

August 25, 2020

Mr. Erin O'Toole
Leader of the Conservative Party and the Official Opposition of Canada
Member of Parliament, Durham

Dear Mr. O'Toole,

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I would like to congratulate you on being elected as the new Leader of the Conservative Party and the Official Opposition of Canada. We know your extensive knowledge and experience as an Ontario MP and former Cabinet Minister in the Harper Government will serve you well as you lead the Conservative Party of Canada. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to unlock continued economic growth opportunities for Ontario's agri-food sector and drive a healthy economy that benefits all Ontarians and contributes to all Canadians.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new reality for all Ontarians and Canadians as the changes and challenges to our environment continue to mount each day. Ontarians rely on the agri-food system to ensure they have steady and reliable access to safe, healthy and affordable food products. Farmers are well-known for their resilience and perseverance. But, even before the COVID-19 crisis, farmers were coping with a difficult year that included multiple rail disruptions, a shortage of meat processing capacity and volatile global trade and market access.

The pandemic has caused business interruptions for farmers across the province, including lost, limited or delayed access to labour, interrupted on-farm services, like feed and agronomy consultations. Farmers are experiencing problems getting their products to market, or experiencing the loss of markets altogether.

Ontario's diverse and innovative agri-food industry feeds our population, continues to provide positive environmental and climate change benefits, fuels our rural communities and services as an economic engine for the provincial economy, generating more than 860,000 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. We encourage you and all party members to ensure that strategic infrastructure investments and food security is prioritized at the federal level. Ensuring a viable, agri-food sector is critical throughout this crisis, but to the long-term success and recovery of the province and our country.

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.



OFA looks forward to continuing the conversation with you and working together to strengthen the agri-food sector and rural communities in Ontario and across Canada. Please feel free to reach out anytime for additional information on issues, priorities or opportunities in Ontario's agri-food sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Keith Currie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" and the last name "Currie" clearly distinguishable.

Keith Currie
President