



DOWNEY DIGEST

ISSUE 13 • OCTOBER 2021



A NOTE FROM DOUG

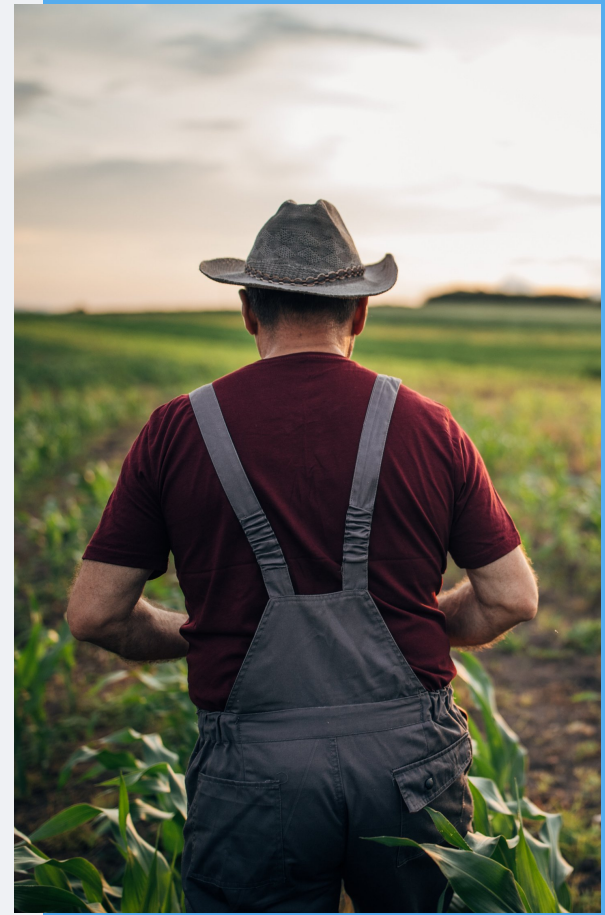
October is always a time to reminisce and remember all the things we have to be thankful for. It's a time to connect with our friends, family and loved ones near and far and reach out with messages of good cheer and gratitude. It's also an important time to thank those in our community who have given so much to ensure that we are all able to have a wonderful thanksgiving meal and to celebrate the new season as it arrives.

This month, I encourage you to thank a farmer, a grocery store worker, or someone else who helps to keep food on our tables. Donate to the Food Bank and other charitable organizations whenever possible, and within your means. Let's all take the time this month to remember the good things we have, and focus on brighter days ahead.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR FARMERS

Throughout the pandemic, our farmers have kept food on our tables and the shelves of our grocery stores stocked. In order to help thank them for all that they do, the government of Ontario is committing more than \$385,000 to expand the 'In the Know' mental health literacy program tailored to support the well-being of the farming community,

Expanding 'In the Know' to more communities will improve the quality and access to mental health services available to Ontario's Agriculture sector to ensure farmers, their families, and their employees have additional places to turn when help is needed.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR FARMERS

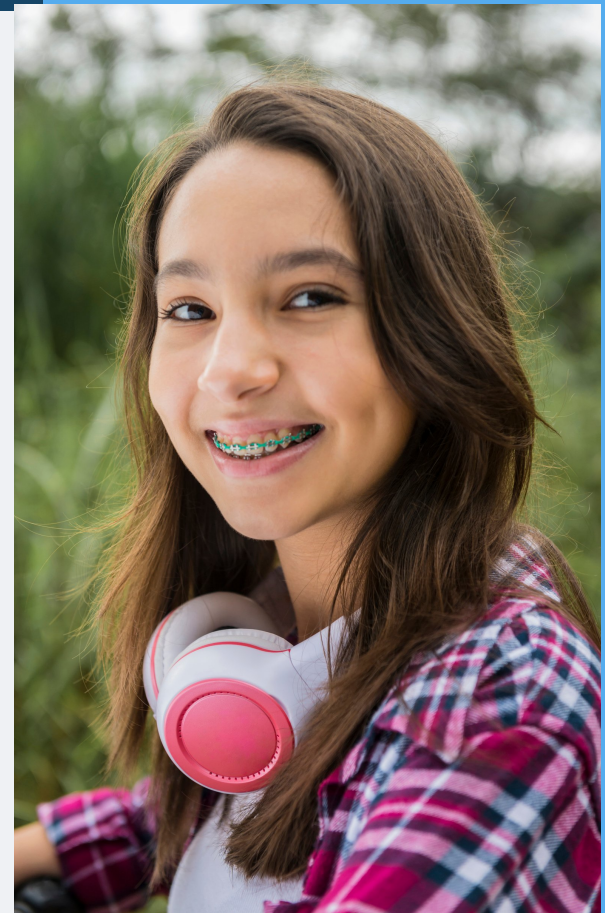
The In the Know program is an important mental health literacy program tailored to the needs of the agricultural community offered at 16 Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) branches in rural and agricultural communities by approximately 30 facilitators. The expansion of the program to more branches will improve access to mental health supports in rural areas, reduce the stigma around mental health, encourage more open discussion, and help connect the farm community with the resources and supports they need.

Farmers have indicated in previous roundtables and conversations that they are more likely to open up about their mental health if they feel their counsellor or other mental health support understands the agricultural sector and the realities of farming. With the funding announced, CMHA will also train and educate more mental health specialists on how they can better support farmers and the unique challenges they face.

FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS

The Ministry of Education recently announced that the Ontario government will distribute six million free menstrual products per year to school boards under a new and innovative partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart designed to improve access to menstrual products. The agreement is the first of its kind for Ontario and will position it as one of the four provinces to take action on the issue of period poverty within schools.

This partnership will benefit students who need menstrual products but are unable to afford or access them, resulting in an inability to participate in school and other activities.



FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS

A survey conducted by Plan International Canada showed 63 per cent of women and girls have regularly or occasionally missed an activity because of their period and concerns about not being able to access menstrual hygiene products or proper facilities. The report also noted that 34 per cent of women had to regularly or occasionally sacrifice something else within their budget to afford menstrual products.

Under the announced agreement, Shoppers Drug Mart will provide six million free menstrual products to the province per year, over the next three years. Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, this supply of free menstrual products will be provided to all school boards, which will make decisions about the distribution of products based on local needs.

NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

October marks National Disability Awareness Month in Ontario. This year, National Disability Month provides an important opportunity to promote the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

Many Ontario businesses are struggling to find skilled employees. At the same time, people with disabilities remain a largely untapped pool of talent - with many looking for work and ready to help businesses grow.

When people with disabilities find meaningful jobs, they can participate more fully in our communities and economy. By removing barriers in workplaces, businesses can expand their talent pool, appeal to more diverse clientele and grow their business.



NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

The Ontario government is supporting jobseekers and workers with disabilities, and businesses looking to hire by connecting them through programs like:

- the *Ontario Disability Support Program*, providing employment assistance including job search, preparation and coaching help.
- *Employment Ontario* programs and services that help people find a job, get training or upgrade skills. Employment Ontario also has new digital services to compliment its in-person support,
- funding for eligible employment supports for people with disabilities, including workplace accommodation needs,
- the *Employment Services Transformation* which offers specialized services to create a path into the workforce for people with unique or complex employment needs
- helping employers find, hire and train skilled job seekers and workers with disabilities, including offering free advice and financial support to individuals to offset costs for accommodations.

NEED HELP PRINTING YOUR PROOF OF VACCINATION?

Visit your local library branch today for assistance in printing out your Proof of Vaccination or your QR code when they are released. A paper copy of your Proof of Vaccination or QR code is acceptable for those who do not have a cell phone.



HAVE YOUR SAY

Visit www.DougDowney.ca/survey to participate in our comprehensive survey regarding the proposed location for the Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) site at 11 Innisfil St. in Barrie

