

January 9, 2020

Mr. Zach Potashner
Senior Policy Advisor to Honourable Laurie Scott
777 Bay Street
College Park, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

Dear Mr. Potashner,

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 concerns raised about infrastructure costs to municipalities as it relates to roads and bridges. 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 - 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.

Again, thank you for your time, and OFA looks forward to continuing the conversation with you and working together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities. If we can provide any further information on this subject matter we would be happy to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Currie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Currie".

Keith Currie
President