



YORK REGION

FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

SERVING THE FARM COMMUNITY SINCE 1940

October 21, 2025

Mayor West and Council
City of Richmond Hill
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, Ontario

Re: Item 12.1 – Member Motion – Councillor Thompson – Plant Based Treaty Initiative

Dear Mayor West, Councillor Thompson, and Council

York Region Federation of Agriculture (YRFA) is requesting that Councillor Thompson withdraw his motion until a further balanced understanding of the impacts and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, and carbon sequestration of Canadian agriculture and in particular Canadian beef can be gained. I am writing to emphasize the unique and often misunderstood role of beef cattle in Canada. As a farmer, I want to share the hard work being done every day to care for the land, raise healthy livestock, and provide Canadians with nutritious food. As your council discusses how to move forward with a Climate Action Plan, it is essential to fully understand the Canadian context and the critical contributions of all farmers, but most importantly in this discussion, beef farmers.

Canadian beef is among the most efficient in the world. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) [Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model](#), beef raised in Canada generates **52% less** greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per kilogram compared to the global average. Yet even as a global leader, beef farmers continue to strive for progress. A 2024 peer-reviewed [study](#) indicated that between 2014 and 2021, each kg of Canadian beef generated 15% less GHG emissions, putting the industry on track to meet its 2030 goal of a 33% reduction in emissions intensity ([Canadian Beef Advisors, 2020](#)).

The FAO's 2023 [Pathways Towards Lower Emissions](#) report emphasizes that global averages conceal important local differences. It shows that the most meaningful reductions in livestock-related emissions will come from greater efficiency—through improved animal production, better feed and nutrition practices, and stronger animal health and welfare. If the global sector follows this pathway, emissions could be reduced by up to 78%. By contrast, reducing consumption of animal products would only deliver a maximum reduction of about 4%, while risking negative health and social consequences.

BUY THE FOOD ONTARIO GROWS



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Looking further into the Canadian context, it is impossible to discuss beef production without highlighting the critical role of grasslands and pastures, among our most important natural carbon sinks. A 2024 [sustainability assessment](#) showed that land used for raising beef holds 1.9 billion tonnes of soil organic carbon—**nearly 40%** of all carbon stored in Canada’s agricultural soils. Each year, these lands capture and store an additional 7 million tonnes of carbon. Most of this storage occurs in native grasslands (67%), landscapes that would otherwise be at risk of conversion, and therefore lost, without grazing cattle.

The same lands that store carbon and support beef cattle also provide the majority of habitat that countless wildlife species depend on. While wildlife habitat across Canada’s agricultural land has declined since 2015, land used for grazing cattle provides more habitat than ever. Importantly, when all of Canada’s crop and pastureland is considered, land used for beef production provides **74% of the critical reproductive habitat** that wildlife rely on, highlighting that beef farmers not only keep ecosystems intact but ensure that biodiversity is actively supported.

Beyond the environmental contributions, the Canadian cattle industry contributes \$51.6 billion in the production of goods and services, \$21.8 billion to the Canadian GDP and \$11.7 billion in labour income. Supporting local beef supports rural jobs, local processing, and keeps money in-region, aligning with local economic development strategies.

Municipal climate plans aim to reduce emissions, and achieve a sustainability solution rooted in local communities, ecosystem services, and food resilience. Beef farmers are already delivering on these priorities, often quietly and without recognition.

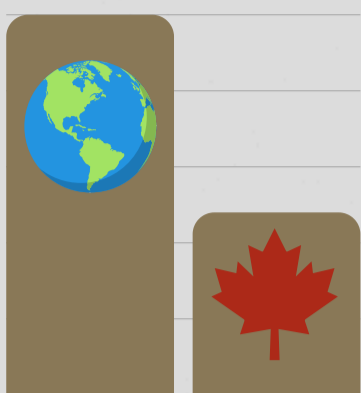
We encourage your council to recognize these contributions as you move forward with your Climate Plan discussions. Canadian beef is part of the solution, and we welcome you to reach out to learn more. We would welcome the opportunity to work together to reach your municipal goals while supporting local farmers across Ontario and throughout Canada. Again, we ask Councillor Thompson to withdraw his motion until a more fulsome understanding of all impacts of this decision can be had.

