



VIA EMAIL

March 20, 2020

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier
College Park, 5th Floor
777 Bay St
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Honourable Ernie Hardeman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
11th Floor, 77 Grenville St
Toronto, ON M7A 1B3

Dear Premier Ford, Deputy Premier Elliott, Minister Hardeman,

Ontario's Grain Farmers applaud the work the Ontario government is doing to keep Ontarians safe from COVID-19. The consequences of the ongoing crisis are far-reaching and its scope -- unprecedented.

As Ontarians face these challenging times, Ontario's Grain Farmers are stepping up to the challenge of mitigating the risks of a food shortage and are looking to the provincial Government to step up to the food security challenge, now and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

The pace and degree of uncertainty is rapidly changing the challenges farmers face, as they prepare to plant their crops in the coming weeks. As the number of individuals impacted by the virus increases and uncertainty reigns in the worldwide movement of commercial goods, concerns arise over supply chain disruptions and price instability, as commodity markets vacillate.

With spring planting mere weeks away, getting the food crop in the ground should be our province's priority, but farmers need help, as they face uncertainty accessing inputs needed to grow their crop this year. We are asking the Government of Ontario to make the following

commitments and give the farmers these tools **today** in order for us to give the people of Ontario food **tomorrow**:

1. A Financial backstop - Remove the cap on the Risk Management Program and fund it at 100% giving farmers the security they need to invest in seed, fertilizer and other inputs
2. An uninterrupted supply chain - Institute emergency measures that ensure that required inputs (seed, fertilizer, parts, and fuel) get to farmers in time to plant their crop this spring
3. A response team - OMAFRA set up a quick response team to deal on an expedited basis with any barriers that farmers and other industry stakeholders encounter. The role of the team would be to act as a liaison between farmers and all government departments to ensure that there are no barriers to farmers' ability to produce a successful crop

Grains are essential to ensuring our food security in the province. Ontario's supply managed system ensures that Ontario has access to protein, including milk, chicken and eggs. All these protein sources as well as the production of beef and pork rely on local Ontario grains and oilseed production as their feed source. 40% of our farmers' crops go into animal feed. Locally grown grains are also important for the baked goods sector including bread, and locally produced grains ensure that shelves will continue to be stocked in the bread section of grocery stores.

How will uncapping the RMP program help?

As grain farmers purchase inputs like seed, fertilizer, fuel, and parts, the RMP program is set up to keep track of these costs and, if needed, at the end of the harvest provide farmers some or all of the money, if they cannot sell the crop at a price that covers these costs. The corollary is true if the demand increases for grain (which is possible given that food is going to be a worldwide concern) then the program would not pay the farmer.

Farmers will need to make a number of difficult decisions in these unprecedented times, including financial ones. Without an uncapped RMP program in place, the necessary funding may not be accessible and thus devastating to the industry.

As Ontarians rely on a steady supply chain, we rely on the Government to institute these necessary, emergency measures.

Thank you for your cooperation and unequivocal support during these times of uncertainty.

Sincerely,



Markus Haerle
Chair, Grain Farmers of Ontario