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New partnership creates unique way to protect farmland in Ontario

Stratford, Ontario – Ontario residents can now play a direct role in the long-term preservation of farmlands in the province by donating to a new stewardship fund created by the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) in partnership with the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation (SPCCF). The [Ontario Farmland Trust Stewardship Fund](#) becomes part of the family of endowment funds held by SPCCF.

Part of a province-wide “Care for the Land you Love” campaign, the partnership is one of 14 initiatives between community foundations and their area land trusts that offer donors a whole new way to help protect their local eco-systems and farmlands. An initiative led by Community Foundations of Canada and the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the campaign is working to raise awareness and funds to maintain the more than 60,000 acres of special lands under land trust care in the province.

"The partnership with the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation will help us raise the endowment funds needed to maintain and preserve important farmlands for generations to come," said Bruce Mackenzie, Executive Director of the Ontario Farmland Trust. "We hope that as the Fund grows it will provide the income necessary to steward the lands entrusted to us for long term farmland preservation."

"The earnings from those funds will be used every year to help us conduct annual monitoring, property and building maintenance, maintain regular contact with landowners, and undertake environmental enhancement projects," said Bruce Mackenzie.

The OFT and SPCCF will work together to identify potential donors to contribute to the Land Stewardship Fund. Gifts to the Fund will receive a charitable tax receipt for the whole amount and can be made by cheque or credit card by following the instructions at www.spccf.ca. Donations to the Fund will form a permanent endowment to create a lasting source of revenue for local farmland stewardship activities.

Each local partnership, in the “Care for the Land you Love” campaign allows donors to double the impact of their gifts as every dollar contributed by the end of 2011 will be matched up to a total of \$20,000, thanks to the participation of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and Community Foundations of Canada.

"Preserving farmland and endowment-building really seemed like a natural fit to us," said Elizabeth Hachborn, Executive Director of the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation. "In Perth County approximately 90% of our total land area is classified as prime agricultural land. We wanted to take a leadership role in ensuring that Ontario remains self-sufficient in food production. We are also acutely aware of the local industry and commerce that is supported by agriculture. We're excited to be part of this innovative program and look forward to working with the Ontario Farmland Trust to ensure a vital agricultural economy in Ontario."

The Ontario Farmland Trust

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) established in 2004, protects and preserves farmland and associated agricultural, natural and cultural features of the countryside. OFT conducts research and education activities to further the preservation of these lands for the benefit of current and future generations. OFT protects farmland by working directly with landowners who want to permanently protect their farm properties for farming. This includes accepting donations of farmlands and farmland conservation easements. OFT easements allow landowners to continue owning and using their properties while placing some non-farm development restrictions on the land. To date 600 acres of farmland have been protected. For more information visit: www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation

Founded in 2004, the SPCCF manages over \$1 million in community assets, awarding grants annually to local non-profit organizations. The Foundation brings local knowledge, experience and a network of community relationships to its work with donors and grant recipients. The Foundation was recently awarded the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award in the Community Service category. For more information visit: www.spccf.ca.

'Care for the Land You Love' is supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation Future Fund Program. Additional information about the Ontario Farmland Trust and Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation partnership can be found on their respective websites.

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Media Contacts:

Bruce Mackenzie, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Trust
(519) 824-4120 x52686; bruce@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

Elizabeth Hachborn, Executive Director, Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation
(519)271-1503; ehachborn@spccf.ca