of our farms is the health of our soils. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has done excellent work in developing "New Horizons: Ontario's Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy." We want to see government support continue for implementation of short and long-term actionable soil health solutions. We request that your ministry support research on and adoption of soil health Best Management Practices (BMPs). We also ask that your ministry continue to update provincial soil mapping for all regions, not only agricultural regions.

### **Water Stewardship**

Just last month, farmers experienced the challenges of an extremely dry May. This is a reminder of the increasingly erratic weather conditions farmers face. As this trend continues, farmers will need to produce quality crops and livestock in extremes of flood and drought. We request funding toward water quality research and supports for on-farm water management and infrastructure projects, such as irrigation tools, retention ponds, and drainage.

### **Conclusion**

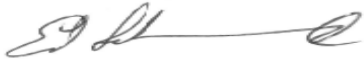
Good on-farm stewardship promotes farm business sustainability over the long term and respects the environment. We believe investments in these four areas will reap benefits for years to come that will serve not only farmers, but all Ontarians.

If the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario can be of any service to you as you begin your work in the Cabinet, we respectfully offer our support. The CFFO has appreciated the consultative nature of Minister Hardeman, and found much benefit from working groups and other opportunities for industry leaders to

collaborate, share information and consult, particularly during the crises presented by COVID-19. We look forward to opportunities to consult with you, as well.

With best wishes for you in your new role and thanks for your willingness to serve our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Scharringa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ed Scharringa, President  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario