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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2023-INFO-87
Date: October 6, 2023

Subject:

Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee 2023 Farm Tour, File: A01-38-02

Recommendation:

Receive for Information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the 21st annual Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) Farm Tour event which was held at Carncroft Farms and Swain Beef in Blackstock, Scugog on September 21, 2023.

2. Background

2.1 Since its inaugural tour in 2003, DAAC has showcased more than 40 farms and other agricultural facilities across Durham Region to more than 1,600 participants.

3. Event Overview

3.1 Over 100 participants representing municipal and provincial governments, public agencies including conservation authorities, school boards, post-secondary institutions; municipal advisory and economic development committees, the financial and insurance industry, the agricultural community and media attended the event. The tour highlighted the importance of Durham's agricultural sector, Durham's agricultural heritage as well as some of the issues and challenges faced by the industry.

3.2 The theme for this year's tour was "Livestock Farming in Durham Region". A variety of topics were covered including:

- Raising livestock;
- Growing crops for animal feed;
- The challenges and opportunities of operating a farm;
- The importance of family farms; and
- Best management practices.

3.3 At the event, there were several displays for attendees to gain information from, staffed by several organizations, including:

- Durham Farm Fresh;
- Ontario Soil and Crop;
- Durham East 4-H;
- Kawartha Conservation Authority;
- Durham Farm Connections;
- Invest Durham;
- Durham Region Federation of Agriculture;
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs;
- Durham College Galen Weston Centre for Food and Barrett Centre;
- District 7 Sheep Producers;
- Durham Workforce Authority;
- Meat and Poultry Ontario; and
- Greenbelt Foundation.

3.4 Prior to lunch, the DAAC Chair, Zac Cahoon welcomed attendees to the event, presented history on the Committee and introduced the host farm family. Mr. Cahoon spoke about:

- The importance of the agricultural industry;
- Farmers being the foundation of the Region;
- The opportunities and challenges facing agriculture in Durham Region

3.5 Regional Chair and CEO John Henry then spoke about:

- The important contributions of farming and agriculture in Durham;
- Opportunities for agriculture in Durham Region;
- Progressive and innovative farms in the Region who contribute to their local communities and the economy.

3.6 Franco Naccarato, Executive Director of Meat and Poultry Ontario provided the keynote address.

3.7 Participants attended presentation stations highlighting the following topics:

a. **Carncroft Farms:** Jenny and Luke Carnaghan and their children took participants through the lamb barn and crop storage area and described:

- The history of their family farm;
- How their farm operates on a daily basis;
- The economics of the livestock industry in Durham;
- How lambs are fed and cared for;
- The technology related to farming;
- The processing and selling of lambs;
- How the feed is grown on the farm; and
- The nutritional requirements of lambs and how they change over time;

b. **Swain Beef:** Nicole and Scott Swain and their children, took participants to the field and through their cattle yards to discuss:

- The history of the family farm;
- Crops grown on the farm, including corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa and cover crops;
- General farm operations and how their cattle are raised and cared for;
- Environmental stewardship and management practices;
- Mutually beneficial business relationships with farming neighbours;
- Equipment used to run the farming operation; and
- Roles of the family members and employees on the farm.

4. Event Feedback

4.1 Each year, participants are asked to complete a survey that is used by DAAC to evaluate the success of the tour and to help plan for future events. This year, an electronic survey was distributed following to attendees along with paper surveys available at the tour. From the responses received, almost all agreed that the tour met or exceeded their expectations. Some general comments were:

- It was beyond my expectations! The venue was well organized, the food was exceptional, the hosts were very welcoming;

- The setting, the small touches, the food, the tractor ride, the information, the speaker, all of it! spectacular;
- It was well organized and the information presented invaluable and insightful; and
- It actually exceeded expectations. I appreciate how the entire family was involved, generations, youth, husband and wife teams.

4.2 Participants were asked what the “Take Home” message was for them. Responses included:

- Farms are the heart of the community and should be celebrated and supported;
- We cannot undervalue the importance of agriculture as an economic driver;
- There is a need for increased focus and appreciation of the agri-food industry. They are the stewards of the land and the suppliers of food for the world; and
- You can't learn and appreciate the farming and agriculture industry by reading about it. Being immersed for a day into the pride and joy of these amazing farmers extends an entirely new appreciation for the industry.

5. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 5.1 In June 2023 Council considered DAAC's 2023 Workplan through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-16](#). The Farm Tour is a major component of the DAAC Workplan.
- 5.2 In October 2022 [#2022-INFO-83](#) was released, summarizing the 2022 DAAC Farm Tour.

6. Relationship to the Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Environmental Sustainability - Protect, preserve and restore the natural environment, including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails, and farmlands.
 - b. Economic Prosperity - Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 DAAC is once again commended for its continued efforts in advancing the knowledge of the agricultural industry in Durham. The annual farm tour continues to be a valuable element of the Council approved work plan for the Committee.
- 7.2 A copy of this report will be forwarded to the Area Municipalities, the Durham Federation of Agriculture, Durham Farm Fresh, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance and DAAC.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Commissioner of Planning and
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