

December 17, 2020

The Honourable Jeff Yurek
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 2T5

Dear Minister Yurek,

You may remember me from the Conservation Authority consultation in North Bay, one of the last in-person events we were all able to attend last March. I presented to the group on behalf of Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), and we spoke later at the back of the room about the roles of agriculture and its interaction with Conservation Authorities. I appreciated your reflections on the work of Conservation Authorities.

OFA welcomes yesterday's announcement of a working group to help implement your government's recent amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and we would like to be an active participant in the process by being named as a formal member of the working group.

The majority of OFA's 38,000 farm family members live and farm under one or more conservation authorities, giving us a unique perspective on interactions between farmers and Conservation Authorities. We share values with Conservation Authorities, including delivery of watershed and stewardship programs to protect people and property from flooding and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits for the benefit of all Ontarians.

OFA is keenly aware of areas in the province where the relationship between agriculture and the local Conservation Authority is strong and working in partnership. In other areas there are real challenges and weaknesses. We'd like to see and facilitate the exchange of best management practices between the Authorities, which would benefit all residents of the watershed. Including OFA as a full participant in this working group will enable us to share our perspective on the mandatory core programs and services Conservation Authorities are required to deliver and those non-mandatory programs and services Conservation Authorities deliver for municipalities. The opportunity to evaluate and make suggestions for improvements is welcome.

OFA's participation would also reinforce the recent amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* that provide for an agriculture sector appointee to an authority's board. I would be happy to chat with you about OFA's interest in participating in this process and elaborate on what we would bring to this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Brekveld". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors