



DOWNEY DIGEST

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A NOTE FROM DOUG

Happy March Break!

March is a fantastic time to recharge as we head into the busier summer months, and for kids to take a much needed break from their studies. In March, we also set our clocks forward and welcome the warmer weather with more daylight hours. All of these signs point to one thing; spring is coming soon. With April right around the corner, I encourage everyone to enjoy the last few days of winter weather by getting outside and experiencing our fantastic ski hills, snowtubing, skating and other winter activities that will soon be wrapped up for the season. Our region plays host to incredible outdoor facilities to serve for all four seasons. Get out and enjoy them today!

SUPPORTING FARMERS WITH STATE-OF-THE ART RESEARCH

The Ontario government is investing more than \$343 million over five years to support agri-food research and innovation.

The investments are being made through a new agreement with the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, a collaboration between the province, the University of Guelph and the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario. The funding will be used for research focused on food safety and animal welfare and support the development of a highly skilled workforce that will lead to more economic growth opportunities in the agri-food sector.



The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance supports fundamental programming to help farmers and the broader agri-food sector build resiliency by:

- Managing threats to food production and security such as African swine fever and avian influenza.
- Advancing science, research, innovation and commercialization of new products, processes and practices that support the long-term success of the agri-food system.
- Building a future skilled workforce and develop talent that will advance Ontario's agri-food sector including veterinary medicine in the agri-food sector and rural communities.
- Maintaining and maximizing use of the network of state-of-the art research centres owned by the Government of Ontario through it's agency, the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO) and managed by the University of Guelph through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.

This work is supported by a network of research centres located across the province. These centres are owned by the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario and managed by the University of Guelph through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance. This network provides a world-class infrastructure platform to bring farm-tested innovations to farmers across the province.

The renewal of the Alliance for an additional five years builds on the success of the government's previous agreement, which increased Ontario's GDP by \$1.4 billion and supported more than 1,300 jobs. Research investments that led to new business in Ontario include:

- Clēan Work, a \$7 million agri-food innovation company with 12 employees that has commercialized a novel waterless process called Clēan Verification for decontaminating fresh and frozen produce, proteins, dried goods and shipping containers.
- Escarpment Labs which provides unique, local and accessible yeast cultures to both local and global beer producers.
- Psigryph Inc. which delivers a naturally derived nano-delivery technology that can increase bioavailability to improve the health of humans, animals and environment. This innovative company was recently named one of Canada's 'most investible' cleantech companies by Foresight Canada.

Since 2018, Ontario has invested over \$335 million in the Ontario AgriFood Innovation Alliance to support research and innovation, further the development of new food products and agricultural advancements and drive economic growth in the sector.

The Ontario agri-food sector supports more than 860,000 jobs in Ontario and contributes more than \$47.3 billion each year to the province's economy.

ONTARIO REQUIRING CLEANER WASHROOMS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

The Ontario government is working for workers by making washrooms on construction sites private, clean and safe. There are nearly 600,000 construction workers in Ontario, but only one in 10 are women. These changes, if approved, would make the skilled trades more accessible to women by ensuring they have access to at least one women's-only washroom on jobsites and properly fitting equipment such as uniforms, boots and safety harnesses.

The government is further improving portable washrooms by requiring them to be private and completely enclosed, have adequate lighting and hand sanitizer (where running water is not reasonably possible) and doubling the number of toilets on most jobsites.



These changes are part of a larger package that expands on the ground-breaking actions introduced in the *Working for Worker Acts, 2021 and 2022*, which are already helping millions of people. These regulatory amendments are part of a comprehensive strategy to meet labour demand, bring better jobs and bigger paycheques within reach for more people, and attract and equip people to thrive in today's world of work.

These proposed amendments to the Construction Projects Regulation help promote diversity and inclusivity in the workplace by, if approved, explicitly requiring that personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing be properly fitted to women and workers with diverse body types.

Ontario's construction sector will need to hire an additional 72.00 workers over the next six years due to retirements and expected job growth. Making these types of workplaces more inclusive to a diversity of people will be a key factor in attracting more skilled workers.