

**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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November 18, 2020

Keith Robbins  
General Manager  
Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers  
keith.robbins@opvg.org

Dear Mr. Robbins:

I want to reach out to you with information that you and your organization's membership may find helpful following Ontario's recent 2020 budget announcement – [Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover.](#)

Our government is committed to doing everything we can to keep our agriculture and food supply chains strong during this difficult time, and to help our rural communities rebound from the pressures of the COVID-19 outbreak. Below are some of the initiatives from our budget that I think will be of particular interest to you.

**Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program:**

Ontario is investing \$25.5 million over three years for the Agri-food Prevention and Control Innovation Program. This initiative will help reduce disruptions in business operations and risks of COVID-19 exposure in the workplace, while supporting the sector's capacity to continue to supply safe, high-quality and nutritious food. The investment will support efforts to innovate and invest in new technologies, leading to increased efficiencies and productivity and helping to support resilience and long-term sustainability and growth in the agri-food sector.

**Broadband:**

The 2020 Ontario Budget introduces new broadband funding bringing Ontario's investment in broadband to nearly \$1 billion over six years beginning in this 2019–20 fiscal year.

These investments will expand broadband and cellular infrastructure across Ontario to enable economic recovery and growth, support productivity, agriculture, education, and health care. Our goal is to create jobs, improve connectivity and maintain Ontario's competitive edge in the global economy.

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Good things grow in Ontario  
À bonne terre, bons produits

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**Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund:**

The Ontario government will sustain the current level of funding for the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) as well as its current structure into the 2021 fiscal period. In addition to ensuring stability, maintaining the program will allow an additional \$5 million in support to be specifically directed to Northern and rural municipalities with challenges, including rural farming communities.

**Agricultural and Horticultural Societies**

The Province is providing \$5 million in new funding to supplement annual grants this fiscal year, helping to offset revenue losses and the impacts from having to cancel agricultural exhibitions and annual fall fairs due to COVID-19.

**Risk Management Program:**

Ontario is committed to providing the best support for our farmers to help them manage challenges beyond their control. Amendments to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act will enable the Ontario Risk Management Program to carry forward unused funds in good production years to offset losses in future years. This amendment puts the Risk Management Program in alignment with an insurance-like approach to better support Ontario's producers.

**Beer and Wine Sector:**

The government is freezing beer tax and mark-up rates until March 1, 2022 and is proposing to retroactively cancel the increase in wine basic tax rates legislated to occur on June 1, 2020.

This is an extension to the order that was issued under the Financial Administration Act during the state of emergency which held back an increase from being applied between June 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020. We are also directing the LCBO to not proceed with the scheduled wine mark-up.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the sector's excellent work and dependability at all times but especially over these past months as we navigate our way in a very new environment.

Sincerely,



Ernie Hardeman

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

**COVID-19 Reminders**

- Practise physical distancing – stay 2 metres away from others in public
- Wash your hands – with soap and water thoroughly and often
- Get the facts – [www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread](http://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread)