



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

February 11, 2020

The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance

7th Floor, Frost Building South

7 Queen's Park Crescent

Toronto, ON

M7A 1Y7

Delivered via email: Minister.fin@ontario.ca and submissions@ontario.ca

Re: Pre-Budget Consultation 2020

Dear Minister Phillips,

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 requests for the Ontario Budget 2020 are based on CFFO's four key priorities: agri-business sustainability, farmland preservation, improved soil health and improved water quality and water quantity. Our budget and investment recommendations focus on helping the government fulfill its duty of care for supporting the wealth and wellbeing of all Ontarians now and into a more sustainable future.

Agri-Business Sustainability

We encourage your government's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility across the budget as a whole. It is important that Ontario maintain the highest international credit rating and advocate at the federal level for a national Canadian interest rate policy that can underpin a healthy agricultural sector.

We also encourage the Ontario government's ongoing initiatives to reduce red tape and commitments to rural infrastructure improvements including natural gas and internet. We are pleased that the government continues to support the success of Ontario farms and agri-food businesses through these initiatives.

Key Focus: Move forward with investments in rural natural gas and broadband expansion. We would like to see continued progress on the promised investment in this valuable infrastructure.

Build Ontario's processing sector so that we have greater local access to meat processing across the province and greater local processing of Ontario's agricultural products across the board for local and international markets.

Farmland Preservation

The CFFO recognizes the need for more development to meet the demands of our growing population. At the same time, we are concerned about the long-term protection of our valuable and productive Ontario farmland. We believe that good planning and density targets in urban areas can prevent sprawl onto our food-growing and naturally sensitive lands. Once we develop on our farmland, it is lost forever.

Density targets affect land use planning around all things we value, including farmland preservation. The CFFO is concerned that revisions to density targets will not sufficiently protect against continued sprawl onto highly productive farmland within growth areas of the province.

The CFFO strongly encourages the government to consider ways to better facilitate brownfield development within the existing boundaries of settled areas. Increased density, especially in areas close to jobs and transportation infrastructure, makes good planning sense and protects productive farmland from being lost to inefficient sprawling development.

Key Focus: Focus on improving development and access to housing should focus on better brownfield development within existing settled areas and increased density targets close to jobs and transportation infrastructure. This ensures better protection for our most productive farmland from urban sprawl in growth-pressure areas.

Soil Health

The CFFO is pleased to see the government is moving forward with “New Horizons: Ontario Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy.” We are strong supporters of the strategy and the actions defined in it. The strategy came out of collaboration between government and the agricultural sector and realization of the actions will require continued collaboration between the two. Government commitment will require strategic investment including through cost share programs such as the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) and in ongoing research, mapping, measuring and monitoring efforts.

Key Focus: Continue the initiative to update the provincial soil mapping into new regions. The Peterborough and Ottawa and Grand River areas have already started this process. Other agricultural areas of the province need similar updated mapping. We recommend that regions with significant prime farmland receive priority for updated mapping.

Water Quality and Quantity

The government has the duty of care to ensure environmental sustainability. We need ongoing commitment to improving how we all impact the environment and how we can best minimize harm. This, in turn, requires ongoing research. We call on you to invest in the research that will enable all farmers to collectively be the best possible stewards in our farming practices. Furthermore, for phosphorus, research will do double duty in helping us fulfill Ontario’s international commitments for Great Lakes water quality.

We are pleased to see that the government continues to support agricultural sector efforts to reduce phosphorus losses within the Lake Erie basin, especially through funding available from the Canadian

Agricultural Partnership (CAP) and Lake Erie Agriculture Demonstrating Sustainability (LEADS). We would like to see greater public access to the results of these projects.

Initiatives to improve soil health also contribute to improving water quality, so there is important dovetailing between efforts here and efforts to improve soil health discussed above.

Government plays an important role in ensuring funding for ongoing measuring and monitoring of water quality across the province, especially in sensitive areas such as the Lake Erie basin. The ongoing work of conservation authorities and other organizations who measure and maintain long-term data sets on water quality is vital to decision makers, policy makers and local farmers to better understand factors impacting water quality.

Key Focus: Funding for research and ongoing measuring and monitoring of water quality, especially in sensitive areas such as the Lake Erie basin.

Final Remarks

The CFFO is asking for the 2020 Ontario Budget to focus on the importance of fiscal responsibility across the budget, including within agriculture, and particular strategic investments for the agricultural sector.

The cost is but one side of the equation. Our requested investments will generate a stream of benefits in terms of well-being for Ontarians. Natural capital research and sustainable land and water management and farmland preservation all generate improved productivity, food security and rural resiliency.

We thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on the Ontario Budget 2020.

Sincerely,



Clarence Nywening, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

CC: Hon. Doug Ford, MPP, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Ernie Hardeman, MPP, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Hon. Steve Clark, MPP, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Hon. Jeff Yurek, MPP, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Hon. John Yakabuski, MPP, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Hon. Vic Fedeli, MPP, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Hon. Doug Downey, MPP, Attorney General