

Ontario Farmland Trust Annual Report 2008



Mission Statement

The mission of the Ontario Farmland Trust is to protect and preserve farmland and associated agricultural, natural and cultural features in the countryside and to research and educate to further the preservation of these lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

A Year of Change and Growth

Message from the Chair

The Ontario Farmland Trust faced a number of changes and challenges in 2008 while continuing our work to preserve the best farmland in Ontario.

Our Chair, yours truly, returned to action after serious illness, with thanks to Nancy Walther for helping out as Acting Chair of the Board in my absence.

At the Board level we thank Rick de Graaf, who represented the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, and has moved back to the Far East to pursue development work. We welcome Glen Duff as the new CFFO representative. Tony Fuller has taken a leave from the Board to work in China.

We received funding from the Metcalf Foundation to support an intern, Ali English, who is working jointly with ourselves and FarmStart. Ali has been working on setting up the FarmLINK Ontario program, a collaborative project with FarmStart and Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, as well as conducting research on land tenure options for new and young farmers.

At the end of the year, Melissa Watkins, our former Executive Director, moved on to take a position as Provincial Farm Succession Manager for FarmStart. We thank her for her enormous contribution to our establishment and early years of operation. We welcome Bruce Mackenzie, who has been providing leadership for the Trust since December, as our new Executive Director. In his short time in his position, Bruce has improved our financial reporting, organized a summer intern, and helped with making significant progress both on land securement and strategic planning.

Our other big step forward is in land securement. Through the continuing huge efforts of Don Prince and Rodger Cummins, we have made significant progress on four agricultural easements, and have recently signed the first of these, protecting Belain Farm in Caledon. We hope to sign the others in the near future. Inquiries continue to come in the door, boding well for future land securement efforts.

Today our focus is on strategic planning for the next three years. With this in place, we plan to charge ahead with our programs, with fund-raising and with membership building in the coming months.

I thank all of the donors, supports and partners who have contributed to our successes over the past year.

*-Stew Hilts
Chair*

The Year In Review

Land Securement

Our work with landowners to protect their land for future generations of farmers using agricultural conservation easements moved forward in 2008. This included conducting preliminary appraisals, producing ecological assessment reports, baseline documentation reports, and surveys, and drafting conservation agreements. We are pleased to report that three of the four properties we are working to secure have qualified as Ecological Gifts under the federal program. Our land securement work has involved collaboration with new partner organizations. Credit Valley Conservation has provided advice and assistance with the securement of a property in Bellfountain. We have also partnered with the Maitland Trail Association for an agreement for trail access on a property near Goderich that includes part of the Maitland Trail. Financial assistance to help with these land securement projects has come, in part, from a grant from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation.

OFT collaborated with the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy and BDO Dunwoody Accounting to produce a report titled *The Potential Use of Farmland Conservation Agreements in Ontario*. The report, addresses the financial implications of registering a farmland conservation agreement on farmland and what this means for landowners. A total of 88 financial scenarios were calculated to demonstrate different tax and asset benefits of conservation agreements for landowners. The OFT has summarized its financial scenarios in a report which is available on our website. Copies of this report will be sent out to each land trust in Ontario through the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and to farm advisors through the Ontario Bar Association and Canadian Association of Farm Advisors. Funding for this report came from the Federal and Ontario governments under the Agricultural Management Institute program.

On the Municipal Front

On the municipal front, OFT met with a number of local and regional officials in Halton Region and provided comments on the region's Greenlands Securement Strategy. We argued that there is a clear need to include wording in the Strategy that broadens the definition of 'ecologically significant' to include Halton Region's threatened agricultural lands, which are clearly a critical part of the ecological fabric of the countryside.

Research on Agricultural Land Use Planning

Our Work Study student from the University of Guelph, Matt Setzkorn, continued his study comparing agricultural land use planning in southern Ontario to that in Pennsylvania. Matt's work includes developing case studies in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and Halton Region, Ontario, that examine responses to high urban development pressures on agricultural lands and identify the effectiveness of farmland preservation programs in both localities. The final goal of the project is to develop a

comprehensive, research-based report that clearly explains differences between farmland preservation in the United States and Canada, identifies any gaps that may exist in Ontario land use planning systems and provides examples of effective farmland preservation programs from Pennsylvania that could be considered for application in Ontario.

Places to Grow Food

Through our three-year Metcalf Foundation funded educational campaign, *Places to Grow Food, Keeping Farmland in Farming*, we are developing a plan for future food production in the province, as well as helping to address some of the barriers that young and new farmers face, including access to land.

Over the past year we investigated practices in other jurisdictions, particularly the use of conservation easements. We examined key issues within this broader context, especially supporting new and young farmers to foster farm succession, municipal planning to foster local food production, and impediments to local food marketing. We co-operated with FarmStart in their project to develop an incubator farm on land owned by the Toronto Region conservation authority near Brampton, where our role was to assist in negotiations to gain access to the land. We held initial discussions with a number of farm organizations such as the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers (OFVGA) about farmer to new farmer linkages. We have gathered information to create resource materials related to alternative land holding arrangements such as long term leases, partnerships and easements. This is being done in part through a partnership with Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, and we are also involving our Metcalf intern in this work. We have also written a draft policy piece for how the government can support young farmers, which can be found on our website.

In 2008 we began work on developing a Places to Grow Food “Blueprint” for future food production. This included gathering background information, assessing farm preservation tools, and developing a concept framework for the Blueprint. We undertook a close examination of the Ontario approach to agricultural land use planning in comparison to the U.S. approach, and also examined approaches used elsewhere in Canada, particularly Quebec and B.C. We worked with the Land Use Committee of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and wrote a policy brief for them entitled “Options for Preservation of Ontario Farmland.”

Outreach and Education

OFT published a series of new Farmland Preservation fact sheets for the general public to help broaden understanding of the work of land trusts and the many benefits of farmlands to society. Another fact sheet explored the proposal for an Agricultural Gifts tax incentive program for donors of farmland or farm conservation easements, similar to the EcoGifts program for donations of environmentally sensitive land. These fact sheets were produced as part of our three-year Trillium Foundation funded project which wrapped up at the end of 2008.

Sustainable Brant

OFT supported the establishment of Sustainable Brant, an organization working to address development pressures on prime farmland in Brant County. The group is committed to creating a process that invites the community to participate in designing a healthy and sustainable environment where people can access local food, find local non-polluting employment, and enjoy recreational activities and our natural environment.

Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers

At the end of 2008, we launched FarmLINK Ontario, in partnership with FarmStart and the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy. This on-line resource links new and young farmers who are looking for land with experienced farmers who have land and mentorship opportunities to share. To date, there are 55 farm listings and 85 farm seeker profiles on the FarmLink website. Through this program Ontario Farmland Trust is helping to support the next generation of farmers and to support farm succession planning.

Ali English, a young farmer and researcher, joined our team this summer for a year-long internship thanks to a grant from the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation's "Leaders in the Field" Program. Ali worked on getting the FarmLINK program up and running and began research on land tenure options for new and young farmers.

"Land for the Next Generation of Farmers" was also the topic of the 2008 Farmland Preservation Forum, which took place on April 17th and 18th, 2008. The Forum brought together a network of actors to address the issue of access to land for the next generation of farmers. Our goal for the event was to define shared objectives, establish key priorities, identify common obstacles, and develop a strategic direction towards ensuring that the next generation of Ontario farmers has access to land to farm.

The presentations and discussion at this year's conference reinforced those at our conference last year, focusing particularly on how we can support new young farmers getting into production. Although access to land is the biggest barrier, many other means of support can be tackled – such as access to knowledge, markets and capital.

The conference allowed discussion of: alternative means to support new and young farmers; means to encourage a sustainable local food system; and issues in providing access to land through better land use regulations. To these three fundamental concerns was added the need to work together in a strategic alliance to make progress on these critical issues. In the months since the conference occurred, great progress has been made in moving toward such an alliance, known as the FarmON Network. FarmON is a provincially coordinated alliance of organizations with a mandate to encourage the development of local

food systems through the support of emerging, ecologically-oriented farmers. The Alliance,

which includes the Ontario Farmland Trust, will be addressing issues of farmland access and succession, as well as knowledge transfer, training and resources.

Growing the Greenbelt

OFT submitted formal comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding the proposed criteria for assessing municipal requests to expand the Greenbelt. While we supported expansion of the Greenbelt in principle, we also outlined three main conditions that must be met if the Greenbelt is going to be a place for agriculture to flourish. First, any Greenbelt expansion must clearly recognize the farm economy of the Greenbelt and surrounding areas, including related infrastructural requirements. Second, payments or ecological goods and services will supplement Greenbelt area farm incomes, allowing Greenbelt farmers to meet growing societal demands for healthy agro-ecosystems and complement farmland preservation for food production as part of an overall robust rural economy. Third, we must address the need for farm succession planning support in the Greenbelt.

Aggregates and Agriculture

OFT also submitted comments to Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Natural Resources over our concerns about a proposed below water table licence for a gravel pit near Aikensville. We are concerned that if this licence application is granted, that it will result in the loss of prime agricultural lands on this site, and would set a precedent that could potentially result in thousands of acres of prime agricultural lands in Southern Ontario being lost to production. OFT feels that the proposal contraindicates provincial policy for rehabilitation back to agriculture after use. The strategy suggested by Capital Paving will result in extremely wet agricultural fields that will be limited in crop types, delay working of the land in spring and shorten the growing season. The OFT argued that if existing pits both dormant and active as well as licenced pits that have yet to be started are included, the potential result could be tens of thousands of acres of prime agricultural lands in Southern Ontario being degraded and/ or lost to productive farming, being too wet for anything but pasture.

Financial Report

For the year ended December 31, 2008

Revenues	2008	2007
Member contributions	2,600	1,650
Donations in-kind	14,500	15,673
Foundation donations	178,087	106,186
Interest	2,308	3,048
Conference	715	13,925
Total Revenues	198,223	140,482
Expenditures		
Payroll and benefits	86,934	74,834
General and administrative	44,931	39,583
Communications	15,134	6,564
Annual conference	13,613	16,850
Board development	n/a	n/a
Land Securement	45,927	3,000
Total Expenditures	206,539	140,831
Net Revenue (Deficiency)	(8,316)	(349)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	2,747	3,096
Net Assets at End of Year	(5,569)	2,747

This report is a summary based on audited financial statements prepared for the Ontario Farmland Trust by Akler, Browning, Frimet & Landzberg LLP. The complete statements with auditor's notes are available from the OFT upon request.

Board of Directors and Staff

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Executive Director

Melissa Watkins

Land Securement

Don Prince

Metcalf Leaders in the Field Intern

Ali English

University of Guelph Work-Study Intern

Matthew Setzkorn

Accountant

Jean Labrecque

Auditor

Sam Landzberg,

Akler, Browning, Frimet & Landzberg LLP

To our Volunteers: Thank you!

Denise Bonin-Mount
Nikki Hammond-Everts
Philip Levett
Alan Northworthy
Patrick Sheridan
Jane Thorpe

Thank you to our funders:

Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
George Lunan Foundation
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University of Guelph



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