

October 16, 2023

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5G 1B3

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson, Minister
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Calandra and Minister Thompson,

RE: Agricultural System Approach and Agricultural Impact Assessments (Resolution # 22-11-09)

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) would like to make you aware of our position and request your help to maintain the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 policies that require municipalities to use the provincially mapped agricultural system, as these policies reduce or eliminate agricultural fragmentation, inconsistent classification of agricultural lands and specialty crop areas and disconnect in agricultural land mapping and classifications across municipal boundaries.

In addition to this, OFA would like to emphasize the importance of Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs) across all proposed agricultural land conversions to non-agricultural land use in Ontario. OFA was pleased that the proposed Provincial Planning Statement included an AIA definition. In our July 31, 2023 submission (ERO # 019-6813), OFA reiterated our position that an AIA must (not should) be completed under section 2.3 Settlement Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions. We are pleased to see the requirement for “avoiding, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated as determined through an agricultural impact assessment...” in section 4.3.5 Non-Agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas. We were also very pleased to see the application of 4.3.5.2 applied to Mineral Aggregate Extraction in Prime Agricultural Areas under 4.5.4.1.a. Avoiding impacts to agricultural areas from mineral extraction is an important protection of Ontario’s limited agricultural lands.

OFA believes that farming to produce food, fibre, fuel, flowers, and nursery stock is the best use for farmland. Ontario’s limited supply of farmland is a scarce resource, making up less than five per cent of all the land in the province. It’s vital that Ontario has a strong, viable and sustainable supply of food products grown, harvested, and processed right here at home. Ontario’s shrinking agricultural land base is alarming. The current rate of loss is measured at 319 acres per day in our province, according to the 2021 Census of Agriculture. These losses are not sustainable. The

full range of urban, rural, agricultural, natural heritage, cultural heritage and mineral extraction land uses must coexist across this landscape. Provincially, the protection of Ontario's prime agricultural areas for their long-term agricultural use must be a key objective. As such, the use and requirements for Agricultural System Mapping and Agricultural Impact Assessments are critical for the protection of Ontario's agricultural land.

As Ontario's largest general farm organization, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm family members, OFA looks forward to working with the ministries to combat agricultural land fragmentation, deterioration, and loss.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: Melissa Schnieder, President, Elgin Federation of Agriculture
OFA Board of Directors
Laura Fraser, OFA Member Service Representative – Elgin, Oxford