



ONTARIO LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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April 03, 2020.

Via E-mail: minister.mecp@ontario.ca andrea.khanjin@ontario.ca Nicholas.Stacey@ontario.ca

Honourable Jeff Yurek, MPP
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
College Park 5th Flr,
777 Bay St,
Toronto, ON
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Hon. Ernie Hardeman	minister.omafra@ontario.ca	tara.barry@ontario.ca
Hon. Steve Clark	minister.mah@ontario.ca	Alex.Beduz@ontario.ca
Hon. John Yakabuski	minister.mnrf@ontario.ca	Brock.Vandrick@ontario.ca
Premier Ford	doug.fordco@pc.ola.org	

Minister Yurek,

The Ontario Landowners Association extends our gratitude to your government for the positive steps taken in the current COVID-19 health crisis.

We hope that you, your family, friends, employees and colleagues are safe and doing well under the current circumstances.

Minister Yurek, the Ontario Landowners Association wishes to extend our appreciation for your invitation to attend the Stakeholder meetings held this past January and February.

The response I have received from these meetings has been exceptional and positive.

To continue this positive dialogue and relationship, we must convey to you our deep concern on issues that you must be made aware of.

I include Ministers Hardeman, Clark and Yakabuski for the purpose of keeping them informed of this developing situation and the effects it may have on their Ministries.

For your reference, I have two letters, one from Tom Black, Past President of the OLA and Elizabeth Marshall, Director of Research. These letters will give you a general understanding of the problem.

The people of Ontario are blessed with a prosperous Agricultural industry that continues to develop and prosper since the early 1800's.

The OLA takes the position, that the Agricultural industry in Ontario is facing a serious situation that must be addressed as quickly as possible as a direct result of the COVID-19 health crisis.

In Ontario, we have one growing season, which is extended for some food products by using greenhouse technology. Corn, soybeans, potatoes and hay are some examples that are not greenhouse products. We cannot rely on greenhouse technology alone to supply the people of Ontario.

Every growing season has specific procedures to follow and timelines to meet. The delivery of seed, fertilizer and when equipment can access fields to begin the planting process are two examples. The weather is not something that can be ordered from a catalogue, but I have been told prayers do work.

This year, there will be no guarantee that food production from other Provinces and other countries will not have their growing season and harvest impacted by COVID-19.

What is important, is to do everything possible to ensure the growing season in Ontario is successful and that every hinderance and interference has been removed.

I am receiving complaints that Conservation Authorities are charging farmers, interfering with Normal Farm Practice and requiring Permits from Municipalities before maintenance of Municipal drains can be commenced.

The people of Ontario are stressed because of COVID-19 and the direct effect it is having on their incomes, businesses, homes, rent, health, family and friends.

What they do not need, is the additional stress of any interference in food production and food prices. Not having lettuce in grocery stores in February is an inconvenience, not having Ontario apples or potatoes in February is unacceptable.

This is not a chicken little, “the sky is falling” letter. Our purpose is to bring to your attention that COVID-19 will affect food production in Ontario. To what degree the effect will be is unknown at this time.

The important question ... “Will we have an abundant Fall harvest, or will we have shortages?”, the Fall harvest will give us that answer.

What is the prudent course of action to take during the COVID-19 health crisis?

The prudent course of action is to remove any known barrier that could interfere with food production and to support the Agricultural industry with every available tool at our disposal.

This afternoon, I listened intently to Premier Ford announcing the closure of additional sections of the construction industry and projecting COVID-19 deaths between 3,000 and 15,000 people over the next two years. This is heart breaking news. How many survivors will have long term physical effects of the virus. What will the long-term emotional upheaval and financial strain have on families?

This Pandemic will have significant implications for our society and economy.

Based on 2016 census data, the average age of a farmer in Ontario is 55.3 years. As of April 2, 35% of all COVID-19 cases in Canada are between the ages of 50 and 69. We can not assume that all farmers in Ontario are male, although historically this has been a high percentage. What is not in these statistics, is that family farms are operated by couples. If either partner becomes ill, the farm operation is directly affected. Our farming community is in a high-risk age category.

Minister Yurek, to ensure the best possible harvest for this growing season, we are asking for a Ministerial directive instructing Conservation Authorities to remove themselves from interfering in Normal Farm Practice. To allow fields to be tile drained, Municipal drains to be “cleaned out”, fields that have been left

fallow to be re-claimed for food production and removal of the requirement for permits and studies, the time and cost for which neither is available.

The growing season is underway, and Time is of the Essence.

When this health crisis is over, Ontario will still be here. We will mourn our lost family members and friends. We will return to work, our children will go to school, our lives will go forward. We will emerge from this crisis stronger than before.

Ministers, the Ontario Landowners Association is here to assist, offer suggestions, recommendations and consultation.

We stand ready to help you, help the people of Ontario, so we may always have a Place to Stand and a Place to Grow!

We are all in this together!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff D. Bogaerts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Jeff D. Bogaerts

President

Ontario Landowners Association

Letter to Premier Doug Ford:

Hello Premier Ford,

I would like to congratulate you and your government for the way that you have been handling this terrible crisis that has put the world on shut down. I also agree with you when you said that we must start to bring back to Ontario, the production of products that we all depend on for our health and security. With that in mind, what could be more important than our own food supply.

Competition from countries where the climate is more favourable to growing vegetables and fruits, plus the manipulation of large corporations that have bought up and removed nearly all large canning and processing plants from the Niagara fruit belt, has left Ontario with only seasonal products from this province. This is also a problem with provincial slaughter plants that have virtually disappeared from this province for several reasons but the most often reason was because of aggressive interference of non-health related regulations (demanding dual washrooms in a small plant was just unaffordable).

There is also a shortage of slaughter space in the Federal plants and much of our beef has to go to the United States for processing, which was the case during the "Mad Cow" disaster of 2004 where we could not slaughter our own animals for hamburger. The border closing for over 2 years almost destroyed our cattle industry which has never fully recovered. If this or the next disaster closed the border with the U.S, we will be back in the same situation.

Farm-land is also under pressure all over the province, from the municipal official plans with the Conservation Authorities identifying wetlands that for years have been farmed and the Heritage Groups identifying special features to restrict the use of the land. Tree-cutting bylaws are stopping farmers from cutting 'brush' on farm fields that they have just bought. Often these are farms where the farming operations have been abandoned often due to health or no one to take over. There should never be a restriction on re-clearing land that was farmed a few years ago. There is no Amazon Rain forest being cleared in Ontario, as virtually all land being cleared was farmed before with horses, then abandoned because of two-wheel drive tractors, and now are again viable with tile drainage.

I would ask all politicians to take a close look at agriculture and see how fragile this sector of our society is and then think of how important it is to be self-sufficient in food especially in the time of crisis. The founding fathers of this nation, who wrote the blueprint for how this new country, Canada, was to be operated, put the importance of agriculture above everything except mining. They even allowed farmers to cut the trees reserved for the Crown if it was to create fields, fences or buildings.

I think that it is time to put agriculture back in its special place of importance, where it would be again recognised as an 'essential service'. Let's stop these special interest groups like

conservation authorities and the MNR from morphing the legislation that they get their power from, into something that says they have control over agriculture.

We have all seen on the news how China turned the boats back that had masks heading for North America, because they needed them. No one blames them for doing that but we should never again allow our country to be dependant on the rest of the world when there is a crisis, we must be self-reliant at least in our food supply.

Our lives and those of our families, depend on it.

Tom Black
Beef and grain farmer
Stittsville, Ontario
613-831-2642



Elizabeth F. Marshall
President All Rights Research Ltd.,

Jeff Bogaerts, President Ontario
Landowners Association
1-613-222-3174 cell

March 28, 2020

Dear Premier Ford and Ministers:

Firstly, I would like to express, on behalf of the people I have spoken with, a sincere thank you for the way you have been handling the Covid-19 crisis. It has been a very trying time for everyone and we appreciate the amount of effort you are putting into continuing to keep the province operational.

After speaking with a number of people in the agricultural community there are some serious concerns regarding the foreseeable food shortages. With this we have categorized some problems/situations and have included suggested solutions. If you would like more information please contact us and we will gladly do what we can to assist you. The problems/situations and suggestions, are:

1. Foreseeable food shortages. This cannot be denied considering some farmers (hot-house) cannot get seed to plant.

Suggested solution

Seeds

All bulk seed orders take precedent over retail sale of seed. Farmers, both large and small, with hot-house/green-house ability need to ensure they have the seed for planting. With suppliers unable to fill orders, due to panic purchases at the retail level, there may be a shortage and farmers, who do this on a mass production scale, seem not able to obtain seed. Perhaps contacting the likes of Amazon, Home Hardware, Co-ops, etc., asking them to restrain the sale of seeds until the orders for the farm producers have been filled. This would not take a lot of time to fix.

2. Migrant workers are going to be late and they must be quarantined,¹ causing crops to be late, perhaps not even being ready for production, due to delays. Fruit and vegetable farmers are concerned with migrant worker shortages, canneries,² transport, harvesting and direct sales at markets.

Suggested solution

Migrant workers

The Federal and Provincial governments have expressed that migrant workers are “essential” and yet they must be isolated for the 14 day period. England has testing available for the Covid-19/Coronavirus which merely takes half an hour.³ Could the government obtain these tests for migrant workers ensuring they are available for work? Could the 14 days isolation be reduced to a 7 day isolation to ensure no residue of the virus? This may assist farmers who are in need of the migrant workers and ease some of the pressure on the food chain.

Canneries⁴

The province should encourage the construction and operation of canneries and could initiate grants and/or interest free loans to accomplish this, as it was the previous government’s initiative to shutter the small canneries and fruit/vegetable processing. This, as with the meat processing plants, could eliminate a bottle-neck in the food chain because it wouldn’t rely on merely a few plants in a few selected areas and/or transport into Ontario.

Transport

See 3

Harvesting

Migrant workers are needed to ensure the harvest is successful for fruit and some vegetables. Other farm crops such as hay, wheat, soy, etc., also need to be harvested by the farmers for feed for animals as well as human consumption. More and more farmers are looking for farm hands to assist with this therefore the province could look to those receiving E.I. benefits to fill in these gaps.

Direct sales

Many farmers have direct sales at farmer’s markets and road side kiosks. Hand sanitizer and/or gloves could be used and/or made available for these efforts. There would also be the need for plastic and/or paper bags to continue for the customer’s use. Farmers and their businesses are and should be considered essential now and in future.

3. Borders between Canada and U.S. being closed, not only to non-essential travel, but eventually to essential travelers such as transport. Provincial borders being closed to essential transport of goods and/or the eventual quarantine of transport drivers and the goods⁵ (re – contamination and transfer of the virus from one jurisdiction to another).

Suggested solution

There is potential that an essential worker, who is crossing U.S.- Canada and/or provincial borders, will be positive with the virus. With that potential it would be remiss for the provincial and federal governments not to restrict even “essential” workers, such as truck drivers, couriers, etc. Therefore, would it not be in the best interest of the province to make the half hour test kits available at the borders, ensuring that there is no cross-border infections? This could elevate the potential of shipments being destroyed and/or community transfer between jurisdictions. Everyone wants to ensure the food chain is protected for the benefit of the residents of Ontario and Canada.

4. Cattle, chicken, pork farmers, etc., are realizing the price of beef/meat is going up (supply and demand) and yet they are looking at difficulties of transport to end users, with fears that if one person in the meat processing plant is struck down with the virus the entire plant must be closed.⁶

“Packing plant suspends slaughter after federal inspectors refuse to enter over COVID-19 concerns

“A packing plant north of Calgary was forced to suspend some of its operations Friday after federal meat inspectors refused to return to the plant, where a worker had tested positive for COVID-19.

Harmony Beef near Balzac halted its cattle slaughter after the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) kept some inspectors out of the facility, the company said....”⁷

Suggested solution

Meat processing plants

The province could be actively involved with re-opening numerous abattoirs throughout the province ensuring there are inspections which meet the CFIA criteria. This would stave off the possibility that if one major processing plant is closed, creating a bottleneck in the food chain, others could fill in the gap, remaining clear of contamination.

The province could initiate grants and/or interest free loans to accomplish this as it was the previous government’s initiative to shutter the small abattoirs and meat processing plants through egregious building coded standards (CFIA), as expressed by a farmer. His statement to me was that the cutting room had been determined to be 4 inches too small therefore the entire premise was closed.

These smaller processing plants could still maintain the processing of private as well as meat for populous consumption as they used to, ensuring that they do meet the CFIA inspection criteria. There would also have to be an increase in fees charged for these smaller processing plants but well worth it if the food chain can be maintained.

5. Restrictions on the use of the land through egregious designations by means of planning, heritage designations, conservation designations, endangered species protection of habitat, Niagara Escarpment designations, etc., etc., etc.⁸

Suggested solution

All Lands designations in the Official Plans pertaining to rural lands need to be removed. These designations include but are not limited to:

- Future Secondary Plan Area;
- Special Study Area;
- Escarpment;
- Wetlands;
- Hazard Lands;
- Major Open Space;
- Areas identified as containing Provincially Significant Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest;

- Other areas identified as potentially containing significant or sensitive natural heritage features.

All of the aforementioned designations restrict the use of rural lands which can be put into production. One property owner, who is not a farmer, leases out his land for cattle grazing. He is restricted as to how much land he can lease out due to these egregious designations of “wetland,” purported “sensitive natural heritage features,” and “karst areas.” If we, in Ontario, want our rural areas and farming communities to meet the challenges presented, we need, as a province, to remove these restrictions. Not only on farm land but land which can and does have the potential to be used as farm land. Not only do these designations restrict the agricultural community’s efforts during a crisis, but when land is offered for sale, if it is designated for anything but agricultural land, the farming community will not even look at it. The restrictions decrease the amount of available land as farm land.

As a final note, Premier and Ministers, again we would like to thank you for your efforts during this trying time. We appreciate how difficult it is, and will continue to be, until this crisis is over. It is hoped that this letter is received with the best of intentions and that this letter is of assistance to you and the people of Ontario.

Sincerest Regards,

Elizabeth F. Marshall
President All Rights Research Ltd.,

Director of Research - Ontario Landowners
Association,
Board Member - Canadian Justice Review Board,
Legislative Researcher – MPs, MPPs, Elected
Officials,
Legal Researcher – Queen’s Counsel, Lawyers,
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¹ “She doesn’t see the 14-day isolation period for the workers as a problem. “We can isolate the workers. That’s not an issue. They have separate housing,” Hambly noted, reassuring the public. “We can do this, and we are willing to do this.” <https://www.orilliamatters.com/coronavirus-covid-19-local-news/feds-announce-travel-ban-exemptions-for-farm-workers-2188146>

² “Actions like the closing of fruit processing plants in the Niagara area, and the ploughing under of acres of apple orchards in Bowmanville, because fruit is cheaper half way around the world (at present) puts us in a very precarious position.” <https://oldottawasouth.ca/archives/2008/1931-2008-10-october/file>

³ “A team from the University of Oxford’s Engineering Science Department and the Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research (OSCAR) has developed a new COVID-19 test, based on a technique which is capable of giving results in half-an-hour.” <https://www.sciencefocus.com/news/new-covid-19-test-gives-results-in-just-half-an-hour/>

⁴ “The General Mills plant in Trenton, fruit-canning factories in Exeter and St. Davids and a Hershey’s chocolate plant in Smiths Falls are among the casualties.” <https://www.pressreader.com/canada/national-post-latest-edition/20080607/281956013534094>

⁵ “In a pair of back-to-back press conferences, Quebec and Ontario — the two most populous provinces in the country — announced there would soon be full shutdowns of non-essential businesses as health officials grapple with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus that has sickened more than 1,400 people in Canada and killed 20.” <https://nationalpost.com/news/covid-19-ontario-and-quebec-order-non-essential-businesses-closed-after-spike-in-coronavirus-totals>

⁶ “In my opinion, based on what we have seen in other workplace situations, it’s hard for me to believe that the consequences of a COVID-19 case at a packing plant would not be a shutdown for quarantine of all employees in the plant.” <https://www.realagriculture.com/2020/03/what-happens-if-a-covid-19-case-hits-the-processing-sector/>

⁷ Packing plant suspends slaughter after federal inspectors refuse to enter over COVID-19 concerns
“A packing plant north of Calgary was forced to suspend some of its operations Friday after federal meat inspectors refused to return to the plant, where a worker had tested positive for COVID-19. Harmony Beef near Balzac halted its cattle slaughter after the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CIFA) kept some inspectors out of the facility, the company said....”
<https://calgarysun.com/news/local-news/packing-plant-suspends-slaughter-after-federal-inspectors-refuse-to-enter-over-covid-19-concerns/wcm/d10ab7b6-47f3-4412-a663-26bde9dcb2e9?fbclid=IwAR0enIUjI5SjE1xLvey3-5fLqUkkOQ2cA3eQ3Hkx1W9cCE1Nt9SDUmGfY>
Jason Herring More from Jason Herring

⁸ “7 NATURAL GREY Background Natural Grey focuses on the environment. The natural beauty of Grey County is a major reason why people choose to live in or visit the County. Grey County needs to be supportive of not just people, but of the plant and wildlife species as well. We need areas for people to interact with nature without overwhelming it. The County also needs to consider our changing climate, and do our part to reduce our impacts on climate change. Natural Grey features include land use types including Hazard Lands and Provincially Significant Wetlands and Significant Coastal Wetlands that are identified on Schedule A. These land use types include specific policies and permitted uses that can be considered either within these areas or adjacent to these areas. The other natural features and areas are constraints, which are identified on Appendix A and Appendix B. For constraints, development can be permitted within these areas or adjacent to these areas, subject to addressing the specific policies identified in this Section, or any provincial and federal requirements. Natural Grey land use types and constraints are as follows: Land Use Types • Hazard Lands • Provincially Significant Wetlands and Significant Coastal Wetlands Constraints • Significant Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest • Other Wetlands • Significant Woodlands • Karst Areas • Core Areas • Linkages • Hazardous Forest Types for Wildland Fire • Significant Valleylands • Fish Habitat For the constraints listed above, the policies of section 7 of the Plan apply, in addition to the policies of the underlying land use type shall apply. Natural Grey features also include the following features which have not been mapped: • Significant Wildlife Habitat (including Deer Wintering Yards); • Habitat of Endangered/Threatened Species. In those areas that have not yet been mapped, the existing mapped natural features capture the majority of, but not necessarily all, of these features. Some of these features may also be subject to existing conservation authority regulations, where they overlap with regulated areas. Each of these natural features were mapped with information provided by different ministries and agencies, the County Plan considers all available data sources to provide an integrated approach to the environment. For the purposes of Section 7 of this Plan, adjacent lands means those lands that are beside a natural heritage feature where development or site alteration may have a negative impact on the feature. The adjacent lands width listed below come from the Natural Heritage Reference Manual, (2010). Reductions to these distances do not require an amendment to this Plan or a municipal official plan, but will generally be supported by an environmental impact study (EIS) prepared by a qualified individual knowledgeable on the environment and natural processes. Reductions in these buffer areas may also be considered on a site-specific basis in accordance with section 7.11.3 of this Plan. Feature or Area Adjacent Land Width Habitat of Threatened / Endangered species 120 metres Provincially Significant Wetlands / Significant Coastal Wetlands 120 metres Other Wetlands 30 metres Fish habitat 120 metres Significant Woodlands 120 metres Significant Valleylands 120 metres Significant Wildlife habitat 120 metres Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest - Earth Science 50 metres Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest - Life Science 120 metres Core areas 120 metres Linkages Not Applicable....” <https://www.grey.ca/planning-development>