

December 18, 2019

Hon. Michael Tibollo, MPP
Vaughan-Woodbridge
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Tibollo,

On behalf of the OFA, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the time your staff Allan MacDermid spent with us last week at Queen's Park and allowing us to share with you the priorities for Ontario's agriculture and food sector. With strong support and investments in our rural communities, we can unlock continued economic growth opportunities and drive a healthy economy that benefits all Ontarians.

Ontario's diverse and innovative agri-food industry feeds our population, fuels our rural communities and drives the provincial economy, generating more than 837,000 jobs and contributing more than \$47 billion to Ontario's annual GDP. From farmers to our diverse food processing industry, our agri-food sector is a powerhouse of possibilities. OFA is Canada's largest general farm organization, representing more than 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. Ontario's agricultural and agri-food sector is among the most diverse agriculture sectors in North America. With over 200 different agricultural commodities grown and raised right here in Ontario, that's more than any other Canadian province and most U.S. states.

We appreciated the opportunity to discuss with you the unique issues of agriculture and rural Ontario. As discussed, we are enclosing with this letter a report from a pilot project in Lennox & Addington Counties that OFA supported in 2019, demonstrating the need for these services in our rural communities. Also enclosed is a brief outline of a program that is being offered in Quebec by the general farm organization UPA to their members called the Sentinel Program. We would very much appreciate an opportunity meet with you to further discuss where the government may be going in terms of future support for mental health to ensure that the unique needs of agriculture and rural Ontario wellness are covered.

OFA looks forward to continuing the conversation with you and working together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President