

October 16, 2020

3rd Floor
5700 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M2M 4K5

(Submitted online via Environmental Registry of Ontario)

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is pleased to have this opportunity to comment on proposal number **20-HLTC035 - Improving Access to Exceptional Access Program Drugs for Ontarians Living Near Manitoba and Quebec Borders**.

OFA is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members across the province. OFA has a strong voice for our members and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. We are passionate and dedicated to ensuring the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability and growth of our farm businesses.

Ontario's diverse and innovative agri-food sector is a powerhouse for the province – growing and producing more than 200 farm and food products, fuelling our rural communities and driving the provincial economy by generating more than 860,000 jobs and contributing over \$47 billion to Ontario's annual GDP. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

OFA is in favour of these proposed changes. For the purposes of Ontario's Exceptional Access Program (EAP), these proposed changes would give the status of "authorized prescribers" to Quebec and Manitoba physicians and nurses with drug-prescribing authority. OFA asserts that health care is a necessary service for sustaining a community, and also provides considerable economic stimulus. In order to keep farm families on the farm, and maintain their substantial contributions to the economy, farmers require access to a variety of services and infrastructure, including hospitals, and health care services, facilities and professionals. Residents in rural Ontario must have equal access to affordable, high quality health care services, facilities, and practitioners that our urban counterparts can readily access. This proposed change to the *Ontario Drug Benefit Act* recognizes that some Ontario residents living near the provincial borders may have easier access to health care professionals in Quebec or Manitoba.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors