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MPP Donna Skelly Introduces Motion to Prohibit Municipalities from Charging Stormwater Fees on Agricultural Lands

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NEWS

Queen's Park — Flamborough–Glanbrook MPP and Deputy Speaker Donna Skelly has introduced a motion in the Ontario Legislature that, if adopted, would prohibit municipalities like Hamilton from charging stormwater fees on agricultural properties which do not contribute to the costs of stormwater management systems.

“Charging our agricultural properties a stormwater fee for services they don't use is unfair and outrageous,” said MPP Skelly. “This so-called rain tax will take thousands of dollars out of the pockets of our hardworking farmers who are already facing complex challenges. My motion is intended to reduce an unjustifiable burden on agricultural properties Ontarians and make life more affordable for people and businesses who contribute significantly to our local economy.”

Despite opposition from rural communities, Hamilton is implementing a stormwater management fee program effective April 1, 2026, to support the construction and maintenance of municipal stormwater infrastructure. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness estimates these fees could exceed tens of thousands annually for agricultural properties while an urban property may be charged hundreds of dollars.

Within Ontario, some farmers operate in municipalities that exempt agricultural lands from stormwater fees while others operate in municipalities that do not provide this exemption, causing inconsistency across the province in how farmland is treated. There is no provincial guidance on how to calculate these fees, so municipalities are adopting their own approaches to these assessments, creating different tiers of fees depending on which approach the municipality adopts.

A province-wide exemption to agricultural lands from stormwater fees across the province would provide consistency across the province and reduce competitive disadvantage for Ontario farmers facing these fees.



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Quick Facts

- The agri-food sector employs over 871,000 people and contributed almost \$51 billion to Ontario's GDP in 2023.
- Our government is committed to supporting the growth of the agriculture and food industry, which is why we released [Grow Ontario: a provincial agri-food strategy](#) to strengthen the agri-food sector, support economic growth, and ensure an efficient, reliable and responsive food supply for Ontarians.

Quotes:

“The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and its 38,000 farm family members strongly supports the motion to exempt agricultural properties from the proposed stormwater tax. This motion is aligned with OFA’s policies and also recognizes the unique and significant contributions of the agricultural sector to Ontario’s economy.”

- Drew Spoelstra, President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

“On behalf of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, I express my strong support for the motion to exempt agricultural properties from a stormwater fee. The motion will prevent the unjust taxation on farms for services and infrastructure which we do not have access to.”

- Jan VanderHout, President, Ontario Greenhouse Alliance

“The financial burden of charging our members a stormwater fee for their unserviced property would be an unfair expense to our members. Our organization is supportive of the motion to exempt agricultural properties from this fee”.

- Jim Whelan, President, Ontario Harness Horse Association

“As a farm owner, I am in support of MPP Skelly’s motion to exempt agricultural properties from the stormwater fee. The financial cost of this fee presents a significant threat to our agricultural community”.

- Cathy MacMaster, Farm Owner