



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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April 24, 2018

Hon. Kathleen Wynne
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture works to address the concerns and interest of Ontario's farm families. We also work closely with rural municipalities and other rural constituents – our neighbours.

Recently, OFA has taken a close look at the proposed High-Speed Rail project. As you know, the route will bisect rural South-West Ontario and significantly affect our farm businesses and our municipalities. We fully recognize that the process is underway to develop the Terms of Reference for the Environmental Assessment, but we have grave concerns that the interests of those most affected may not be fully taken into account.

Your government's messaging indicates the Terms of Reference for the EA includes an approach to "an assessment of alternatives". However, the same messaging includes that the government is "starting work on a number of fronts **to deliver HSR**" (emphasis added). We are not confident that the concerns of farmers and rural communities are to be assessed.

Based on the available information to date we have drafted a position which reads as follows:

- *Fast, efficient, and cost-effective public transportation is vital to **both** rural and urban Ontario. Improved rail transportation is one piece of a comprehensive, integrated transportation system for all of Ontario.*
- *The OFA is highly skeptical that the proposed High-Speed Rail concept will provide sustainable, effective, and efficient transportation with any net benefit for Ontarians.*
- *For rural and small-town Ontario, High Speed Rail downloads all the associated problems, with none of the ascribed benefits. Clearly, the HSR proposal offers no benefits to rural Ontario and our farm communities but imposes significant and potentially devastating costs and consequences.*
- *OFA calls for a comprehensive analysis of costs and benefits of the alternative High-Performance Rail (HPR) proposal including all costs and benefits applicable to rural residents, communities, and farm businesses to determine the viability of High-Performance Rail in Ontario*

- *OFA calls for a comprehensive analysis of costs and benefits of the High-Speed Rail proposal including all costs to rural residents, communities, and farm businesses to determine the viability of High Speed Rail in Ontario; including, but not limited to;*
 - *the impacts of a fenced HSR line on wildlife, natural heritage, and biodiversity,*
 - *the social and economic impacts of a fenced High-Speed Rail corridor physically dividing SW Ontario,*
 - *the impacts for communities across SW Ontario not near or on the HSR line; further losses to VIA service and lost opportunities for local economic and population growth (Producing Prosperity in Ontario (PPIO))*

Our fundamental concern is that the requisite preliminary analysis that may or may not justify a full-blown EA has not been done. On the surface, the apparent costs (capital and human) do not appear to be overshadowed by the potential benefits.

On behalf of our affected farmers and all members concerned with Ontario's fiscal management, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture urges you to solicit a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the proposed project. Likewise, as efficient rail service is an important element of an Ontario transportation system, we urge a comprehensive assessment of the alternative High-Performance Rail System being suggested by community groups.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

cc: Hon. Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Transportation
Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Hon. Chris Ballard, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Hon. Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure
OFA Board of Directors