

ONTARIO'S 2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

ELECTION TOOLKIT FOR BEEF FARMERS



PRODUCER CALL TO ACTION

As Ontario prepares for the 2026 municipal elections, Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) is encouraging beef farmers and local associations to help raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing Ontario's beef sector.

This toolkit has been developed to support Ontario beef farmers and industry representatives in engaging with municipal election candidates on issues that matter to agriculture and rural communities.

Every conversation with a local candidate helps build awareness of the beef sector's economic, environmental and social contributions, while highlighting the important role municipal governments play in supporting a strong and sustainable agricultural industry.

Producers are encouraged to connect with candidates by attending all-candidate meetings, arranging one-on-one discussions, participating in local community events, or reaching out through social media, email, letters or phone calls. Building relationships with future municipal leaders provides an opportunity to discuss local priorities, better understand candidates' positions on agriculture, and encourage policies that support farming and rural communities.

To help guide these conversations, this package includes suggested discussion topics, questions and communication tips for meeting with municipal candidates.

ELECTION DAY - OCTOBER 26, 2026

FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION & SUPPORT



BFO POLICY & ISSUES LEAD

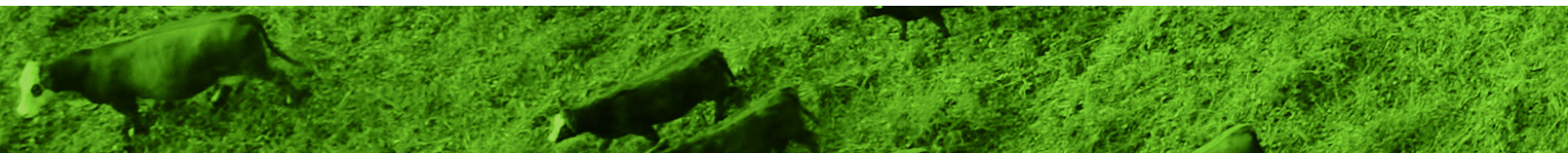
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ONTARIO BEEF SECTOR OVERVIEW

In Ontario, beef cattle are raised on over 12,500 farms located in nearly every county, district and region of the province. Almost 100 per cent of beef farms in Ontario are family owned and operated. Farms where cows and calves are raised, tend to have smaller herd numbers and utilize extensive grasslands, which help to sequester millions of tonnes of carbon in Ontario. Farms, known as feedlots, and where cattle are grown to market weight, predominately feed a balanced grain diet and tend to be larger in size. Precision feeding on feedlot farms plays an integral role in the beef sector's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Ontario beef sector largely produces a grass-fed, grain-finished product from *Bos taurus* (European breeds) herds. These two main contributing factors support the production of high-quality beef products and enable Ontario beef farmers and processors to sell into 58 markets around the world.

ECONOMY

The beef sector is an important economic driver of Ontario's agri-food sector. Combining the revenue from primary production, processing and retail, the beef sector contributes \$2.99 billion to Ontario's GDP on an annual basis. The income derived from the beef sector helps support a broad range of rural infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and community centres.

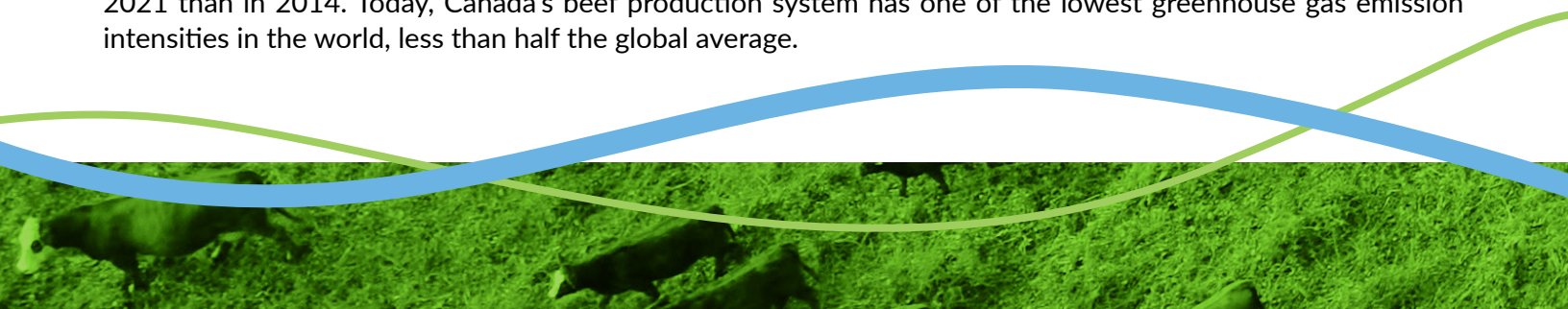
EMPLOYMENT

Ontario's beef sector is vitally important to the well-being and growth of families, businesses and communities, both rural and urban. As a significant job creator, Ontario's beef industry is responsible for 56,400 jobs through primary production, processing and retail. Beef farms provide a wide variety of jobs between on-farm (equipment operation, breeding and feeding) and off-farm (farm machinery sales, grocer sales, meat packaging and processing, and transportation).

ENVIRONMENT

Ontario farmers have a long history of caring for the environment and continually improving their farming practices. Through initiatives like the Environmental Farm Plan, farmers voluntarily assess environmental risks on their farms and develop action plans to protect soil health, improve water quality and enhance local ecosystems.

Canada's beef farmers also play an important role in conserving the environment by managing more than 44 million acres of grasslands, which store an estimated 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon while providing valuable wildlife habitat and supporting biodiversity. Thanks to continued improvements in genetics, nutrition and production practices, producing one kilogram of Canadian beef generated 15 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 than in 2014. Today, Canada's beef production system has one of the lowest greenhouse gas emission intensities in the world, less than half the global average.



PRIORITY ISSUES FOR THE ONTARIO BEEF SECTOR

TOP MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES FOR THE ONTARIO BEEF SECTOR

1. Grow Ontario's agri-food land base through investments in community pastures and greater policy flexibility to allow municipal land and Crown land to be accessed by farmers for food production.
2. Prioritize the protection of Ontario's finite agricultural land base, recognizing its fundamental role in supporting farm families, rural economies, domestic food security and long-term agricultural competitiveness. Cities and towns need to grow up not out.
3. Ensure that major infrastructure and development projects affecting agricultural land, including initiatives such as the Alto High-Speed Rail and Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar projects, involve transparent consultation with the agricultural sector and incorporate strong farmland protection measures, meaningful mitigation strategies, and fair compensation for impacted farm businesses.
4. Encourage municipalities to utilize Canadian science, data, and production practices when developing climate action plans, sustainability initiatives, and food procurement policies to ensure decisions reflect local agricultural realities and outcomes.
5. Promote recognition of livestock production and cattle grazing as important contributors to environmental sustainability, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, grassland preservation, carbon sequestration, and the protection of species at risk.
6. Address Ontario's critical veterinary shortages by improving access to veterinary services in rural communities, enhancing the Veterinary Incentive Program (VIP) and continuing to modernize the Veterinary Assistance Program (VAP) to reflect current costs and on-farm needs.
7. Increase investments in meat processing capacity while reducing regulatory and taxation burdens for small and medium-sized abattoirs to strengthen local processing resilience.
8. Improve and modernize the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OWDCP) by increasing compensation values for calves, reducing claim processing and payment timelines, and aligning the Protection of Livestock and Poultry from Dogs Act compensation rates with the OWDCP to ensure timely and consistent support for livestock farmers.



QUESTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

LAND USE PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

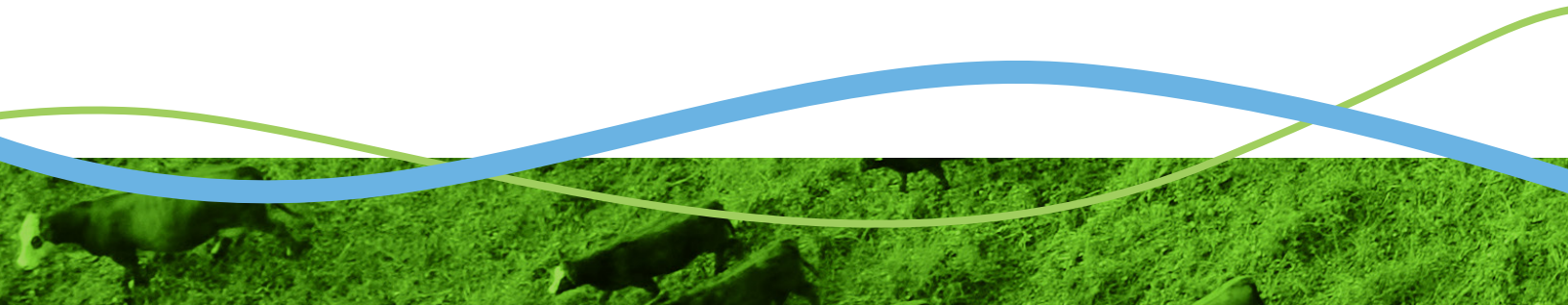
A key priority for BFO and our members is the preservation of Ontario's agricultural land base. We strongly believe the best way to protect Ontario's agricultural lands is through sound provincial land use policy that sees agricultural lands, including marginal lands used for livestock grazing and carbon sequestration, protected as the highest and best use of Ontario's arable land.

