

October 14, 2020

Hon Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
56 Wellesley St. W, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 2E7

Hon Ernie Hardeman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville St., 11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5S 1B3

Dear Ministers,

RE: Red Tape Reduction: Removing the Automatic Cessation of a Nutrient Management Plan

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) proudly represents more than 38,000 farm family members across the province, supporting our members and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. OFA works to ensure the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability of our farm businesses. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

OFA is in favour of the Ontario government's efforts to remove regulatory burdens and the related costs for businesses. One such costly regulatory burden faced by producers in Ontario is the 5-year Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) cessation trigger when there have not been any substantial changes to the farm operation. Requiring farmers to endure the substantive cost and time requirement of engaging a consultant to complete and submit a new NMP for review, on a farm that has not had any substantive changes does little to nothing in advancing environmental protections.

The limited value of replicating existing regulatory tools without substantive changes was recognized on July 1, 2019, when the Nutrient Management Regulation was amended and streamlined to remove the automatic five-year expiration associated with a Nutrient Management Strategy (NMS). However, the NMP cessation requirement remained.

The purpose of the *Nutrient Management Act* is to “provide for the management of materials containing nutrients in ways that will enhance protection of the natural environment and provide a sustainable future for agricultural operations and rural development.” In the simplest terms, a

NMS outlines how to manage nutrients generated on the farm, whereas a NMP details how these nutrients are applied to the land. These nutrient management plans and strategies are scientifically based. Currently, a NMP “expires” after 5 years and a farmer must have a new one prepared, even if the operation has not undergone any significant changes to the nutrients. The new plan must be reviewed and approved by government staff. This process adds very little, if any value to environmental protection when the NMP does not require any changes. It also adds compliance costs to farmers as well as regulatory administration costs for taxpayers.

OFA believes there are other, more effective means of ensuring the environmental protection of an NMP without the administrative costs to both the farmer and the government. Over the past several months, OFA and livestock commodity organization staff have discussed this issue with OMAFRA and MECP staff through the Nutrient Management Efficiency and Continuous Improvement Discussion Forum. In those discussions, the proposal of removing the NMP 5-year cessation for farms that do not have a substantial change has been well received. The group has been discussing options that if implemented properly, could reduce paperwork burden and cost while providing a similar if not better level of environmental protection and accountability.

We would like to request your consideration of the regulatory changes required to enable this approach and to direct Ministry staff to further engage with OFA and other impacted commodity groups, to develop an alternative that is mutually agreeable and will reduce the regulatory burden.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

cc: Minister Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Mr. Scott Helps, Chair, Egg Farmers of Ontario
Mr. Eric Schwindt, Chair, Ontario Pork
Mr. Murray Sherk, Chair, Dairy Farmers of Ontario
Mr. Marc Carere, Chair, Ontario Sheep Farmers
Mr. Rob Lipsett, President, Beef Farmers of Ontario
OFA Board of Directors