

2026 Farmland Forum

Municipalities & Farmland Protection



Program

9:00 AM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Steve McCabe, Councillor, Township of Wellington North
Martin Straathof, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust
Marsha Paley, Board Vice Chair, Ontario Farmland Trust

9:10 AM

Table Discussions

9:20 AM

Opening Keynote - Envisioning a Future Where Farmland Thrives

Rene Van Acker, President, University of Guelph

10:00 AM

Table Discussions

10:10 AM

Break

10:20 AM

Morning Sessions - Strengthening Agricultural Systems through Policy and Community Engagement

Session 1 (located in the River Room): Best suited for individuals with a strong background in planning

Session 2 (located in the Main Hall): Best suited for individuals new to planning and municipal planning processes

*Please refer to your name tag to identify which session you are registered for.



11:35 AM **OFT's Organizational Update and Initiatives**
Martin Straathof, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust

11:45 AM **Lunch & Networking**

12:45 PM **Bill 21: Protect Our Food Act**
Mike Schreiner, MPP, Guelph

1:00 PM **Panel - Farmers on the Impacts of Development and Planning**

- Jenn Pfenning, President, National Farmers Union
- Crispin Colvin, Director, Middlesex Federation of Agriculture
- Jack Chaffe, Owner/Operator, Chaffe Farms Ltd
- John den Haan, Shareholder, Haanview Farms inc. and Sheldon Creek Dairy
- **Moderator:** Kate Procter, Owner/Operator, Bodmin Limited

2:10 PM **Table Discussion**

2:20 PM **Break**

2:30 PM **Afternoon Workshop - From Tools to Action: Strengthening Farmland Protection Together**

Part 1 - Speakers

- Rob Vanden Hengel, President, Huron County Federation of Agriculture
- Jennifer Miltenburg, Municipal Councillor & Dairy Farmer, Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh

Part 2 - Facilitated Activity

- Zoe Miller, Community Development Lead, The Community Company
- Justin Chan, Executive Director, The Community Company

3:50 PM **Closing Remarks**
Martin Straathof, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust



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Speaker Bios

Steve McCabe, Councillor, Township of Wellington North

Steve has spent his professional career in agricultural advertising, working with clients like John Deere, Case IH, New Holland, Syngenta, Pioneer, Pride Seeds, and HUSKY Farm Equipment to further increase their exposure to farmers in Ontario and across Canada. He was elected to the Wellington North Township Council in 2014 and continues to serve the residents of Wellington North. Steve has served as a board member of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority for the past 11 years and was elected to represent Zone 2 as a board member for the Rural Ontario Municipal Association in 2023 for a four-year term.



Master of Ceremonies

Martin Straathof, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust

Martin grew up on a dairy farm in Renfrew County, shaping his lifelong commitment to agriculture and rural communities. He holds a Bachelor's degree with an area of emphasis on Agricultural Development, and a Master's degree in Rural Planning and Development from the University of Guelph, where his research explored how development can support farmland preservation. With experience in agriculture, non-profit leadership, and rural planning, Martin is a strong advocate for sustainable agriculture and farmland protection for future generations.



OFT Presentations



2026 Farmland Forum

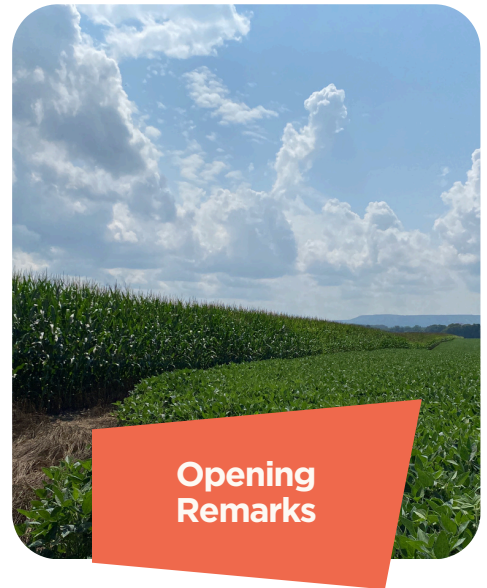
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Speaker Bios

