



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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October 19, 2015

Ms. Fiona McGuiness
Senior Policy Advisor
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
300 Water Street
Peterborough, ON
K9J 8M5

Dear Ms. McGuiness;

RE: EBR Registry 012-5138; Amendment to Ontario Regulation 197/11 made under the Endangered Species Act, 2007 with regard to agricultural operations and Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 36,000 family farm businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of our robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

The OFA welcomes this opportunity to present its perspective on the regulatory provisions relating to agricultural operations and Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark. The OFA has a long-standing involvement in this.

The amendments to Ontario Regulation 197/11 propose to extend the current exemption for agricultural operations for ten (10) years. The OFA wholeheartedly supports a 10-year extension of the agricultural operations exemption. This provides certainty to farmers who rely upon grass pastures and hayfields for their livestock operations, or who incorporate hay as part of their crop rotation cycle. The exemption addresses concerns that agricultural cropland conversions might be prohibited.

The OFA further endorses the development of grassland stewardship initiatives to assist in the recovery objectives for Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark.

The OFA thanks the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for proposing an extension of the agricultural operations exemption for Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark for 10 more years. The time will enable Ontario to assess the impacts of its Recovery Strategy for Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark, the recovery solution proposed by the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark Roundtable and a status reassessment of both birds by the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario before the end of the agricultural operations exemption on December 31, 2025.

The OFA looks forward to the adoption of amendments to Ontario Regulation 197/11 well before December 31, 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don McCabe".

Don McCabe
President

DM/pj

cc: Hon. Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors