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Provincial land trust celebrates 20 years of protecting farmland

Shares vision for future of Ontario farmland at anniversary party

Alton, ON –

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) recently celebrated its 20th anniversary with a gathering of board members, volunteers, donors, farmland owners, staff, and supporters. The outdoor event space at GoodLot Brewery near Orangeville, Ontario, provided a poignant backdrop for honouring the unique mission of the farmland trust.

“Canada's best of the best farmland is disappearing at unsustainable rates, the majority of which is situated in Southern Ontario. This undermines future generations' ability to feed themselves,” says Martin Straathof, Executive Director of OFT. “This is why the Ontario Farmland Trust is needed, and all the more reason why we need to be more ambitious than we ever have been before.”

The land trust is a conservation organization which focuses on the protection and preservation of Ontario's food producing lands which feed Ontarians and beyond, and provide the foundation of the agricultural sector, which employs 1 in 10 people in Ontario.

OFT has launched a new strategic plan and intends to protect an additional 10,000 acres of farmland by 2029, ensuring the sustainability of Ontario's agricultural heritage for generations to come. Other initiatives that will unfold over the next few years include land access programs for farmers without farmland, and acting as a leader in shaping agricultural land preserves in communities throughout the province.

Straathof's comments were echoed by OFT's Board Chair, Margaret Walton, who left attendees feeling hopeful for the future of agriculture in Ontario. “We at the Trust know we are at a crossroad. It is time for our organization to build on the work of the last 20 years that we are celebrating tonight and expand our reach and our impact,” stated Walton, a Registered Professional Planner with 30 years of experience, and expert on agricultural land use issues. “[Ontario] has outstanding resources, and with climate change and our access to prime land, water and skilled operators, we will have an increasingly important role in feeding Canadians and the world. We are committed to the critical mission we have taken on. And we invite all Ontarians to join us.”

The evening event included a meal provided by Chef Phil DeWar, of Soulyve, based in Orangeville. Chef DeWar sources many of his ingredients from local farms in the Dufferin area, another nod to the value local farmland provides to other sectors of the economy.

The OFT's province-wide mission is to protect and preserve farmlands and associated agricultural, natural, and cultural features of the countryside. The charitable organization advances its mission through land securement, stewardship, policy research, and education. To get involved, visit www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca.

Donations to OFT are welcomed, and can be made online at www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/donate. Businesses wishing to make an impact to protect farmland are encouraged to inquire with OFT about ways to partner.

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