

April 13, 2012

The Honourable Michael Gravelle, MPP
Minister of Natural Resources
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 6630
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1W3

Dear Minister Gravelle;

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has a long-standing interest in the impacts on agricultural operations of elk, reintroduced into Ontario in the late 1990s. Over the intervening years, we have repeatedly advocated for a means for farmers in the reintroduction areas, particularly Bancroft North Hastings and Lake Huron North Shore, to have options available to respond to elk damaging agricultural property.

We applauded the Ontario Government's initiative in 2010 to amend the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* to enable the Ministry to issue authorizations to farmers, to harass or kill elk. We actively participated in consultations with your Ministry on the development of the "Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk", which came into effect January 2011.

Following the implementation of the Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk", the Ministry issued a limited number of authorizations to either harass or kill elk.

Regrettably, we are now hearing that no further authorizations have been issued since last October's provincial election.

Minister, farmers in both Bancroft North Hastings and Lake Huron North Shore are again reporting incidents of elk damaging agricultural crops and stored feed. With the onset of Spring, many agricultural crops are beginning to grow. Feeding on the emerging plants by herds of 50 or more animals, as reported from Bancroft North Hastings poses a significant threat to farm viability in these areas. Crops damaged or destroyed by feeding elk now will not produce the crop anticipated or required.

We have been told that authorizations to harass or kill elk to protect agricultural crops and stored feed from elk require your signature. Minister, we urge you to sign those awaiting authorizations as soon as possible. Furthermore, we urge that subsequent applications for an authorization are acted upon promptly.

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The Bancroft North Hastings and Lake Huron North Shore need to develop a fear of mankind. The combination of a fall hunt, along with authorizations to harass or kill elk to protect agricultural crops and stored feed are necessary to achieve this goal. The timely issuance of authorizations under the Ministry's "Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk" is critical.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Wales
President

cc: Hon. Ted McMeekin, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors