

Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Ontario Pre-Budget Consultation Submission 2014

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to submit our views on matters of importance to the budget for 2014. The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is one of three general farm organizations in the province of Ontario, representing 4,300 farm families. We believe that the province plays a critical role in ensuring that the business climate and the supporting infrastructure are right for farming to succeed.

Our key messages are the following:

1. **Stay the course in balancing the budget.** CFFO has consistently called on government to set getting its fiscal house in order as its highest priority and it remains our key message. Continue on the path of balancing the budget with selective, limited and prudent additional spending that increases the potential of businesses in Ontario.

There is very little that could destabilize the business climate in Ontario more swiftly than downgrading of credit scores and increased interest rates. The CFFO strongly urges the Ontario government to stay the course.

Within the context of agriculture, we believe that farmers need to do their part to help Ontario stay the course. Prudent farm managers are not in need of additional support as they used the marketing tools available to them to manage their market risk along with the existing support system. Second, the CFFO believes that in the long-run farmers need to be less reliant on government support, where farmers receive their income from the marketplace.

2. **Invest in the Productivity of the Agriculture Sector:** Any new spending in primary agriculture should be focused on infrastructure that will improve the productivity of food production in the long-run. For example, the CFFO believes that investments in innovative water management infrastructure (improvements in irrigation, drainage and storage) will improve the productivity of land, and thus the productivity of the sector.
3. **Invest in Market Intelligence Resources for Agriculture:** the CFFO believes that in an era of growing trade opportunities in agriculture, there is merit in committing additional government resources in finding a variety of opportunities for agricultural businesses. We see the following opportunities:
 - a. **Attract New Firms to Ontario.** With the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the province needs to ensure Ontario has a business climate that will attract European food makers into Ontario looking to produce goods for the 100 million people within a one day drive of Toronto. Connecting these new firms with Ontario growers will grow the market and the prosperity of the entire sector. And most importantly, we need

these firms to be here (profitably) before Europe and the United States reach their own agreement. The window of opportunity is open and we need to seize it immediately.

- b. **Foreign market information.** OMAF needs the resources to help farmers, Canadian processors, and the farm supply industry to find opportunities in the expanding number of free-trade zones that exist, particularly in Europe, and soon within the countries that sign onto the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We can improve the odds of homegrown individual business success through government led information gathering.

Thank you for your time and consideration on these important matters to the Agricultural Community and Rural Ontario.

Nate Stevens

Nathan Stevens, General Manager, Director of Policy Development
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario