



Mayor Brown and the City of Brampton Council
The Corporation of the City of Brampton
2 Wellington Street West, Brampton, ON, L6Y 4R2

May 6, 2021

Re: Stormwater Discharge Levy Rates for Agricultural Operations

Dear Mayor and Council,

Flowers Canada (Ontario) Inc. represents greenhouse floriculture growers that contribute over \$700 million in farm gate sales, and we have membership in the region of the City of Brampton. We are concerned to learn of By-Law 82-2020, which has been approved by Council without appropriate consultation with the agricultural community in the City of Brampton. We understand the City has a responsibility to maintain its stormwater management infrastructure, and that with climate change, all municipalities have a responsibility to manage additional and unpredictable surges in volume. However, other jurisdictions with stormwater bylaws considered agricultural operations as unique entities that require a different fee structure. Farming operations are the soul of our Canadian roots – the ability to produce food and plants that are critical to every Ontarian's well-being. According to the 2020 Ontario Provincial Policy Statement, agriculture is clearly a priority for the current government to protect and support: "1.7.1 Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by: i) sustaining and enhancing the viability of the agricultural system through protecting agricultural resources, minimizing land use conflicts, providing opportunities to support local food, and maintaining and improving the agrifood network...".

The Staff Report dated March 12, 2021 contains several concerning points:

1. The report states that exemptions and rebates are not eligible under the *Municipal Act* (2001) – there are a number of municipalities that do, in fact, discount or completely exempt farms from stormwater fees. Richmond Hill and Vaughan have flat annual fees, \$73.95 and \$640.04 respectively. In Mississauga, if a farm is eligible for the Farm Property Class Rate, it is automatically eligible for the Stormwater Subsidy and no action is required by the farm owner. The subsidy is 100% of the stormwater fee. Other municipalities with full agricultural exemptions include Ottawa and Markham. These municipalities clearly prioritize and recognize the value of active agricultural operations in their communities and have obtained legal advice to the contrary of that obtained by the City of Brampton.

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2. Farms that are assessed as properties benefiting from the Farm Property Class Tax Rate should not be penalized by the City of Brampton because they are legitimate, active farming operations. As noted above, some municipalities actually consider eligibility for this Tax Rate as a guarantee that the farm should have exemption status from stormwater fees.

3. It is disheartening to read that the farms in the City of Brampton are considered to provide “...no significant benefit resulting to the City or the general public...”. These farms are not just ‘pre-development’ properties – they are active farming operations that nurture one of the most respected roles in our society.

4. The engineering costs required to establish even the most basic information for a credit (e.g., that the City’s stormwater drainage system is not used) far exceed the annual fees for most farms, and would be required to be repeated every five years. The application of this criteria was clearly designed to deter any property owner from requesting a credit.

Overall, our association supports the recommendation by the Peel Federation of Agriculture to request a by-law review with the goal to recognize our members’ unique agricultural status. Further, we request a consideration of exemption for agricultural operations in the City of Brampton, or alternatively, we would accept a sustainable flat fee. Other municipalities with similar annual budgets for stormwater (\$20-35M range) are charging a flat rate for farms between \$100-600 per year. Please recognize our support of the comments provided by the Peel Federation of Agriculture, and contact the undersigned if you require additional information.

Sincerely



Andrew Morse

Executive Director

Flowers Canada (Ontario) Inc.

CC. Dr. Jeanine West, Environmental Specialist, Flowers Canada (Ontario) Inc.

CC. Tom Dolson, Vice President, Peel Federation of Agriculture

CC. Michael Heralall, Senior Manager, Environment, City of Brampton