



Toll-Free:

519-837-1620

(1) 855-800-0306



www.christianfarmers.org



642 Woolwich Street,

Guelph ON, N1H 3Y2

September 18, 2018

Mr. Toby Barrett, MPP

Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Room 6522

99 Wellesley Street West, Whitney Block

Natural Resources and Forestry

Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1W3

Via email: toby.barrett@pc.ola.org

Re: Letter in Support of Bill 28: An Act respecting a voluntary program for the alternate use of agricultural land and the production of ecosystem services on that land

Dear Mr. Barrett,

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. The CFFO values family farm enterprise, profitability and responsible stewardship of resources. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

As such, the CFFO has been a long-time supporter of ALUS programs in Ontario, which reward enrolled farmers and landowners for efforts to manage and maintain ecologically beneficial projects on their land. We are writing in support of Bill 28, the Alternate Land Use and Services Program for Agricultural Land Act, 2018.

Support

The CFFO believes that land should be set to its best purpose. The best food-growing land should be tasked with growing food. The most naturally sensitive land should be dedicated to nature. Therefore, the CFFO supports efforts to encourage farmers to dedicate fragile or marginal land toward providing ecological benefits to society.

To that end, the CFFO approves the proposed legislation as a governmental commitment to support voluntary, farmer/landowner-led, incentive-based programs that empower Ontario's agricultural landowners to contribute to the establishment, restoration, and preservation of natural ecosystems.

As outlined in the Bill, the proposed provincial framework and action plan offers several means of supporting the stewardship efforts of farmers both through its educational objectives and the provision of dedicated programs and funds toward ecological on-farm projects.

The CFFO supports government in exercising its duty of care for Ontario's natural resources and ecology through this framework and favours collaboration between government and landowners to build the specific conditions of programs that balance the best interests of both farmers and society overall.



Toll-Free:

519-837-1620

(1) 855-800-0306



www.christianfarmers.org



642 Woolwich Street,

Guelph ON, N1H 3Y2

To that end, the CFFO proposes a number of recommendations for the Minister's consideration in any future development of this proposed legislation.

Recommendations

1. Establish ALUS programs province-wide: The CFFO believes that ALUS or similar programs are of benefit to most food-growing regions in Ontario. A key initiative of the provincial framework and action plan should include active expansion of the reach of ALUS or similar programs.
2. Consult widely: The CFFO applauds the desire of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to work collaboratively to build a policy that is sustainable into the future. The CFFO strongly recommends that the Minister consult with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) as well as Ontario's accredited farm organizations for the purpose of developing, amending, and/or administering the proposed legislation.

The CFFO also requests that the Minister investigate beneficial linkages between other provincial initiatives, including the Greenbelt Plan and the Natural Heritage System, as well as OMAFRA's Best Management Practices recommendations.

Finally, the CFFO encourages collaboration specifically on the conditions associated with land set aside in perpetuity. While ALUS has proven to be an effective alternative to permanent procurement of conservation areas established through land purchases or easements, going forward we would support further discussion and collaboration regarding the conditions attached to ALUS lands.

3. Provide staff extension: The CFFO supports recommendations under the bill's provincial framework and action plan to provide educational materials and guidelines for projects that provide ecosystem services. The CFFO recommends the addition of extension staff to offer expertise to participating farmers on the particular situation of their farms.
4. Maintain government commitment to reducing red tape: The CFFO applauds the government's commitment to reducing red tape. The CFFO also believes that it is best that programs delivering ecosystem services on agricultural land operate on a voluntary, farmer-led basis, consistent with optimizing along the triple bottom line. Therefore, CFFO encourages the Minister to promote voluntary, incentive-based initiatives to provide ecosystem services on agricultural land into the future.

The CFFO would be pleased to consult with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to develop a provincial framework and action plan that meets the needs and stewardship commitments of farmers.

Sincerely,

Clarence Nywening, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
MV