

Attention: Maddison Mather, Clerk; Jennifer Moore CAO, Dwayne Campbell, Director
Regarding: Request for submission of written delegation in support of the Ontario-Agrifood Venture Centre.

Good afternoon. As a resident, farmer and small business owner in Northumberland County, I have a vested interest in decisions made by council that have the potential to impact my livelihood. It has come to my attention that County Council will be examining areas of potential cost savings in their review of discretionary services on January 30th, which includes the future of the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre.

Unfortunately, due to prior commitments I am regrettably not able to attend this council session in person. Therefore, I would like to respectfully request that this written delegation be accepted and presented for consideration by council in support of continuing the operations of the Agri-food Venture Centre.

My name is Lori Latendresse. I am a long time resident, independent farmer, and the owner of Dirty Dog Cider Company in Alnwick Haldimand Township, Northumberland County. As a small-scale producer and manufacturer of sweet apple cider, the OAFVC was instrumental in helping me develop, test, and produce my first variety of sweet cider in 2022. Since then, the OAFVC has been fundamental in providing production services that have allowed me to increase my production from 400 litres of a single variety in 2022, to nearly 5000 litres in 2024, and an expansion from 1 to 3 varieties of sweet cider. The services offered by the OAFVC have been indispensable to the growth and expansion of my business, and have provided me the opportunity to wholesale my product to several small independent agri-food, restaurant, and retail businesses across Northumberland County, in addition to operating my own farm-based cider retail outlet. The OAFVC has also supported increased production of my cider by providing me with the service of secure, food safe and climate -controlled storage space, as well as refrigerated and freezer storage space. As a small- scale manufacturer in a rural community, I could not have developed and grown my business to the point where I am now without the support of the OAFVC. This one of a kind centre provides equipment, expertise, staffing, production and storage space that small start- up businesses such as myself require, but simply cannot afford to build and purchase independently.

In addition to being a manufacturer, I am also a small- scale farmer operating an agri-food business in rural Northumberland County. My cider company uses 100% fruit grown by myself and other local farms. As with all crops, there is a harvest season for field grown fruit. Harvest occurs once a year over the period of a few months. Therefore, I must harvest and process all the fruit to support the upcoming year of cider sales. The OAFVC provides services to my farm and other farms that include close proximity storage for raw materials (in my case, fresh pressed juice from harvested fruit). The OAFVC is a valuable storage and production facility that is within close proximity of my farm. This ensures that my bulk raw material can be moved into appropriate storage so that it does not spoil. Most small farms like myself, do not have refrigeration or freezer capacity for bulk raw materials needing immediate food safe storage. Should the OAFVC close, I would no longer have access to local food safe storage for my time

sensitive harvest. As a small farm in the early years of developing into an agri-business, it is not feasible to build a facility with bulk climate and temperature controlled storage, let alone a facility with required production and bottling equipment.

The OAFVC is a one of a kind facility that we are fortunate to have in our community of Northumberland County. The facility and staff provide services that are essential to local farmers and manufacturers such as myself. I think our community is very proud to be home to the OAFVC and I ask council to consider this, as well as the impacts that closure would have on local farms and businesses who currently utilize the facility, staff and services. We live here. We work here. We contribute to the local economy, and provide opportunities for residents to buy locally grown and produced food. Please show your support for myself and other local farmers and producers by keeping the OAFVC open. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Lori Latendresse
Resident, Farmer, Producer
Dirty Dog Cider Company