



For immediate release

General farm organizations receive notice of decision regarding freedom-of-information request

GUELPH, ON [August 11, 2020] – The [Ontario Federation of Agriculture \(OFA\)](#), [Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario \(CFFO\)](#) and the [National Farmers Union – Ontario \(NFU-O\)](#) have been informed of the decision made by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to release the list of names of all Farm Business Registrants in response to the freedom-of-information (FOI) request.

“As an organization, we are disappointed in the decision of OMAFRA to disclose the farm business names of FBR registrants in Ontario,” said Keith Currie, OFA President. “We are concerned about the safety and security of our farm businesses and the serious risk this poses to them.”

OMAFRA has advised all three general farm organizations in the province that it intends to release the business names of FBR registrants but withhold the FBR number portion of the record. The names will be released to the person who submitted the FOI request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Ed Scharringa, President of CFFO stated that, “We believe that farm business names constitute personal information and should therefore be protected. We are concerned that OMAFRA’s decision to release this information could lead to harm for farmers, their families and their employees.”

“Only 3% of farmers consulted by OMAFRA agreed to the release of their information,” said Don Ciparis, NFU-O President. “This is an unacceptably low consent rate on which to base an FOI decision.”

Although OMAFRA has chosen to withhold the FBR number information, they received expressed consent from 15 farm businesses to release both the farm business name and FBR number to the requester.

“Jointly, our farm organizations strongly oppose the release of this information as it has the potential to greatly impact the health, safety and security of our farm operations,” stated Currie.

That sentiment was echoed by a substantial number of Ontario farmers who voiced their input and concerns to OMAFRA’s Freedom of Information and Privacy Coordinator throughout the comment period. The overwhelming response from farmers was to oppose the requested disclosure of FBR information.

The process includes the right to appeal and all three general farm organizations expect to exercise that right. OFA, along with CFFO and NFU-O, intend to file their own formal appeal of the decision in an effort to protect the privacy and security of all Farm Business Registrants. These farm organizations will act on behalf of Ontario farm businesses in an attempt to prevent the exposure of this information.

All requests for appeal need to be submitted through the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC). If an appeal is filed with the IPC, OMAFRA requires notice of the submission via email at FOIaccess.omafra@ontario.ca. For more information about the appeal process, visit www.ipc.on.ca/access-individuals/filing-an-appeal.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 38,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy recommendations, research, lobby efforts, community representation, media relations and more. OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario's farmers and is Ontario's voice of the farmer. For more information, visit ofa.on.ca.

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.

The NFU-O is an accredited farm organization whose members work together to advocate for policies that maintain small and medium sized family farms as the primary food-producers in Canada. The NFU-O believes agriculture should be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and lead to enriched soils, biodiverse ecosystems, financially-viable farms, healthy and safe food, and thriving rural communities. The NFU-O collaborates locally, nationally and internationally to research, educate, and share effective solutions that lead to a better world for farm families and their communities.

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