Marsha Paley, Board Vice Chair, Ontario Farmland Trust

Marsha is a Principal Planner at Peel Region with knowledge of agriculture, aggregates, economic development, natural heritage, and water resources. Her career started with Environment Canada, conservation authorities, then moved into municipal planning and senior management positions in central and Southwestern Ontario, and is now back into land use planning. Marsha is certified as a Municipal Officer, a Personal Property Appraiser, and a Registered Professional Planner. Marsha remains a long-term mentor in planning and municipal work.



Rene Van Acker, President, University of Guelph

Rene Van Acker is a Canadian agricultural scientist and academic leader who is currently serving as the 10th President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guelph. In his career as a Faculty Member, Department Chair, Associate Dean, Dean, and Vice-President of Research, he has made contributions to the fields of cannabis science, sustainable agriculture, and academic administration leadership.



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Speaker Bios

Regan Zink, Rural Planner, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA)

Regan Zink, is a Rural Planner with the Agricultural Land Use Planning team at OMAFA. In this role, Regan provides support to municipalities and agri-food stakeholders regarding Provincial agricultural land use policy. Prior to joining OMAFA, Regan worked in both private and public sector roles in land use planning, research, and government relations. Regan completed her PhD in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph and holds a Bachelor of Environmental Studies, Honours Planning from the University of Waterloo.



Lisa Grbinicek, Policy Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA)

Lisa Grbinicek is a Registered Professional Planner and Policy Advisor with the OMAFA Agricultural Land Use Planning unit. Lisa has an extensive history in the Ontario Public Service with a strong focus on provincial natural heritage and agricultural policy development and implementation. Prior to joining OMAFA, Lisa dedicated much of her career to Provincial Plan implementation focused on the protection of the Niagara Escarpment. Lisa's work at OMAFA is currently focused on agricultural land use policy implementation, including supporting provincial guidance.



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Speaker Bios

Dr. Pamela Duesling, Director of Community Planning & Development, Town of Pelham

Dr. Duesling is a Registered Professional Planner and Economic Development Professional with over 25 years of experience in Southern Ontario. She currently serves as Director of Community Planning and Development for the Town of Pelham and is a Sessional Professor at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph.

An expert in rural planning and economic development, her work focuses on balancing farmland preservation with responsible on-farm development. She is also a sixth-generation family farmer in Norfolk County, Ontario.



Claire Basinski, Co-founder & Principal, Take Consulting Ltd.

Claire is a skilled facilitator and one of Ontario's leading engagement professionals, specializing in the strategic use of the IAP2 framework to design and deliver effective engagement programs. Since 2008, she has contributed to more than 75 engagement strategies across Ontario and Canada.

A Registered Professional Planner (RPP) and Certified Public Participation Professional (CP3), Claire recently co-founded Take Consulting Ltd., which focuses on integrated planning, design, and engagement projects that support meaningful change and progress.



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Speaker Bios

Mike Schreiner, MPP, Guelph

Mike Schreiner is the leader of the Ontario Green Party and has served as MPP for Guelph since 2018.

At Queen's Park, Mike works across party lines to crack down on corporate greed and advocate for affordable homes and communities, better public services and protections for Ontario's farmland and natural spaces.

Since his re-election in February 2025, Mike has introduced legislation to stop subsidizing oil and gas companies and to establish a "foodbelt" that protects Ontario's farmland for future generations.



Jenn Pfenning, President, National Farmers Union

Jenn Pfenning has been the President of the National Farmers Union since November 2022. She has been farming with her family at Pfenning's Organic Farm in New Hamburg, Ontario, for thirty years. She enjoys working alongside local and migrant workers to produce food that serves her passion for healthy living, food justice, and strong community. Jenn is an active participant in boards and committees. She served on the Foodshare Toronto Board of Directors for seven years. She also served on the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable and is a past president of the Organic Council of Ontario.



