



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

October 10, 2018

Hon. Ernie Hardeman, MPP
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
11th Floor,
77 Grenville Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3
Discussed in person and delivered via email:
minister.omafra@ontario.ca

Re: Economic Success for Ontario Agriculture and Agri-food

Dear Minister Hardeman,

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.

We believe the agriculture and agri-food sector is a cornerstone of the Ontario economy, but political will is necessary to help it thrive.

The CFFO sees six issues of particular concern for ensuring that the agriculture and agri-food industry thrives in Ontario.

- 1) **Fiscal Responsibility:** Agriculture is a capital-intensive industry that relies both on credit and sophisticated management to maintain healthy and viable farm businesses. We ask that your government also demonstrate a commitment to fiscal responsibility by pursuing sensible debt management, maintenance of the highest international credit rating, and advocating at the federal level for a rational Canadian interest rate policy that can underpin a healthy agricultural sector.
- 2) **Minimum Wage and Labour Policy:** Labour policy should balance the needs of both employees and businesses. Extreme changes, as we've seen to minimum wage, jeopardize the livelihood of small and medium-sized business owners, as well as job security especially for new and young workers. Your government's announced reversal is one approach to dealing with these issues. An alternative could be a hold on further increases to facilitate adjustment to the higher cost of doing business.

Farmers also depend on a supply of labour that is sensitive to demand for seasonal labour. This kind of labour supply is not always sufficient locally. We therefore ask for your support at the federal level regarding time-sensitive and appropriate agricultural worker visas.

3) **Energy Policy:** Energy costs, including carbon pricing, have been onerous on agriculture. We encourage development of provincial energy policy that is sensitive to our needs and also reflects good stewardship of the land, atmosphere, and waters. We have concerns about future energy policy and would like to be consulted.

4) **Rural Infrastructure:** Rural communities and farm businesses need modern high-speed internet. They also require well-maintained transportation infrastructure, functional sewer and drainage systems, and reliable hydro services in order to thrive and grow.

We look forward to a better understanding of your government's proposed legislation to extend access to natural gas for rural Ontario.

5) **Trade:** Expanding our markets through international trade could provide for multiple benefits for both the industry and the province. We welcome the opportunity to consult with you and your staff regarding opportunities and how our industry could be assisted by policy and programs.

6) **Red Tape:** We agree with your government's focus on reducing Red Tape and look forward to detailing situations that could benefit from reductions and streamlining without compromising food safety.

The agriculture and agri-food sector has enormous potential in Ontario, but its potential requires policy that supports the needs of the industry. We are keen to help progress necessary improvements and would welcome opportunities to help in identifying specific areas for improvement.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. We are counting on your commitment to ensuring the continued success of Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sector.

Sincerely,



Clarence Nywening, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario