

Farm & Food Care Ontario receives program support

New funding agreement with OMAFRA provides \$547,000 over three years

BY LILIAN SCHAEER
Ontario Farmer

Elora – Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson made an in-person appearance at the Farm & Food Care Ontario annual conference on April 13 to announce a new funding agreement between her ministry and the public trust organization.

OMAFRA will be contributing up to \$547,000 over the next three years to support key Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) activities. The announcement marks the first time in FFCO's ten-year history that it has received provincial government funding for its public trust initiatives.

"For the last decade, as long as I've been at Queen's Park, Farm & Food Care has worked tirelessly to bring people together to strengthen public trust and make sure people understand what it takes to produce food," she noted in making the announcement, which drew a standing ovation from the audience.

"My entire career I've known how important your work is and I've recognized the return on the investment on the projects and initiatives you've introduced. I can't say enough good things about what you're doing," she added.

According to FFCO, the funding will support:

- Breakfast on/from the Farm events which provide a



Participating in the funding announcement were, from left, FFCO treasurer John Taylor, second vice-chair Janelle Cardiff, chair Bonnie Den Haan, Ontario agriculture minister Lisa Thompson, and vice-chair Crispin Colvin.

unique personal experience for Ontarians to visit and explore agriculture with working farmers each year

- Farm tours for culinary students which allow them to learn about raising and producing animal and plant products they work with in the kitchen

- Interviews, photography and videography work for the More Than A Migrant Worker initiative that profiles the critical work that seasonal agricultural workers and temporary foreign workers do in Ontario

- The Garden in a Box program that connects home gardeners with Ontario farmers

- Numerous digital consumer outreach activities including virtual field trips highlighting the diversity of farms and food processing facilities to consumers.

The announcement capped what FFCO chair Bonnie Den Haan described as an exceptional year for the organiza-

tion, which was founded 10 years ago by the joining of legacy organizations Agricultural Groups Concerned About Resources and the Environment (AGCare) and the Ontario Farm Animal Council.

Ongoing public health restrictions drove a continued reimagining of many of the FFCO outreach programs, making them more diverse and appealing to new audiences. A new strategic plan is charting a course for the next several years.

Program highlights from 2021 included the launch of four new virtual reality tours, a successful winter speaker series that attracted almost 500 food influencers, a partnership with AgScape to record 26 live online farm and food processor tours that reached an audience of 269,000 people, three drive-through Breakfast from the Farm events, and a virtual gala

in a box that raised \$29,000.

The latest edition of the Real Dirt on Farming publication received a Best of CAMA award from the Canadian Agri-Marketing Association and two top awards from the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation.

"Collaboration and partnership sum up the work of the last year; partnership is fundamental to what we do," said executive director Kelly Daynard, noting the organization had 182 members across four categories, 85 attendees at its environmental and farm animal care council meetings, and 104 partners in its events and programs.

FFCO also works closely with its sister organizations in Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, as well as AgScape and its national counterpart, Agriculture in the Classroom Canada, 4-H Ontario and Canada, and the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity.

For 2022, the organization is planning a gradual return to in-person events like bus tours, food influencer and registered dietitian programs, as well as an expanded Garden in a Box program, increased digital outreach, and new Breakfast on/from the Farm events.

"We've experienced some incredible momentum-building this year, and I'm optimistic about the road ahead as we slowly add in-person events like this AGM back in," said Daynard.

Three Farm & Food Care directors have stepped down from the board: Josh Boersen representing Grain Farmers of Ontario who served for two

years, Jordan Fois representing Chicken Farmers of Ontario who served for four years, and Richard Blyleven from Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario who rejoined the board two years ago and is currently chair of the 10th anniversary committee. Blyleven is a former Chair of AGCare and was involved in the formation of FFCO a decade ago.

Three new board members have been acclaimed: Mark Hamel from Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Andrea Veldhuizen from Chicken Farmers of Ontario and Steve Lake with Grain Farmers of Ontario.

Three candidates are running for two member-at-large spots: Frank Hoftzyer from Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Crispin Colvin of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Bonnie Den Haan representing Sheldon Creek Dairy. The election will be held at the upcoming FFCO members-only business meeting.

Other FFCO directors include Janelle Cardiff (Egg Farmers of Ontario), Brian Gilroy (Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association), Joe Hickson (Ontario Seed Growers' Association), Quintin McEwen (Ontario Sheep Farmers), Holly McGill (Wallenstein Feed & Supply Ltd.), Jennifer Mitchell (Mushrooms Canada), John Taylor (Ontario Mutual Insurance Association). Ex-Officio board members are Jason Leblond (Beef Farmers of Ontario), Mike Mitchell (Ontario Pork), Gordon Stock (Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association) and Steven Vanderzanden (Turkey Farmers of Ontario).

Landowners feel railroaded by upgrade costs

BY TODD HAMBLETON
Postmedia

Several residents in North Stormont are among thousands in Canada with railway crossings on their private property who are currently - or could soon be - on the hook for repair and upgrade costs.

And some aren't too pleased about that.

One man, who lives in an area west of Finch, near Highway 43 and Goldfield Road, has the Canadian Pacific Railway line running through his property, and doesn't feel he should be paying for the upgrades required to adhere to

Transport Canada's new regulations and standards.

The issue was also highlighted by the Chesterville Record with the newspaper reporting recently that Mountain resident Estella Rose, a former deputy mayor of North Dundas, was one of the residents receiving a letter from CPR outlining her obligations to look after her railway crossing.

"They want \$1,000 to \$2,500 for liability insurance, but we already have farm insurance," Rose told the newspaper, adding the letter informed her the crossing would need new signage at a cost of \$700, and that a yearly

assessment at the crossing will cost \$275.

"They should be paying us. It is an inconvenience for us... we would only go across to plant the seed and maybe once to spray it and then combine it."

"They (the railway) have always maintained it. That was the idea when they got the right of way. They used to put up fences to keep cattle in. If you called and told them your gate was not up to par, they would drop off a new gate. They always had a machine to cut the brush to be able to see down the track. Are they going to cut that too?" The Standard-Freeholder

contacted the CPR media department with some questions regarding residents' concerns, and was told by Stacy Patenaude, the CP manager of government affairs and communications, that "existing federally-regulated grade crossings must meet the requirements of the Grade Crossings Regulations by Nov. 28, 2024."

Patenaude said Transport Canada has assigned responsibilities to private authorities and CP is trying to "contact and assist all private authorities, as much as possible, to understand the requirements of the regulations."

Patenaude added that residents

with concerns can contact Transport Canada through its website. Or, if they have disputes over costs for their crossing, they can contact the Canadian Transportation Agency at 1-877-850-7148, or through its website.

Incidents, injuries, and deaths are the main reasons for the required upgrades, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada reporting in one of its studies that between 2009 and 2015 there was annual national average of well over 170 incidents each year - with an average of nearly 25 fatalities and 25 serious injuries each year.