

January 9, 2020

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell, MPP  
Thunder Bay - Atikokan  
Room 207  
Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1A8

Dear MPP Monteith-Farrell,

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.

At our meeting, you indicated interest in receiving additional information about animal rights activists and special interest groups that are claiming that Bill 156, *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019* is an "ag-gag" bill, hindering whistleblowers, and reducing the ability to report on animal abuse and neglect within the agricultural sector. That is far from the truth. Bill 156 was created to ensure food security through the value chain is protected, from farm to table, balanced with allowing individual's right to protest as long as it is done in a legal manner.

Under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canadians have a fundamental right to freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly. However, there are limits to these rights, as protests must remain "peaceful", not infringe on the rights of others, and cannot break any laws (unlawful conduct). Under the guise of protests, farms have increasingly come under the threat of unwanted trespassers and activists illegally entering property, barns and buildings, seizing private property, and threatening the health and safety of the farm employees, livestock and crops. Under the *Criminal Code of Canada*, protestors are allowed to

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protest on any public property, as long as the protest remains peaceful. As most farms and barns are privately owned, activists are not allowed to assemble on the groups as it is considered private property, and therefore would be considered trespassing. Animals are considered private property under the *Criminal Code of Canada* and the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) Act, 2019*. Removing animals from the barn or property by trespassers and activists is considered theft.

The ability and in fact obligation to report animal abuse is entrenched within the newly introduced *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019*. The Ontario government introduced the new model which allows for individuals who suspect animal abuse or neglect to report directly to the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre, available 24 hours a day. Provincial Animal Welfare Inspectors will investigate the incident, and where appropriate, lay charges. Bill 156, *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019*, provides a balanced approach to protecting farms while recognizing a citizen's right to protest. This new legislation will ensure farm businesses have a legal standing to protect their farm, family and employees, livestock, crops and ultimately the entire food system.

OFA sincerely appreciates the opportunity to meet with you, and provide additional perspective on these specific pieces of legislation affecting Ontario farmers. We look forward to continuing the conversation with you and working together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie  
President