

October 7, 2022

Recovery Planning

Environment and Climate Change Canada

15<sup>th</sup> Floor, Place Vincent Massey

351 St. Joseph Boulevard

Gatineau, QU, K1A 0H3

Via email: [ec.planificationduretablissement-recoveryplanning.ec@canada.ca](mailto:ec.planificationduretablissement-recoveryplanning.ec@canada.ca)

**Re: Recovery Strategies for the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark**

Dear Environment and Climate Change Canada,

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.

As a society, we have a collective responsibility for the stewardship of species at risk. In the specific case of the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark, agricultural land uses such as pasture and hayfields have provided suitable surrogate habitat for the breeding requirements of these birds. However, this surrogate habitat has declined as economic pressures have changed agricultural land use and practices. The current economics of farming no longer support the maintenance of this habitat to the degree seen in the past. In this context, environmental incentives are a way for society to support on-farm stewardship that benefits these species.

As the draft "Recovery Strategy for the Eastern Meadowlark in Canada," and the draft "Recovery Strategy for the Bobolink in Canada" indicate, "stewardship programs and beneficial management practices that allow for both species conservation and farm economic viability are needed." Where economic factors are pushing decisions toward row cropping and away from livestock, hay and pasture farming, economic incentives to promote stewardship are important. Farm economic viability is foundational to good stewardship on farms. The CFFO strongly encourages government programs and policy that support farmers in their stewardship efforts.

The CFFO emphasizes the importance of voluntary stewardship to promote critical habitat for these two birds on private land. Farmers who are motivated to create and maintain habitat suitable for these birds should be supported in their efforts, should they wish to receive this support. Farmers should not face increased risk to their farming businesses as a result of stewardship efforts to support these birds.

The CFFO recommends the following to encourage voluntary stewardship of critical habitat on privately owned agricultural land:

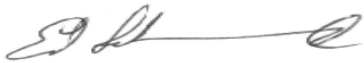
- Cooperate and collaborate with the Ontario government and other provincial governments to promote the success of existing strategies and stewardship incentive programs, or to re-establish successful stewardship programs.
- Provide incentives for landowners to establish or improve and to annually maintain critical habitat.
- Encourage and support consultation with professional advisors on establishment and conservation of critical habitat.
- Ensure education and outreach are available to landowners on critical habitat and beneficial management practices relating to stewardship for these birds.
- Ensure ongoing protection for agricultural operations through legal exemptions and safe harbour agreements.

## **Conclusion**

Voluntary stewardship is the best way to promote critical habitat for Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks on private agricultural land. Farmers who are motivated to create and maintain habitat suitable for these birds should be supported in their efforts via educational materials, access to professional advisors and stewardship incentives. Farmers should not face increased risk to their farming businesses as a result of stewardship efforts to support these birds.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input and thank you for your consideration of our concerns and comments.

Sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario