



July 14, 2015

Mr. Darrell Russett
President
Beef Farmers of Hastings County

Dear Darrell,

The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) Board of Directors recently reviewed the following resolution passed by the Beef Farmers of Hastings County in May of this year:

WHEREAS: The Beef Farmers of Hastings County (BFHC) operate under the guidance and mandate of Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO),

WHEREAS: The BFHC represent the interests, concerns and mandate of all beef farmers/producers operating in the County of Hastings, Province of Ontario,

WHEREAS: The farmers/producers of Hastings County have expressed concerns, questions and dismay over the BFO promotion, and collaboration with the Ontario government with respect to the expansion of beef herds on to crown lands in north-eastern Ontario.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That BFHC would implore the BFO to revisit and rethink their promotion of ‘Beef Cattle to the North’ due to harsh environmental conditions, distance to markets, feed supplies, and veterinary care, as well as the financial burden placed on mainly young or beginner farmers for startup and continuation of a viable beef operation in the north. In addition, the more prudent use of check-off fees for the benefit of all Ontario beef farmers is imperative.

It was disappointing for the BFO Board of Directors to learn of BFHC’s apparent dismay with BFO’s promotion and collaboration with the provincial government with respect to expansion of beef production in Northern Ontario.

During BFO’s strategic planning process more than two years ago, the shrinking cow herd and decreasing supply of locally-produced beef in the province were identified as issues that needed to be addressed. Beef production is declining in Ontario with cow herd numbers at their lowest point in decades, and we are getting dangerously close to a tipping point. This poses a direct threat to the survival of processing plants in the province and the sustainability of beef farming.

The vision for our organization is helping to foster a sustainable and profitable beef industry and have Ontario beef recognized as an outstanding product by our consumers. To help meet this objective, BFO assembled some of the best minds in the province and held extensive producer consultations to determine

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if expansion of beef production in Northern Ontario was economically feasible or not. This endeavor comes with a set of unique challenges and obstacles, some of which you have cited. However, the report that BFO commissioned last year, with input from Northern Ontario beef farmers, demonstrates that northern expansion is both economically feasible and required to support Ontario's current beef industry and processing sectors.

Accessing land for beef production is becoming more and more difficult due to land being converted to cash crops, competing government policies, and urban encroachment. Ontario beef producers know that the biggest cost factor in establishing a farm business is the cost of land. The available and affordable land in Northern Ontario presents a significant opportunity to help reverse the decline in Ontario's beef production and increase jobs and income for families, if the proper supports are put in place.

Expanding Ontario's cow herd requires tremendous collaboration and BFO needs to work with the province to allow for industry growth. Currently, BFO is requesting that the provincial government release crown land in Northern Ontario for beef production. This will help ensure our feedlots in the south have a steady supply of Ontario-born animals, our southern processors maintain a sufficient supply of cattle, and consumers continue to have access to local Ontario beef products.

With the average age of Ontario farmers having now reached 55 years old, we need to be seriously committed to finding new ways of ensuring a sustainable and economically viable future for the next generation of beef farmers. We believe wholeheartedly that Northern Ontario can provide this opportunity and that sustainable beef farming operations in the north will reduce the threat of processing plants closing, with the increased production used to access new and growing markets in Ontario and around the globe.

It must be stated that BFO strongly supports any and all initiatives aimed at increasing Ontario's cow herd, including expansion initiatives in other areas of the province. Recognizing the need to look at ways to expand the cow herd in Southern Ontario as well as Northern Ontario, BFO has a new project getting underway that will establish resources and identify pathways that will help encourage and facilitate expansion of the cow herd across southern and eastern Ontario.

The BFO board strongly believes that the resources invested in this initiative for the south and the sister project for the north represent a necessary and responsible investment of BFO check-off dollars. I sincerely hope that you understand the urgency behind the need to invest in projects aimed at growing and sustaining our industry in Ontario.

Should you have any further questions regarding the cow herd expansion project please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this resolution forward.

Sincerely,



Bob Gordanier
President

cc: BFO Board of Directors

