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From: noreply@northumberlandcounty.ca <noreply@northumberlandcounty.ca> On Behalf Of Sharon Kelly

Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 12:46 PM

To: Mather, Maddison <matherm@northumberland.ca>

Subject: OAFVC

CAUTION: External E-Mail

To the County Clerk,

I'm writing to you about the item to discuss the funding for the OAFVC this week. I can't express enough what a facility like this means to food entrepreneurs!

I was going to close my business last summer as I was feeling hopeless about how I could grow my vegan frozen food business until I heard about the OAFVC. This facility allows an emerging brand like mine to take the next step.

Since starting there last August I was able to get a higher food safety designation which allows my brand to continue in Whole Foods, and now get into the large, national chains. I also was able to get a distributor in Vancouver so am now selling my products outside of Ontario! This would not have happened without OAFVC. I sold my condo downtown Toronto, and am renting a place in Cobourg as I'm fully committed to growing my business in Northumberland.

The OAFVC's staff have expertise that is allowing me to learn and grow. Such large brands have had their start there (Cedar Valley, Nana Pops, Oat & Mill) and knowing this gives me such hope that we'll be able to do the same. Closing the OAFVC would be devastating to my company, and all the other manufacturers working there. We have built a community of learning there. We network and talk with other business owners and help each other out. It's such an amazing, unique and special place in Ontario that I considered myself so lucky to have discovered it.

Ontario needs the OAFVC to give small brands a chance to grow as there are so many barriers to being able to compete with the mega-brands that closing this centre is the death knell to many of us. I desperately hope the county continues to support this amazing initiative to support entrepreneurs in Ontario.

Sincerely,
Sharon Kelly
Owner, Situ's Kitchen