Sincerely,

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

BUY THE FOOD ONTARIO GROWS

CANADIAN BEEF and Climate Action



GHG EMISSIONS

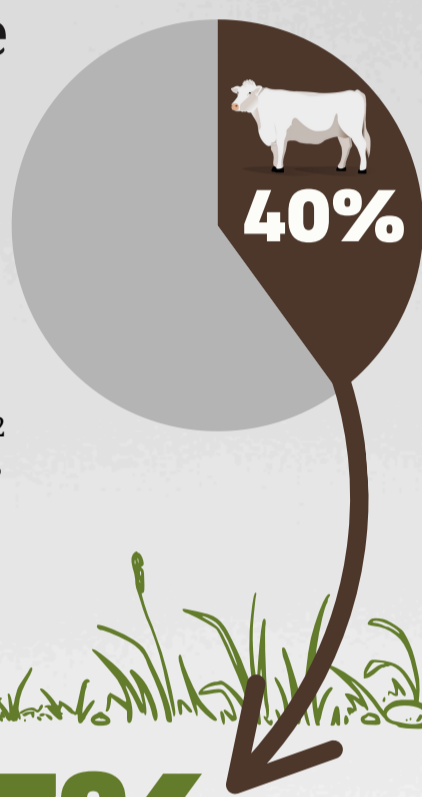
Beef raised in **Canada** produces **52% less GHGs** per kg than the global average.¹

In 2021 every kg of Canadian beef generated **15% less GHGs** than in 2014.^{2,3}

GHG 
↓ 15%

1.9
BILLION
t o n n e s
CARBON

Land used to raise beef cattle stores **1.9 billion tonnes** of soil carbon—nearly **40%** of all agricultural soil carbon in Canada.²



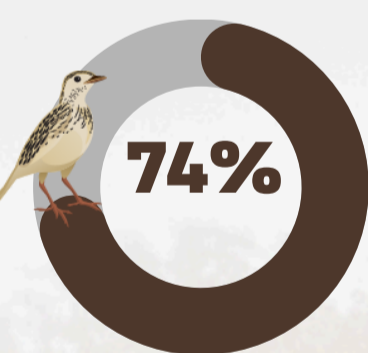
Within beef's 40%, the majority of carbon storage occurs in **native grasslands (67%)**,² which depend on grazing cattle to stay intact.

67%

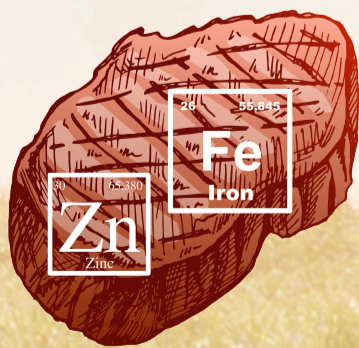
Grazing land provides **74%** of

WILDLIFE HABITAT critical for reproduction and nesting

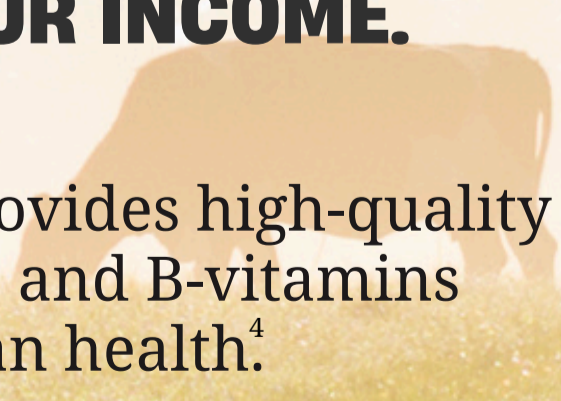
when all of Canada's crop and pastureland is considered.²



THE CANADIAN BEEF SECTOR CONTRIBUTES \$51.6 B IN GOODS & SERVICES, \$21.8 B TO GDP, AND \$11.7 B IN LABOUR INCOME.²



Canadian beef provides high-quality protein, iron, zinc, and B-vitamins essential for human health.⁴



1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2022). Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model.
2. Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. (2024a). National Beef Sustainability Assessment: Environmental and Social Assessments. Calgary, AB: Groupe AGECO.
3. Aboagye et al. (2024). An assessment of the environmental sustainability of beef production in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Animal Science*, 104(2): 221-240. <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjas-2023-0077>
4. Canada Beef. (2024). Health & nutrition fact sheet.