

**Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de l'Agriculture, de
l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales**

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August 12, 2021

June Caul
Mayor
Fort Frances
Islomke@fortfrances.ca

Dear Mayor Caul:

Thank you for your letter and for sharing the Township of Chapple resolution for the province to conduct a needs assessment under the AgriRecovery disaster relief framework to assess the scope and severity of drought conditions in Ontario.

Please be assured, ministry specialists monitor crop conditions and provide timely information to farmers and agri-businesses to implement best management practices for effective crop management. We are taking this matter very seriously and appreciate the feedback you have provided. Protecting the agri-food sector is a priority of the ministry.

On July 27, the Ontario government announced it is making \$2 million in funding available to farmers in northwestern Ontario who have been impacted by drought conditions to help them meet their immediate needs to source hay and water supplies for their livestock.

Through the Northwestern Livestock Emergency Assistance Initiative, up to \$800,000 will be provided to the Beef Farmers Ontario to help deal with the immediate feed shortages of impacted farmers in the region. My thanks go out to Rob Lipsett and the Beef Farmers of Ontario for stepping up to collaborate and coordinate the response to address immediate feed shortages in the region. An additional \$1.2 million will be made available to area farmers for emergency measures to source water for livestock and to purchase and install new fencing to allow livestock to safely graze in alternative locations; this funding will be delivered by Agricorp and cover eligible costs incurred from June 14, 2021 onwards. This is intended to be an interim, emergency measure while we work with the federal government on a broader response.

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As you may know, I have written to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) requesting that a formal assessment process be initiated under AgriRecovery. AgriRecovery is intended to respond in situations where producers do not have the capacity to cover the extraordinary costs associated with mitigating the impact of a natural disaster and returning to production, even with the assistance available from other programs.

We are committed to rolling out an AgriRecovery response as quickly as possible, which is why on August 10 the Ontario government announced that financial support is being made available through the federal-provincial AgriRecovery program, a cost-share initiative designed to help farmers cover the extraordinary costs caused by severe drought and feed shortages in Ontario. Ontario is committing up to \$5 million in funding for the 40 per cent provincial cost share. The federal government announced \$100 million for AgriRecovery across the drought area in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

Ontario is calling on the federal government to include in the AgriRecovery program costs related to hay and other feeds, transportation of feed, transportation of animals to feed, measures to provide water to animals including trucking and equipment, temporary fencing and other extraordinary costs related to the drought. I have directed ministry staff to accelerate discussions with federal officials to ensure Ontario producers get the support they need.

Additionally, I am pleased to say that the federal government has approved Ontario's request to increase the AgriStability interim payment to 75 per cent in the drought impacted areas, and that Rainy River, Kenora and the Thunder Bay regions have been included in the list of areas eligible to participate in the federal Livestock Tax Deferral. I will continue to advocate for the addition of other parts of the province if needed as the season progresses.

Ontario also has a variety of Business Risk Management programs in place to help farmers deal with unforeseen circumstances, including adverse weather, such as AgriStability, Production Insurance, the Risk Management Program and AgriInvest. Farmers affected by dry weather conditions are encouraged to contact Agricorp at 1-888-247-4999 to discuss their individual circumstances.

Finally, during 2020, my ministry developed a toolkit of [resources for the agriculture sector](#). Included in this toolkit are a number of mental health resources including the [Mental Health for Farmers – First Aid Kit](#) and [AbilitiCBT](#), a government-sponsored mental health program. I encourage you to share these widely.

I understand how challenging this has been and I greatly appreciate hearing directly from the individuals impacted. Receiving letters such as yours helps influence positive change for the agricultural sector.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Thompson" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

COVID-19 Reminders

- For vaccination booking details visit: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>
- Follow your local public health/safety measures: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions>
- Practice physical distancing – stay 2 metres away from others in public
- Get the facts - www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread