



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

100 Stone Road West, Suite 206, Guelph, Ontario N1G 5L3
Tel: (519) 821-8883 • Fax: (519) 821-8810 • www.ofa.on.ca

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Ministry of Education
Capital Policy and Programs Branch
900 Bay Street
Mowat Block, Floor 19
Toronto, ON
M7A 1L2

BSB@ontario.ca

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Proposal 15-EDU003 Consultation on the Disposition of Surplus School Property

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is pleased to have this opportunity to provide our input on “**Proposal 15-EDU003 Consultation on the Disposition of Surplus School Property**”.

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.

In order to keep farm families on the farm and maintain their substantial contributions to the economy, farmers require access to a variety of affordable services and infrastructure. This includes our schools. Schools play a very important role in rural communities. Not only are the schools a place where our children spend a large portion of their days being educated; they are also our children’s playgrounds, adult learning centres, child care centres, community centres, recreational facilities, and meeting halls. Without such facilities available, it becomes difficult to maintain a viable population and economic base in rural areas. The use of schools as Community Hubs is already occurring informally throughout many rural areas. Formalizing a process to ensure these alternative uses of surplus schools are supported is very important. It is for these reasons that OFA is supportive of the purpose of this review “keeping surplus school board properties within the public sphere and better co-ordination of public surplus property management processes.”

OFA does not have specific comments regarding the proposed reform options. However, we are supportive of the purpose of the review and want to see an outcome that recognizes that there is only one taxpayer and ensuring that rural communities have access to affordable services and infrastructure. The goal is to ensure viable building space that has been paid for through public money remains available to continue servicing the communities where there is a

need. The review must be sure to consider the proposals from a rural lens as well – ensuring that any of the unique needs of the rural communities will be considered and accommodated through this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don McCabe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "M".

Don McCabe
President