

March 14, 2019

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

**RE: OMAFRA Agriculture Development Advisors**

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. The Ontario agri-food sector has potential for economic growth and to create more jobs for hardworking Ontarians.

However, OFA is concerned about the ongoing loss of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) extension staff and the negative impact on rural and agricultural communities. OFA works closely with the OMAFRA Agriculture Development Advisors in the north, and Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Advisors in the south. We see firsthand the impact that they have on our communities and the detrimental effect when their position is not replaced when they leave the position or retire.

For example, OMAFRA Agriculture Development Advisors in Northern Ontario have shrunk by half since 2017. There are great distances to travel between farming regions across Northern Ontario and unique climate needs. Initiatives such as the Northern Ontario Agri-Food Strategy identify the need to strengthen and foster growth of the agri-food sector, and OMAFRA staff play an integral role in facilitating these connections.

OFA urges your government to lift the hiring freeze and replace retired OMAFRA staff in these crucial positions in Northern Ontario and across the province.

We appreciate your consideration and commitment to rural and agricultural communities across Ontario.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie  
President

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cc: The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
The Honourable Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines  
The Honourable Victor Fedeli, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Todd Smith, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
OFA Board of Directors