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## For Immediate Release

### ONTARIO FARMERS NETWORK SUPPORTS SCHEDULE 6 OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET ACT

*Changes to the Conservation Authority needed, could go further, and signal a good first step*

November 30, 2020

WEST LORNE, ON - The Ontario Farmers Network, a farmer-advocate organization established in January 2020, announced today its formal support of the changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, 1990 proposed in Schedule 6 of the Ontario government's 2020 budget.

"The proposed changes are long overdue," stated OFN President John Watterworth a grain farmer in Elgin County, Ontario. "In fact, OFN wishes they went further to curtail the outright attack on agriculture. Farmers are Ontario's best conservationists."

OFN has received many enquiries and complaints from farmers across all regions of the province regarding costly and unreadable conflicts involving conservation authorities.

OFN participated in several of the multi-stakeholder consultations conducted by the Ministry of Environment Conservation. OFN is pleased to observe that the warrantless entry provisions passed but not proclaimed by the previous government will not be acted upon.

Further, the OFN supports the appeals avenues requirements, timelines for conservation authorities to receive applications and issue decisions, and for the clarity that as municipalities are the biggest funding 'shareholders' of a conservation authority, they should be driving the focus on core mandate.

OFN continues to express concern regarding the negative and partisan advocacy campaigns engaged in by Conservation Ontario and several if not all of the province's thirty-six (36) conservation authorities vigorously opposing the changes.

"The conservation authorities think they're independent and not subject to direction from the province," said Pete Archer, an OFN member from Northumberland County. "How taxpayer funded public agencies believe they can oppose government policy using public dollars is beyond the pale."

Consultation was extensive prior the inclusion of Schedule 6 in the Budget Act. OFN understands from the fall of 2019 into 2020 that all conservation authorities were individually consulted. Further, in the same multi-stakeholder consultations OFN attended, municipalities were well represented including their municipal advocacy groups. There have been multiple avenues for the public and these same interests to express their ideas to the government.

"In the farming world, when something becomes untamed you deal with. OFN is relieved the government is finally taming CAs that have been out-of-control for years," concluded Watterworth.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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