



The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development
Report: #2025-INFO-34
Date: May 2, 2025

Subject:

Agriculture Wellness Ontario's "In the Know" Mental Health Training Session Hosted by the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee

Recommendation:

Receive for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of "In the Know" mental health training session, presented by Agriculture Wellness Ontario and organized by the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC), held on April 24, 2025.

2. Background

- 2.1 "In the Know" is a mental health literacy program designed specifically for farmers, their families and those who are involved and/or support the agriculture sector.
- 2.2 The training is delivered and administered by Agriculture Wellness Ontario (AWO). AWO is managed by Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division, in partnership with other stakeholders in the agricultural community.
- 2.3 Representatives from AWO presented to DAAC on December 10, 2024. They introduced the various programs offered by AWO and detailed mental health issues facing agricultural workers. DAAC members then requested further information on training opportunities.

- 2.4 DAAC, in partnership with the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture, organized a half day session with AWO to deliver their “In the Know” mental health training to Durham Region farmers.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 Report [#2025-CG-1](#) - Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Workplan.

4. Event Details

- 4.1 The “In the Know” training session occurred April 24, 2025 at the Goodwood Community Hall in the Township of Uxbridge.
- 4.2 The training session was administered by 2 trained staff members from Agriculture Wellness Ontario. These presenters are mental health professionals who come from farming backgrounds.
- 4.3 Seven people attended the training, including members of DAAC, Region of Durham staff, local farmers, and people involved in the agricultural sector.
- 4.4 The stated purpose of the training is to increase understanding of mental health and wellness on the farm, raise awareness, and create comfort in having conversations about mental health. The information was presented through slides, case studies, and interaction with the group about how to best deal with mental health related situations.
- 4.5 The focus of the training was on the challenges facing rural farming communities and famers including: lack of mental health support resources, isolation, stigma, and farmer stereotypes.
- 4.6 The training session covered the following topics:
- a) Factors contributing to mental health;
 - b) Information on and effects of long-term stress, anxiety disorders, depression, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder;
 - c) Substance use and addiction; and
 - d) Suicide risks, barriers to seeking help with mental health, and suicide prevention.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Directions in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Healthy People, Caring Communities

- H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.

b. Resilient Local Economies

- R4. Protect and strengthen the local agriculture sector and food supply chains.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The "In the Know" mental health training session provided valuable and vital information to members of Durham's agricultural sector. Further training sessions will be considered outside the traditionally busy spring planting season as a way to attract more participants.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Commissioner of Community Growth and
Economic Development