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Speaker Bios

Crispin Colvin, Director, Middlesex Federation of Agriculture

Crispin Colvin is a Director with the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture and a former Director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He and his wife have a small herd of beef cows and grow corn, soybeans, and wheat together with their son and his young family. Crispin was first elected to the OFA board in 2016 as a director-at-large. He is also the past Chair of Farm & Food Care Ontario. He's a former Mayor of Thames Centre, Warden of Middlesex County, and Chair of the Board of Governors of Fanshawe College, and has also been involved with the Thorndale Fair Board and the boards of Western University, London Training Centre, and London Convention Centre.



John den Haan, Shareholder, Haanview Farms inc. and Sheldon Creek Dairy

John comes from a multi-generation dairy farming family that immigrated to Canada in 1950 and continues to farm the same land today. A graduate of the University of Guelph, he has volunteered extensively with 4-H at both the local and provincial levels and currently serves on the board of directors of EastGen. John views farmland not as a commodity but as an intergenerational resource to be protected, nurtured, and responsibly improved. He is well-versed in succession planning, navigating municipal planning processes, and the role of policy in supporting long-term growth in the agricultural sector.



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Speaker Bios

Jack Chaffe, Owner/Operator, Chaffe Farms Ltd.

Jack is Vice President of the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association and a Director with the Canadian Beef Grading Agency, representing the Canadian Cattle Association (CCA). He is a past President of Beef Farmers of Ontario, where he represented Ontario at the national level through the CCA.

Jack is also President and Co-Owner of Chaffe Farms Ltd., a fifth-generation, family-run beef feedlot operation that feeds and markets cattle through Ontario's Corn Fed Beef Program. Chaffe Farms works with Ontario producers through custom feeding agreements and has been backgrounding and finishing cattle in Western Canada since the early 1980s.



Afternoon Panellist

Jennifer Miltenburg, Municipal Councillor & Dairy Farmer, Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh

Jennifer Miltenburg is a dairy farmer, municipal councillor, and Director of St. Joseph's Kingsbridge Community, a charity that transformed a closed church into the multi-use Kingsbridge Centre. A lifelong volunteer, she coaches youth sports, teaches guitar and piano, mentors through Big Sisters/Little Sisters, and is active in youth ministry.

She is also pursuing continuing education through college courses and leads excursions for her five grandchildren as part of the 'Adventure Team'



Afternoon Workshop - Speaker

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Speaker Bios

Rob Vanden Hengel, President, Huron County Federation of Agriculture

Together with his wife and children, Rob owns and operates Vinselaar Holsteins Inc. near Seaforth, Ontario, a family dairy farm established by his grandparents after immigrating from Holland in the 1950s. After earning a degree in Physical and Health Education from Laurentian University and a teaching degree from D'Youville College, he taught for five years before returning to farming full-time. He has been actively involved with the Huron County Federation of Agriculture for over a decade, particularly on the Property and Land Use Committee, and volunteers as a youth soccer coach and local club executive.



**Afternoon Workshop -
Speaker**

Zoe Miller, Community Development Lead, The Community Company

Zoe holds an MA in Adult Education & Community Development and a BA in Women's Studies & History. She focuses on building meaningful relationships across grassroots groups, non-profits, charities, organizations, and funders to ensure community projects reflect diverse perspectives.

Outside of work, Zoe is a feminist, activist, harm reduction advocate, permaculturist, artist, and community leader, passionate about creating better systems, sharing knowledge, and driving change at both community and ecosystem levels.



**Afternoon
Workshop -
Facilitator**



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Speaker Bios

Justin Chan, Executive Director, The Community Company

Justin is completing a Master of Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology (MBET) and holds a BBA in Finance. Combining business expertise with community organizing, he supports projects ranging from investment management and non-profit fundraising to grassroots initiatives.

He serves on several boards and advisory committees, including the Guelph Community Foundation and the Better Food Co Advisory Committee for Hope House. Outside of work, Justin enjoys photography, reading, running, basketball, and chess.



**Afternoon Workshop -
Facilitator**