

November 30, 2022

Mr. John Vanthof, Critic, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Room 348
Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A8

JVanthof@ndp.on.ca

Dear Mr. John Vanthof,

Re: Bill 27, Protecting Agricultural Land Act, 2022

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 agrifood 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.

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. Decision-makers must never lose sight of this reality when making decisions about housing for population and employment growth and the potential impacts to agricultural land, industries, and communities.

OFA supports Bill 27, Protecting Agricultural Land Act, 2022 as drafted. This Bill requires that any potential rezoning of agricultural land be subject to an Agricultural Impact Assessment. We believe that provincially, the protection of Ontario's prime agricultural areas for their long-term agricultural use must be a key objective, and Bill 27 has the potential to contribute to this.

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is a critical tool that is used to evaluate the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the agricultural system, and recommends ways to avoid or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts.

AIAs have been a long-standing OFA ask of government. They first were mentioned during the Co-ordinated 4-Plan Review, which then vice-president Keith Currie, was a part of. It was seen as a way to strategically consider where development should go, and OFA continues to see AIAs as a tool for long term land use planning.

Farmland makes up less than 5% of Ontario's land base. Ontario's agricultural lands are a finite and shrinking resource. We cannot sustain continuing losses of agricultural land while maintaining our ability to produce food, fibre and fuel from this limited and declining agricultural land base. When agricultural land is developed, it is lost forever.

If our province plans to continue to grow and prosper, we must also have a plan to protect Ontario's position to produce food, fibre, and fuel for the people of Ontario and beyond. This includes supporting initiatives that will protect our farmland – such as Bill 27.

We appreciate and support your private members bill - Bill 27, Protecting Agricultural Land Act.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors