

BFO STATEMENT

Alto High-Speed Rail Development



Beef Farmers Call for Responsible, Agriculture-First Planning in Alto High-Speed Rail Development

March 3, 2026 (Guelph, Ont.) The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) stands united with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and l'Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) in calling on the Government of Canada and the federal Minister of Transport to immediately halt the proposed Alto High-Speed Rail project.

Our members voted strongly in favour of a resolution at our Annual General Meeting on February 19 calling on BFO to formally oppose the proposed project. This clear direction reflects the serious and widespread concern among beef farmers about the impact this development would have on farm families, rural communities, and Ontario's agricultural land base.

While BFO supports improved transportation options and recognizes the importance of strategic infrastructure investments, the current proposed rail alignments through central and eastern Ontario would be devastating to the beef sector and the broader agricultural community. The proposed route would cut through key beef producing counties across central and eastern Ontario, expropriating and dividing farms with a fenced rail corridor, closing local roads, disrupting wildlife movement, and delivering no clear social or economic benefit to the affected rural communities - who would not even have access to the service.

Ontario's farmland is a finite and irreplaceable resource. For beef farmers, maintaining large, contiguous land bases is essential for pasture, feed production, livestock movement, drainage systems, and overall operational efficiency. The proposed corridor risks breaking farms into smaller, less viable parcels, disrupting tile drainage systems critical to crop production, and creating long-term operational and financial burdens associated with fencing, crossings, and biosecurity concerns.

BFO echoes the specific requests advanced by OFA and UPA and calls on the federal government and the Minister of Transport to suspend the project until these concerns are fully and transparently addressed. If the project were ever to proceed, it must guarantee full access to farmland, establish properly sized agricultural crossings where required, and ensure fair and proportional compensation that reflects the permanent and significant impact of a rail corridor on agricultural operations.

While prime agricultural lands have been identified as areas of concern by OFA and UPA, BFO believes no lands currently in agricultural production should be impacted by this project - including marginal lands essential to livestock and forage production - unless comprehensive

mitigation strategies, properly designed agricultural accommodations, and compensation that fully reflects both immediate and long-term operational impacts are secured in advance.

As outlined by OFA and UPA in their February 27, 2026 statement, farm organizations are calling on governments and Alto to:

- Stay out of prime agricultural areas, and BFO would add, actively farmed lands
- Avoid breaking farms into smaller pieces and keep fields and farm operations whole
- Protect farm drainage systems that are essential for crop production
- Address farmers' concerns about construction impacts and ongoing costs, including fencing, and the building, upgrading and long-term maintenance of safe farm crossings for equipment and livestock
- Ensure agricultural impact assessments are independent, thorough and publicly available

"We remain deeply concerned about the significant uncertainties surrounding this project and the very real risk it poses to dozens of family farms across eastern Ontario. The long-term implications for land access, farm viability, succession planning, and rural stability cannot be overstated," shared Jason Leblond, BFO President.

"Projects deemed to be in the national interest must not come at the expense of Canada's food-producing land or the sustainability of rural communities. Protecting Ontario's agricultural land base and ensuring the long-term viability of farm businesses must be treated as a national priority," added Leblond.

BFO stands firmly with OFA and UPA in advocating for an agriculture-first approach and urges the Government of Canada and the federal Minister of Transport to take immediate action to halt the Alto High-Speed Rail project.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario represents 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario by advocating in the areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety, and domestic and export market development. BFO's vision is help foster a sustainable and profitable beef industry, and have Ontario beef recognized as an outstanding product by our consumers.

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