

October 14, 2022

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
5775 Yonge Street - 16th Floor
Toronto Ontario M7A 2E5

Hon. Michael Kerzner
Solicitor General
Ministry of the Solicitor General
25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1Y6

Dear Ministers,

RE: Coordinating the consistent application of the What3Words application across emergency services in Ontario

The landscape of rural and remote areas naturally presents significantly greater uncertainty for pinpointing the location of an emergency incident when compared to urban areas. While accidents on the farm can happen anywhere, the most recent report from the Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting (CAIR) for 2003-2012 indicates that of the 780 agriculture-related fatalities during this period, the majority occurred out in fields, in woodlots or orchards, or on roadways far from areas readily identified by a civic address. When precious moments can make all the difference in an emergency situation, we believe it is vital to use all the tools and technology at hand to increase accuracy and reduce response time for emergency services.

As a farm organization, we never want to see accidents happen. But when they do, we hope that any tool that can bring help faster will be available. The recommendation below is a very low cost efficient tool that we believe government can promote to emergency services and citizens across the province.

The What3Words (www.what3words.com) application (app) divides the world into three metre by three metre squares and gives each square a unique combination of three words. Using words rather than strings of numbers or letters to encode location provides a simple and accessible way to identify the site of an emergency incident – saving time and reducing error. Administration of the app is simple and integration into existing systems is not technically complex. Further, the app developers have indicated that there are no fees charged to emergency services employing the technology.

Currently, there are 34 fire, ambulance, and police services in Ontario that have adopted the What3Words application to improve their ability to find people in need of help. While the Ontario

Provincial Police (OPP) have adopted the app for their jurisdiction, what remains is a patchwork of regional and municipal emergency services using the app to supplement existing means of locating people in need of critical assistance. This inconsistent use not only results in gaps in application, but potential confusion among callers regarding where the service is and is not available.

OFA requests that the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and the Ministry of the Solicitor General examine the feasibility of extending the use of What3Words application across emergency services within their administration. We see this as a simple, easily implemented solution that can serve as a bridge until integrated systems such as the Advanced Mobile Location (AML) are available in Canada.

We believe this would also nicely complement an existing program, Farm911 - The Emily Project (www.farm911.ca). This is a grassroots initiative that strives to improve emergency services in rural communities by assisting landowners to request a civic address from their municipality for entrances to their vacant farm fields.

While we continue to work tirelessly to protect our farm workers and owners from injury, farming remains a dangerous profession. What3Words is another option for emergency services to use to locate and provide urgent care to Ontario's rural and remote residents.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors

About the OFA:

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.