

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – March 24, 2023**

## **Ontario Sheep Farmers Support Provincial Budget Commitment to Increase Veterinarians in Ontario**

**Guelph, ON** – The Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) are pleased to see a commitment from the provincial government to increase the number of veterinarians in Ontario.

Ontario's sheep farmers have been concerned with the limited number of specially trained small ruminant veterinarians in the province for a long time. Access to veterinary support is especially challenging in northern regions of Ontario where there are approximately 140 sheep producers in our northern district which covers Kenora, Rainy River, Thunder Bay, Cochrane, Algoma, Sudbury, Temiskaming, Nipissing & Manitoulin and the rest of Northern Ontario.

"A partnership between the University of Guelph and Lakehead University in the north is a positive step for our northern sheep producers," says John Hemsted, chair of Ontario Sheep Farmers. "We look forward to working with the universities to support their students' hands-on learning in northern farm communities."

Additionally, sheep producers have expressed concern with the low number of veterinary school graduates who choose to practice in rural areas and with livestock. OSF is encouraged by the government's commitment in the budget to increase enrolment in DVM programs to support Ontario's livestock sector.

"In a meeting held this fall in eastern Ontario, our producers suggested financial support for graduates of veterinary programs who wish to work and live in rural and underserved areas as one of the solutions to the veterinary shortage," says Hemsted. "We are pleased to see the commitment from government in the budget for student loan assistance for veterinarians willing to relocate to underserved areas."

Ontario's sheep farmers appreciate the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Thompson on this issue and for their continued support of agriculture and food production in the province.

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**About OSF** The Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) is a producer-run organization established in 1985 that represents the province's 3,000 sheep farmers who contribute over \$530 million to Ontario's economy. Ontario is home to the country's largest sheep flock and processes over 50% of the sheep and lambs born in Canada. We believe passionately that sheep farming is an agricultural business sector that contributes to the well-being of our communities and our province and offers unique opportunities to develop new markets, provide needed environmental benefits and grow both our domestic and international markets.

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