

September 16, 2020

Mr. Eric Melillo
Shadow Minister, Northern Affairs & Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario
Conservative Party of Canada
Member of Parliament, Kenora

Dear Mr. Melillo,

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), we would like to congratulate you on being appointed the Shadow Minister of Northern Affairs & Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario for the Conservative Party of Canada. We know your knowledge, experience and leadership abilities will be a great asset in your new role. We look forward to working together to unlock continued economic growth opportunities for Ontario's agri-food sector. We hope that with you and your colleague's guidance we can drive a healthy economy that benefits all Ontarians and contributes to all Canadians.

Farming in northern Ontario remains a significant driver of economic activity that continues to make large contributions to the provincial economy. A study completed by OFA analyzing the northern Ontario farm sector's economic impact discovered that farm-level commodity sales (farm cash receipts) have grown over the past ten years, supporting 12,220 jobs and contributing \$587 million in GDP to the provincial economy.

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.

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 serves 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, not only throughout this crisis, but to the long-term success and recovery of the province and our country.

OFA looks forward to continuing the conversation with you and working collaboratively 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,



Keith Currie
President



Peggy Brekveld
Vice President
Director-at-Large, Thunder Bay



Mark Kunkel
Zone 15 Director, Algoma-Cochrane-Dryden-Kenora-Manitoulin/North Shore-Muskoka-Nipissing
East & West-Parry Sound-Rainy River-Sudbury East & West-Temiskaming-Thunder Bay