



Date: February 1, 2025.
Oat & Mill Ltd.
216 Purdy Rd. Colborne
Ontario K0K 1S0

Dear Warden and Northumberland County Council Members,

My Name is Candace Tierney. I am the owner of Oat & Mill. I spoke to counsel and have written a letter to touch on key points which were and weren't covered in my speech. I am the owner of Oat & Mill. We are just one of over 80 companies that rely on the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC). We have been operating out of this facility since 2019.

The OAFVC functions as a business incubator. Instead of for tech jobs in the city, the OAFVC creates manufacturing jobs in Northumberland. Leveraging the strengths of the area. The desire for more manufacturing jobs and proximity to farms. OAFVC has built a process which draws businesses from inside and outside of Northumberland and helps them grow through the pains of scaling a business until they have too much invested in the area to move away from the county. Oat & Mill stands as an example of this.

We started using the OAFVC in 2019. Attracted to the site by what they offered. At first using the services once a month. By 2024, Oat & Mill was using the services several times a week. Oat & Mill then graduated from the shared space model, into long-term exclusive use of a room. Giving a stepping stone to companies who need more time. Oat & Mill is now working out how to move into the annex in a year. An unused portion of the building which isn't finished. Each of these stages of growth comes with its own unique challenges. The OAFVC has helped us get through each of these steps.

Oat & Mill is one of over 80 companies that are growing in the space. We currently employ 6 people from Northumberland county. We currently have open job posting for 3 additional jobs and expect to reach 10 employees by spring and 20 by end of 2026.

Oat & Mill focuses on hiring a portion of the manufacturing staff who have folks with barriers to work. One of our employees **Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)** has been with Oat & Mill for 4 years. Before hand **Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)** hadn't had a job in several years. We are not the only OAFVC company to do this. Many companies hire folks who would otherwise be out of work or support different communities.

I would like to discuss the economic impact this has on Northumberland county. In the last year, Oat & Mill has invested or spent over \$200,000 in the community. This is broken down into 4 different categories.

- 1) We buy local ingredients from local farmers. For example, we buy strawberries from **Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)**, as well as several other farms in the area.
- 2) We receive provincial grant funds every year to invest in training our employees. This year we have \$70,000 between our own contributions and government grants to increase the working skills of members of the Northumberland community. Giving them manufacturing and food manufacturing skills.

- 3) We used local businesses in Northumberland, from tradespeople such as electricians, to equipment certification services, equipment parts, Food & safety consultants in the area, to other consultants, we will be spending over \$100,000 this year on businesses in the area.

To provide a few of the larger examples. In 2025 we will be spending:

- 1) \$15,500 on electrical upgrades to our rental room.
- 2) \$12,000 to [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)] of Northumberland [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)].
- 3) \$4500 in electrical certifications to Northumberland company to ensure equipment is approved to be plugged in.
- 4) \$6250 in parts from [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)] of Northumberland.
- 5) \$30,000 in Food Safety consultation to [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)] of Northumberland.
- 6) \$20,000 in sustainability consulting to [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)] of Northumberland.
- 7) \$25,000 in locally purchased ingredients. Predominantly strawberries [Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)].

These are expenses going directly to Northumberland businesses and economy. Made possible because of the economics and supports that the OAFVC allows.

- 4) Our own staff we will be spending \$250,000 in wages this year. Including to folks who would otherwise be out of work and not able to contribute towards our economy or spend money in the economy.

While this is a significant amount of money, it would be completely understandable to think that there is a lot of money going around. For a business such as our own, that isn't the case. We are able to make these investments into the community because the OAFVC makes it possible for us to reach the economics required to scale.

Another point which has been raised is whether Oat & Mill is a Northumberland company. I would like to make it clear that Oat & Mill is, and will continue to be, because we are on the OAFVC's newly devised model of ensuring that the companies grown here, stay here. This model gives space to companies to grow as they increase their manufacturing capabilities and investments in Northumberland.

Phase 1: Starting with shared space.

At this stage companies can book time to use a room for their manufacturing. Growing from using the space once every few months, to twice a week. At this stage companies typically grow to 5+ manufacturing jobs for Northumberland county residents.

Phase 2: Long-term exclusive use of a room.

Where companies can use a dedicated space up to 5 days a week. They can set-up their manufacturing and leave it without the otherwise required tear down. This is where Oat & Mill has recently grown into. Companies here can grow to about 15 manufacturing jobs. Depending on the manufacturing process.

Phase 3: Annex.

The OAFVC takes up approximately 65-70% of the building, 216 Purdy. The extra 30-35% of the space is unused and waiting for a tenant to grow into. It is our intent for Oat & Mill to be that tenant. Here a company can get set-up in the space with 15 jobs and grow to 50+ manufacturing jobs. At the end of this stage of growth, a company has

put down roots and integrated into the community to the point that the cost of moving and loosing the workforce and building else where is extra-ordinary and insurmountable. When they next move, they are ready to strike out on their own and continue to grow within the Northumberland community.

This is the roadmap. Oat & Mill is currently tracking through the stages and one of the three Northumberland jobs I mentioned that we are hiring for is a Production Manager.

There are many other companies making this scale of investment in the community. If the OAFVC closes, Oat & Mill like the other 80 companies who invest and spend at Northumberland businesses, will be forced to either shut down, or move their manufacturing jobs and investments to other counties before they have the chance to put down roots.

We ask the counsel to support manufacturing in Northumberland county by supporting manufacturing companies and keeping the OAFVC funded.

Sincerely,

Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)

Candace Tierney