



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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Policy & Innovation Branch
Health System Quality & Funding Division
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
5th Floor Hepburn Block, 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Via Email: ecfaa@ontario.ca

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the proposed changes under the **Excellent Care for All Act, 2010: Supporting the Establishment of the Patient Ombudsman**.

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.

OFA would like to ensure that the Patient Ombudsman and Health Quality Ontario function to their full potential, and in our minds one impactful activity of the Ombudsman would be to report on the provision of and access to, high quality health care services to Ontario's rural residents. We would like to ensure that this Act and all regulations under it will use a "rural lens" as a means of identifying, monitoring and reporting on potential discrepancies in health care access between our rural and urban populations.

OFA asserts that health care is a necessary service for sustaining a community, and also provides considerable economic stimulus. In order to keep farm families on the farm, and maintain their substantial contributions to the economy, farmers require access to a variety of services and infrastructure, including: hospitals, and health care services, facilities and professionals. Residents in rural Ontario must have equal access to affordable, high quality health care services, facilities and practitioners that our urban counterparts can readily access.

In **Rural Roadmap: The Path Forward for Ontario, 2015**, issued by the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Jeff Leal, states that "Healthy, productive and educated Ontarians create successful businesses, drive innovation and contribute to thriving communities... Ontarians deserve high-quality health care wherever they live..." Incorporating consideration of health care provision in rural versus urban Ontario by the Patient Ombudsman and Health Quality Ontario will serve to strengthen this commitment.

The Preamble to the ***Excellent Care for All Act, 2010*** reiterates the need for *all* Ontarians to receive high quality health care that is “*accessible, appropriate, effective, efficient, equitable, integrated, patient centred, population health focussed, and safe*”. Allowing the Patient Ombudsman and Health Quality Ontario to report on health care provision in rural areas fits the intent of this Act.

I trust OFA’s opinions and recommendations will be given due consideration.

Sincerely,



Neil Currie
General Manager