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Mr Marc Godbout
Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton
116 Albert Street, suite 100
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G3

Dear Mr Godbout

The Organic Council of Ontario (OCO) is a non-profit membership-driven association, the only full value-chain association in Ontario working at the provincial level – where regulatory decisions are made. OCO unifies Ontario’s diverse actors in our organic movement – from farmers to processors to city dwellers and all points between.

On behalf of the members of OCO, I write to you to express our full support for the pursuit and expansion of education and research at Alfred College, particularly with respect to its certified organic dairy research, education, and demonstration farm.

Canada's organic market grew to \$3.5 billion in 2012, with national sales of certified organic food and non-alcoholic beverages reaching \$3 billion. The value of the Canadian organic food market has tripled since 2006, far outpacing the growth rate of other agri-food sectors. The sector is being driven by a diverse consumer base, with over half of all Canadians buying organic products every week. In Ontario in 2010, we counted 716 certified organic farms and 266 certified organic handlers and processors.

Alfred College is a rare jewel, a critical part of a small but growing number of science, research and educational facilities supporting the blossoming organic sector. The College is a major player with several research projects in progress with the Organic Science Cluster. OSCII is supported by \$8M in federal research moneys, over 65 contributing partners on 37 Research Activities. OSCII includes over 170 collaborating researchers at over 36 institutions across Canada.

Organic agriculture is knowledge and management intensive. Farmers and processors require an extensive understanding and training in natural biological processes without resorting to quick fixes, bandages, and packaged recipes in the form of synthetic inputs (soluble fertilizers, pesticides, antibiotics, etc...).

As the organic sector is fairly young and relatively small, organic farmers often operate in isolation, in the absence of formal or practical training in organic production, without the support of expert resources and mainstream scientific resources. Alfred College is a part of the movement to correct that isolation. The College is already a dairy producer and active scientific contributor in the organic dairy sector in Ontario and Quebec. Farmers rely on easy access to technical expertise at the college. The college organizes and participates in organic farm conferences locally and across Canada.

Most importantly, the scientific breakthroughs and knowledge in organic agriculture developed at Alfred College are invaluable on all farms including soil biology, animal welfare, crop rotations, and nutrient management.

The Organic Council of Ontario strongly recommends that the research capacity at Alfred College be expanded to include growing organic markets in horticulture, small animals, and field crops. As Alfred College focuses on research and education in organic production, everyone wins.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JPfenning', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jennifer Pfenning

Chair, Organic Council of Ontario