

August 14, 2020

Ms. Antonia Testa
Special Project Officer
Project Coordination – Team 2
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
135 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, ON M4V 1P5

Dear Ms. Testa,

RE: ERO 019-1882 Proposed regulation for a streamlined environmental assessment process for the Ministry of Transportation’s Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor project

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada’s largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of a robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs) are referenced in A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement as studies *“that evaluate the potential impacts on non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the Agricultural System and recommends ways to avoid, or if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse effects”*. OFA firmly believes in the widespread use of AIAs to ensure that any negative impacts of proposed developments are first avoided, then minimized and lastly mitigated. Ontario’s agricultural lands are a finite and shrinking resource that all Ontarians benefit from, not only for the ability of these lands to provide us with a secure supply of safe, affordable and environmentally sustainable food, fibre and fuel but also for the concurrent environmental and ecological goods and services that all Ontarians derive from our agricultural lands, in alphabetical order, include; aesthetic and recreational space, air quality, including oxygen production, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, climate change mitigation, nutrient cycling, pollination services, soil erosion control, water cycling (purification, retention, flood mitigation, groundwater recharge), and wildlife and endangered species habitat. OFA strongly recommends that despite the desire to streamline environmental assessments or exempt various Ministry of Transportation projects from environmental assessments, that agricultural impact assessments be an integral part of project planning, design, and construction.

OFA appreciates this opportunity to provide an agriculturally focused response to ERO 019-1882 with an eye to seeing the Ministry of Transportation's highway design criteria reflect farm vehicle usage of provincial highways.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

KC/pj

cc: The Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
The Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
OFA Board of Directors

