

January 9, 2020

Ms. Jennifer French, MPP
Oshawa
Room 185
Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A5

Dear Ms. French:

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the time you spent with us last month 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.

Thank you for your interest in the Thames River Phosphorous Reduction Collaborative (PRC) project¹. This collaborative was established by OFA and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to come up with a strategy for dealing with the problem of toxic algal bloom incidents in the western basin of Lake Erie. We hope that you will consider attending the next PRC conference. Detailed information about the collaborative can be found at: <https://www.thamesriverprc.com/>

As noted in the 2012 Provincial-Municipal Roads and Bridges Review, municipalities own and manage over 15,000 bridge structures, which include both bridges and large culverts. In follow up to our discussion and your request for additional information - government infrastructure investments to replace roadway bridges in Ontario is of great interest to OFA members. This is especially true in Chatham-Kent where there are more than 850 bridges which span more than 3 meters. Closed and load-restricted bridges pose a significant barrier to moving farm equipment between farmland parcels. However, we understand reconstructing all the bridges that need replacing in the short term would put undue financial strain on finite infrastructure budgets.

While respecting finite budgets, it is our experience that some current municipal infrastructure tendering processes do not give full consideration to alternatives to traditional concrete. In some cases, engineering firms have identified alternatives such as metal culverts or advanced fiber reinforced polymer decking which are allowed under the Canadian Highway Bridge Design Code but found their bids rejected as not meeting the tender specifications if the request for tenders specifies a concrete bridge. To ensure the maximum number of bridge projects can be completed with the available budget, it is important that municipalities fully consider all the options.

Thanks again for the opportunity to meet with you and for your interest in these specific areas of priority for Ontario's agricultural community. 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