



November 27, 2024

Peter VanStaveren
President, Simcoe County Beef Farmers

Chad Anderson
President, Lambton County Cattlemen's Association

Dear Peter and Chad,

Re: *Funding Program Application Assistance 24-14 and Program Delivery and Application Process 24-19*

The following resolutions were passed at the Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) annual general meeting in February and were recently discussed by the BFO Board of Directors:

WHEREAS, accessing Climate Change Funding through Soil and Crops can be frustrating; and
WHEREAS, for each of the funding opportunities it is difficult to access and decipher that information; and

WHEREAS, the intake window is fairly short and at a somewhat difficult or busy time of the year;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT BFO provide greater assistance with the clarity and requirements and be able to assist with the process and ensure it is accessible on the BFO website.

WHEREAS, the government cost share and grant programs are meant to improve/ incentivise all targeted farms in regards to program design; and

WHEREAS, many Ontario farmers have had difficulty navigating and applying for provincial government programs or opt instead to hire a private individual/ company who specialize in grant writing; and

WHEREAS, the Beef Farmers of Ontario often promote these programs such as OMAFRA's biosecurity enhancement initiative;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT BFO work with the other farm organizations to better understand the hurdles farmers face when applying for government programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT BFO work on recommendations to those responsible for program delivery that would make application processes not as complicated and less difficult for all farmers to be able to participate in these government programs.

BFO thanks Simcoe County Beef Farmers and Lambton County Cattlemen's Association for bringing these resolutions forward. As these resolutions speak to similar concerns, we have included them both in this response.

BFO has long advocated for various funding initiatives to support producers with on-farm enhancements to support biosecurity and traceability, processing capacity, environmental stewardship, etc. When speaking with government representatives and program delivery agencies, BFO routinely emphasizes the importance of ensuring program applications are not overly complicated and administratively burdensome, are easily accessible, and are broadly and clearly communicated with producers.

Concerns with how funding application processes are designed and implemented continues to be an issue for many producers. As noted, some of these concerns relate to the complexity of the applications, time commitment required to effectively complete some applications, questions around who to contact for assistance, and the inability to or confusion on how to discuss and receive feedback on denied applications. In addition, with programs being delivered by different bodies, such as government or other organizations like Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC), the application process and customer support options vary, which can add to the confusion of the funding application process. Many producers have also raised the growing role of third parties who can be hired to assist producers to find funding opportunities and complete funding applications, which many view as concerning and largely a result of the complexity and competitiveness of some funding opportunities.

With the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), the federal, provincial and territorial five-year agreement, coming into effect in the spring of 2023 to support agriculture programming and cost-share programs and activities, a number of funding programs have been developed, including the Resilient Agricultural Landscapes Program, the Biosecurity Enhancement Initiative, the Agricultural Stewardship Initiative, and the Agri-Tech Innovation Initiative. Although the funding opportunities that have become available for producers are extremely welcome, navigating through program details, intake periods and deadlines, applications, etc., for numerous programs can be overwhelming and confusing for most people.

To speak to these resolutions and the concerns highlighted above, BFO staff met with funding program staff at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), and with staff at AAC and OSCIA, who are currently responsible for delivering various producer funding programs. In these discussions, the concerns raised were certainly not lost on those responsible for designing and delivering these programs and the feedback was welcomed. In these discussions, it was clear there is an effort and a desire to continuously improve the funding program application experience and to address or remove barriers to accessing funding; however, what that looks and the pace in which these changes are made, looks different depending on who is delivering the program and the design of the program. BFO will continue to speak to producer concerns and provide feedback and recommendations to those responsible for designing and delivering funding programs for producers.

BFO has also recently hired Barb Caswell as the BFO Provincial Programs Supervisor who will eventually succeed Cheryl Russwurm when she retires in early 2025. Barb has worked in the agri-food sector for close to 20 years, with stops at the Turkey Farmers of Canada, the Canadian Sheep Federation, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), and most recently

with Elite Agri Solutions. During her 10+ years with OSCIA, Barb helped develop and oversee the delivery of numerous on-farm cost-share and other grant programs. She joins BFO with significant depth of knowledge and experience in program delivery and support, as well as experience in food safety, traceability, biosecurity, and environmental best practices. While Barb will take over primary responsibility for the supervision of the finance programs BFO administers, she will also provide advisory support to staff, the board and producers on government programming related to the on-farm needs of beef farmers, and more broadly, the Ontario beef sector. While Barb's role will not include writing applications for individual producers, she will be able to share insights and help producers navigate the funding program process. She will also work closely with BFO's policy, communications, and producer engagement teams.

Lastly, BFO encourages producers who have experienced issues or challenges with funding programs to contact BFO staff, in addition to the organization delivering the program. For more information related to Ontario's Sustainable CAP programs, please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/sustainable-canadian-agricultural-partnership>.

Thank you, again, to Simcoe County Beef Farmers and Lambton County Cattlemen's Association for bringing these resolutions forward.

Sincerely,



Craig McLaughlin
President

cc: David Millsap (Mover)
Jim Whitley (Advisory Councillor)
Lori Chalmers (Secretary)
Joe Dickenson (Mover)
Blair Williamson (Advisory Councillor and Seconder)
Hanneke Mills (Secretary)