



July 28, 2020

The Honourable Ernie Hardeman  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
77 Grenville Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 1B3

Dear Minister Hardeman,

**RE: Requesting Emergency Relief for Ontario's Equine Sector**

Ontario Equestrian (OE) is the recognized Provincial Sport Organization that represents over 21,000 members who share a passion for horses. Horses and horse sport are important to who we are as Ontarians, and are a viable component of our provincial agricultural sector and valuable contributor to the rural economy. The equine sector in Ontario is very diverse, with significant economic and social contributions. It touches on a variety of sectors, including agriculture, sport, recreation, tourism and health, only to name a few. Equine businesses are significant consumers of agricultural commodities such as hay, grain, and bedding, and facilitate jobs across many sectors and industries.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the equine sector in Ontario has been widespread and devastating. Since the province declared an emergency on March 17, 2020, Ontario's equine industry has been facing unprecedented financial hardships. Equine businesses across Ontario were forced to suspend their operations, greatly reducing monthly income, or seeing it eliminated altogether. The core workforce of equine businesses are the horses; equines who have lost the ability to generate income due the pandemic, but still require daily care. The cost to keep a horse is fixed; regardless of work, a horse needs daily feed, hay, water and shelter, and regular farrier and veterinary visits to maintain health and welfare.

In response to the ongoing pandemic and equine businesses crisis, Ontario Equestrian launched 'For the Herd', (<https://www.fortheherd.ca>) an emergency fundraising initiative to help support equine businesses in Ontario. Since its launch in April 2020, For the Herd has raised over \$200,000 and helped approximately 95 equestrian facilities with hay, feed and bedding costs until the end of July. This does not include other necessities such as veterinarian and farrier costs. However, this amount is not enough. Many equine businesses require financial support for basic necessities for their horses in the coming months, and the fundraising effort is unable to meet those demands. The reality of the situation is, without more support, these businesses will fold, and our industry will become obsolete. Worse yet, these businesses will not have the means to support the lives of these animals.

As their source of income has disappeared or is greatly diminished, equine business owners continue to be unable to pay for the on-going care for their working horses. While the province continues to reopen, it is not business as usual for the equine industry. Restrictions regarding permitted activities such as summer camps, public health and provincial guidelines on physical distancing, gathering size, and event restrictions, such as disallowing spectators, and the general unease to return to public spaces continues to put a strain on income for equine businesses now and for the foreseeable future. A survey of For the Herd applicants shows that in July, 50% of equine businesses will make less than 50% of their regular income in July. 82% will make less than 70% of their regular monthly income.

Without support from the government, equine businesses will be forced to make culling or euthanasia decisions of perfectly healthy, capable equines due to the sudden burden of operating costs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Ontario Equestrian is asking for support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in conjunction with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to establish a national emergency relief fund under the AgriRecovery framework to help with the costs related to the health and welfare of active equines and their businesses in Ontario.** As the majority of equine businesses are located in Ontario, the contribution from provincial government would be \$400,000 per month to support at-risk active equines in the province.

Fall and winter will be difficult for equine businesses. The current pandemic situation, coupled with poor hay yield from the current growing season, declining grass quality in fields, and limited turnout abilities in the winter months, equine businesses will be forced to make difficult decisions regarding their animal, their businesses, and ultimately their livelihood. Equine businesses are asking for emergency relief to subsidize the health and welfare of the equine employees across the province. Without government intervention, equine businesses are facing equine health and welfare crises, and risk closing their doors permanently due to the burden of care for their equine partners.

Ontario Equestrian appreciates the support of the provincial government during this difficult time. We look forward to working with you to ensure the health and welfare of Ontario's active equines and the sustainability of the province's active equine businesses now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Peter Chiddy  
President



Tracey McCague-McElrea  
Executive Director



cc: Mr. Randy Pettapiece, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs  
Mr. Toby Barrett, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs  
The Honourable Victor Fideli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
The Honourable Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction  
The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Equestrian Canada

### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO KEEP A HORSE HEALTHY PER MONTH?

 <p><b>FEED: \$175-\$350</b> Includes hay as well as different types of grain. An average 1000 lb horse requires approximately 15-20 lbs of hay daily.</p>	 <p><b>FARRIER: Up to \$250</b> A farrier is a specialist in equine hoof care. Most horses require hoof maintenance every 4 to 8 weeks, depending on growth of hoof and individual needs.</p>
 <p><b>BEDDING: \$175-\$300</b> Bedding is needed to keep stalled horses healthy. Bedding comes in different materials: wood shavings, straw, expandable pellets, which come with their own benefits and costs.</p>	 <p><b>VET AND MEDICINE: \$150</b> Horses require annual vaccinations, wellness checks and dental visits, including supplements and medicines.</p>

### 2016 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE<sup>1</sup>

<p><b>3,112</b> Number of Horse Farms in Ontario</p>
<p><b>9,300</b> Number of Farms with 1+ Horse</p>
<p><b>64,536</b> Horses in Ontario</p>

### SECTORS

 <p><b>SPORT</b></p>  <p><b>RECREATION</b></p>	 <p><b>HEALTH</b></p>  <p><b>TOURISM</b></p>
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### JOB

 <p><b>SERVICE PROVIDERS</b> Veterinarians, farriers</p>	 <p><b>AGRICULTURE</b></p>
 <p><b>EMPLOYEES</b> Farm employees, related facility staff</p>	 <p><b>PHARMACEUTICAL</b></p>
 <p><b>SUPPLIERS</b> Feed, tack, equipment</p>	 <p><b>TRANSPORT</b></p>

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that unless the business files income tax as a farm, they will not be captured in the Census of Agriculture, and many people who own horses do not file as a farm. This means there is an unknown number of horses not represented in the census. As no one governing body represents equines across all industries, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of horses in Ontario or Canada used across multi-disciplines and sectors.