



YORK REGION FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

SERVING THE FARM COMMUNITY SINCE 1940

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

Committee of the Whole
City of Richmond Hill
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, Ontario

Re: Item 11.3 - Stormwater Management Financial Plan

Chair Thompson and Committee

Stormwater Management Rate Structures are an important topic of discussion. A lot has happened since our last request to Council regarding the Fee in November 2023. Both King and Georgina Townships have exempted the farmland from their Stormwater Management Fee and Minister of Rural Affairs, Lisa Thompson has sent a letter to Mayors Ontario making the same recommendation.

York Region Federation of Agriculture requests that Council follow Minister Thompson's recommendation and the examples of fellow York Region Municipalities to amend the Stormwater Management Rate Structure to provide a 100% exemption from Stormwater Management charges for the farmland (FT) portion of an agricultural property class.

The York Region Federation of Agriculture (YRFA) is a non-profit general farm organization representing over 600 registered farm business members in York Region. We are farmers working for farmers on issues, legislation and regulations affecting farms in the Region as well as decisions that will affect agriculture into the future. We are passionate and dedicated to ensuring the agriculture sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector in the Region.

Stormwater Management Fees should not be applied to agricultural properties. Our agricultural lands provide many water and environmental benefits to municipalities that must be taken into account. These include, but are not limited to, absorption of stormwater through infiltration – replenishing aquifers, streams, lakes and wetlands; slowing peak flows thereby decreasing in stream erosion, and filtering contaminants.

Furthermore, we believe that Municipal Stormwater Management fees may constitute an unfair tax on farms. Municipalities must be able to clearly articulate and quantify how the fee being charged to agricultural properties correlates with a service being provided to the landowner/property. We further believe that this quantification must take into account the water/environmental benefits agricultural properties provide.

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As mentioned above, we are pleased to say the Honourable Lisa Thompson, (former Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and current) Minister of Rural Affairs has written a letter to Mayor's across the Province, urging them to consider the potential impact of these fees on agriculture when considering these charges. A copy of the Minister's letter to Georgina is attached.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Stormwater Management Financial Plan. YRFA strongly urges you to exempt farmland from these fees. We look forward to working with you on this and other agriculture related issues in the future.

Sincerely

Kim Empringham
Secretary/Treasurer/Director
York Region Federation of Agriculture
york@ofa.on.ca

BUY THE FOOD ONTARIO GROWS

Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

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April 16, 2024

Her Worship Margaret Quirk
Town of Georgina
mquirk@georgina.ca

Dear Mayor Quirk:

It has been brought to my attention that some municipalities in the province have implemented new stormwater fee structures, and others are exploring doing so.

As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I am writing to ask that your municipality considers the needs and potential impacts on agriculture in your community when evaluating proposed changes to stormwater or other fees and to offer any support that my ministry can provide as you fully consider the impacts.

As you know, Ontario farms contribute significantly to local economies while supporting access to high-quality food both domestically and globally. The agri-food sector employs over 836,000 people and contributed \$48.8 billion to our provincial economy. Our government is committed to supporting the growth of the agriculture and food industry, which is why we released [Grow Ontario: a provincial agri-food strategy](#) to strengthen the agri-food sector, support economic growth, and ensure an efficient, reliable and responsive food supply for Ontarians.

To ensure that our food supply system continues to be responsible, trusted, and competitive on the world stage as well as a driver for economic growth in Ontario, it is important that all levels of government work closely with the agricultural community when evaluating new policies.

There is a need for special consideration for agricultural properties to ensure there are no unintended consequences that disproportionately impact farmers or greenhouse operators, as demonstrated in several of the new stormwater utility programs, including Brant County's proposed Stormwater Utility Program, which will exempt agricultural properties from the new proposed fee.

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It is also worth noting that many farmers have already invested in water management measures and may not utilize municipal waterways in the same manner as other businesses.

Staff at my ministry are available to provide guidance on supporting the growth of the agricultural community while balancing broader municipal needs. Please feel free to contact Scott Duff with any questions you may have at (519) 820-3331 or by email at scott.duff@ontario.ca.

I hope that your municipality will consider engaging more directly with farmers and greenhouse operators to mitigate any unintended impacts new charges may have. It is imperative that municipalities and the agricultural industry work together to ensure the economic prosperity of our rural communities now and well into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa M. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being particularly prominent.

Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

c: Scott Duff, Director, Policy Division

Did you know about the Farmers' Wellness Initiative?

- Your mental health is important! If you're a farmer or a member of a farm family and in need of mental health support, please call 1-866-267-6255 and arrange to speak with a professional today.
- For additional resources visit: <https://farmerwellnessinitiative.ca/>.