

October 23, 2023

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez
Minister of Transportation
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Sent via email to TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca

Dear Minister Pablo Rodriguez,

RE: Existing private railway crossings

I am writing today to express concern about an issue that I believe you can have influence on. Access to our fields, crops and pastures is necessary to Ontario farmers. An issue has arisen for several farmers across Canada that have private railway crossings on their land. As such, on behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), proudly representing more than 38,000 farm businesses across Ontario, we request your assistance.

Many farmers have had long established private crossings arrangements that they use to access their farmlands on the other side of railway tracks. Where the railway company has historically conducted all maintenance and upgrades of the crossing at the railway's expense, we expect these arrangements to continue. We are troubled to learn of situations where our members are being required by the railway company to now sign a new private crossing agreement contract, which would shift costs and responsibilities from the railway company onto the farmer.

Railways companies are federally regulated, and because of this, OFA is reaching out to you. We ask that you urge railway companies to meet their pre-established obligations with respect to existing private railway crossings. We also ask for any assistance you can provide to persuade railway companies to cease any unilateral action to revise, in their favour, the terms and/or conditions associated with an existing private crossing agreement or arrangement. Such actions are currently happening and weakening relationships with farmers as we speak.

This request is supported by the OFA; on October 20, 2023, OFA's Board of Directors passed a resolution (# 23-10-01), submitted by the Oxford County Federation of Agriculture, requesting that you advise the federal-regulated railway companies that they should not require a new agreement for a private crossing from landowners where an existing private crossing exists.

OFA looks forward to your reply to our request.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld
President

cc: Arpan Khanna, Member of Parliament (Oxford)
Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Keith Currie, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Dirk Boogerd, President, Oxford County Federation of Agriculture
OFA Board of Directors
Laura Fraser, OFA Member Service Representative (Oxford & Elgin Counties)
Paul Nairn, OFA Manager of Member Services (Western Ontario Region)