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NFU Position on Renewable Energy Production and the Ontario Green Energy Act

The National Farmers Union continues to take the position that farmers and rural communities must have the opportunity to determine which renewable energy production projects are appropriate for their community. Rural communities must be able to set targets around the size, scale and ownership of projects and must have option of refusing developments that do not benefit their communities. Renewable energy projects must be under the control and ownership of farmers and rural communities, not in the hands of multinational energy corporations, and communities must have assurance that the benefits will remain in the community in the future.

The National Farmers Union recognizes the environmental and social impacts that energy extraction and production have on rural communities across the globe. We also acknowledge that fossil fuel reserves are being rapidly depleted. Therefore, the NFU supports the production of energy from renewable, sustainable sources including low-impact hydro, solar and wind, as long as the development of energy resources are controlled and owned by farmers, rural communities and the broader public.

Along with the focus on the production of renewable energy, the province of Ontario must put more emphasis on creating a culture of conservation. The first step should be decreasing the need to produce more energy, by making conservation the first priority. The National Farmers Union advocates for local food distribution systems, organic and low-input farm practices and public and rail transit as ways to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels and other forms of energy.

Across Ontario, farmland continues to be lost on a daily basis to industrial and urban developments. While Class 1 and Class 2 farmland is supposed to be protected, the Ontario Green Energy Act allows the erection of solar farms on Class 3 farmland. Class 3 farmland is an important resource for the production of food for the citizens of Ontario now and in the future. The province of Ontario must restrict the transfer of dependable farmland, including Class 3 farmland, to non-agricultural uses, including industrial solar generation projects.

All NFU policies and positions, including our positions on renewable energy, have been developed by NFU members and locals bringing forward resolutions for debate and discussion at Region 3 (Ontario) and national policy conventions.