1. How will you balance growth, housing and infrastructure needs with the long-term need to preserve farmland and local food production?
2. How will you ensure municipal planning and economic development staff remain informed about agricultural issues and opportunities?
3. How would you involve the farm community in the development and review of Official Plans and Zoning By-laws?
4. Please share your ideas for how agricultural organizations could participate earlier in planning discussions. Do you support the municipality maintaining a dedicated agricultural advisory committee? If your municipality does not have one, would you support the creation of one?
5. How will you help educate new rural residents about living and working in an active farming community?
6. If applicable - How will you advocate for farm businesses that may be affected, fragmented, or made less efficient by major infrastructure projects such as the Alto High-Speed Rail corridor or the Department of National Defence's Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar project?

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RURAL SERVICES

Access to large animal veterinary care remains a significant challenge across much of Northern Ontario and parts of Eastern and Southern Ontario. Improving access requires better use of the entire veterinary team, including supporting and incentivizing veterinarians to establish practices in underserved areas, ensuring farmers have access to veterinary care. At the same time, livestock farms need the tools, support, and emergency preparedness plans necessary to respond effectively to floods, severe weather, power outages, and animal disease outbreaks.

1. How will you ensure your municipality's emergency management plans recognize the needs of livestock farms and support a coordinated response during emergencies?
2. Many rural communities are experiencing shortages of large animal veterinarians. What role do you believe municipalities can play in attracting and retaining veterinary professionals to support local livestock farms?
3. How will you support the agri-food sector in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce?
4. What specific actions would you take to ensure our municipal emergency services have the training, staffing, equipment, and funding needed to respond safely and effectively to farm emergencies, including equipment fires, field and crop fires, and grain entrapment rescues?



QUESTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

MUNICIPAL FINANCE

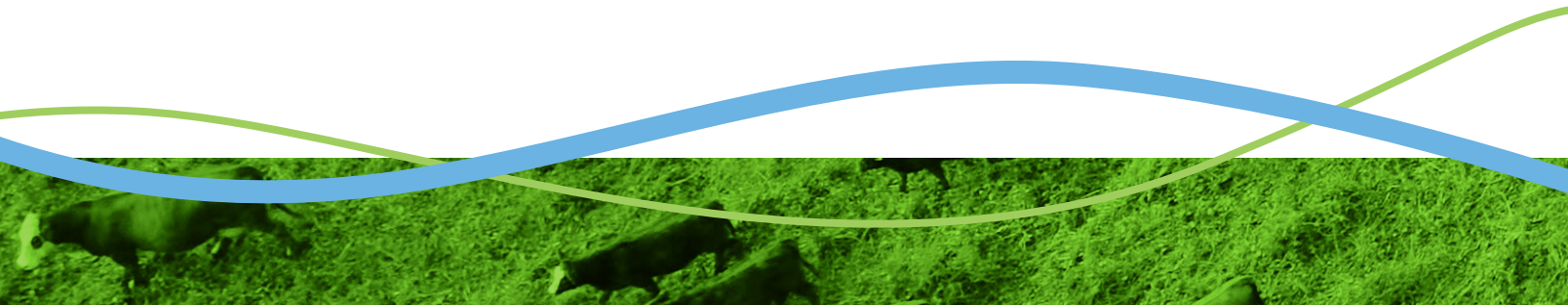
Municipalities should recognize the importance of small and medium, provincially inspected, family-operated abattoirs in maintaining local meat processing capacity and supporting Ontario beef farmers. These essential facilities are often taxed at industrial rates that may not reflect their scale or community value. Municipal policy should consider approaches that support their long-term viability and the farmers who rely on them.

1. What steps do you think the municipality should take to support small, family-operated abattoirs that are facing high industrial property tax rates?
2. Are you willing to support reducing the farm property tax ratio to prevent further increases in the tax burden paid by farmers?
3. Are you willing to support adopting the new commercial and industrial subclasses that encourage on-farm, value-added agricultural enterprises?
4. Do you believe development charges should apply to agricultural structures in this municipality?

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Ontario beef farmers care for their land because it's the foundation of their livelihood, and they care for their cattle because healthy, well-cared-for animals are essential to producing safe, high-quality beef. Through responsible grazing, protecting soil and water, following science-based animal care standards, and continually improving their farming practices, beef farmers demonstrate their commitment to environmental stewardship and animal welfare every day.

1. How will you ensure your municipality has a qualified inspector available to administer the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program, and what steps will you take to ensure livestock producers' claims are processed fairly and efficiently?
2. How will you support farms, farmers, and farm animals from the risks of trespass and activist activities?
3. Non-farm developments adjacent to farmland often involve sizable site grading, which can change natural drainage patterns. Drainage problems can be created at the newly created site, adjacent farms, or both. How will you ensure that adjacent properties are not negatively impacted by drainage?
4. The province holds the sole authority to regulate pesticides and land-applied nutrients in all municipalities. Will you support repealing any existing by-laws that deal with either pesticides or land-applied nutrients, and work to ensure new by-laws that impede farming operations are not created?
5. How will the municipality ensure that Ontario beef and livestock farmers are meaningfully consulted when developing policies related to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental goals?
6. Will you commit to reviewing municipal by-laws that may unnecessarily restrict proven predator management practices, such as the use of livestock guardian dogs, and support responsible coyote control measures to help protect livestock?



QUESTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

FOOD PROCUREMENT

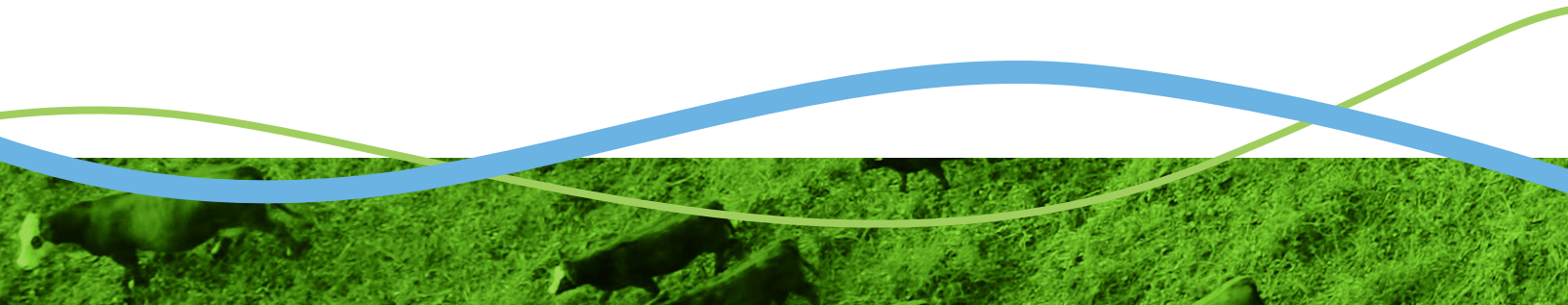
We encourage municipalities to recognize Ontario beef farmers as valued partners in building resilient local food systems through its food procurement policies. Ontario's beef sector provides high-quality, locally produced food while supporting rural communities, economic growth, and a strong domestic food supply. We welcome continued engagement and constructive dialogue to ensure procurement policies reflect the benefits of sourcing local food and support the long-term success of Ontario's beef farming community.

1. How will you ensure community members have access to affordable, locally and Canadian-produced food, and what commitments will you make to source food locally while reflecting the community's needs and existing food procurement practices?
2. When developing food procurement policies, how are agricultural and livestock producer organizations being consulted and engaged in the decision-making process?
3. How will you ensure that the data used to inform food procurement decisions includes both national and local sources and accurately reflects regional agricultural production and food systems?

COMMUNITY PASTURES

A key priority for Beef Farmers of Ontario is to explore community pasture expansion and renewal opportunities by securing government and ENGO partnerships to fund infrastructure upgrades, enhance environmental outcomes, and expand grazing capacity.

1. How do you think the municipality can facilitate partnerships between livestock producers, conservation authorities, and environmental organizations to enhance pasture ecosystems?
2. If there are municipally owned or underutilized lands, would you consider/support initiatives for community pasture development or expansion on those lands?



TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

BE AWARE OF TIME. You may only have a few minutes to get your point across.

BE ASSERTIVE. Know what you want in advance and ask for it.

BE DIRECT. State the purpose of your meeting clearly and highlight our sector's key issues.

BE INFORMATIVE. Refer to information in this toolkit and stick to the facts.

PERSONALIZE YOUR MESSAGE. Relate our sector priorities to your own story as a beef farmer and support it with BFO's speaking points. Your personal story and how the challenges facing the beef industry affects your operation will be more highly regarded than speaking points alone.

BE INQUIRING. Ask your candidate if they are familiar with your issues. Ask for the candidate's view on the subject and how they will act to address these issues, if elected.

BE COURTEOUS. Be tolerant of differing views and don't speak badly of other politicians or organizations.

BE RESPONSIVE. Try to answer questions. When you can't, offer to get back to the candidate with the information. You can always ask BFO for help in getting the necessary information to the candidate.

BE AVAILABLE. Make sure your candidate knows how to reach you. Feel free to offer to have the BFO office follow up with additional information.

BE AWARE. Local farm organizations often host candidate meetings or debates, which is a good time to get out to see your local candidates and ask them questions all at the same time.

