



News Release

MEDIA RELEASE

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Supporting New Farm Entrepreneurs in Accessing Land

Peterborough - On Thursday, local MPP Jeff Leal spoke at a gathering hosted by Farms at Work entitled: **Farmland: Using it, Losing it and Protecting it** in Millbrook. And in his remarks to the audience, MPP Leal congratulated Farms at Work on an innovative project it's been involved with since receiving a \$47,800 Seed grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2016. Farms at Work organization is researching the feasibility of enhanced support for new farmers in accessing land, enabling them to learn hands-on skills and gain the experience needed to be successful.

"I am pleased that our government through the Ontario Trillium Foundation partnered with Farms at Work to assist with this innovative project. New farm entrepreneurs need supports to find farmlands, learn valuable skills and have access to infrastructure to ensure farming in our community and right across this province is well positioned for the future." - Jeff Leal, MPP

Start-up farm supports can range from help in arranging access to rental farmland, to shared access to land and shared infrastructure, and can include educational components and guidance as well. While there are about 100 start-up farm locations across North America, there are currently none in east central Ontario. Farms at Work does, however, have a simple online "bulletin board" of farmland for this region at www.farmsatwork.com/farmland.

Agriculture is the largest source of self-employment in rural and small-town Canada, but has been eroded by long term outmigration to cities. By 2016, well over half the farmers in Peterborough County were over the age of 55 and only 95 farmers (seven per cent) were under the age of 35. Agriculture represents an entrepreneurial opportunity that could keep young people financially secure in rural communities in the future.

"Start-up farms and other farmland linking services have the potential to benefit the entire agricultural value chain, and launch much-needed new farmer entrepreneurs" said Pat Learmonth, Director of Farms at Work. "In combination with production training and the business planning support provided through our Farm Business Planning Program, they help to provide a full suite of supports for new entrepreneurs".

Results will be disseminated widely to stimulate further discussion about how to support new farm entrepreneurs. The report will be available later this spring at www.farmsatwork.ca/library

Farms at Work promotes healthy and active farmland in east central Ontario. We seek ways to support viable farm businesses and ensure that farmland is actively used for the production of food, fuel and fibre, while at the same time promoting environmental integrity. Farms at Work is a project on Tides Canada's shared platform. www.farmsatwork.ca

An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is one of Canada's largest granting foundations. With a budget of over \$136 million, OTF awards grants to some 1,000 projects every year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities. www.otf.ca



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