

November 28, 2023

Katerina Downard
Environmental Policy Office
438 University Ave, 12th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 1N3

Via email to Katerina.Downard@ontario.ca and submitted through the Environmental Registry of Ontario

Dear Katerina Downard,

RE: ERO 019-5275 Ontario Marine Transportation Strategy

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on Ontario's Marine Transportation Strategy. We are pleased that the Ministry of Transportation sees the importance of thorough reviews of regional transportation strategies and inter-modal connections. While we support creating a more efficient marine transport strategy, we emphasise that this requires consideration of our food safety, food security and the health of our livestock. OFA recommends the Ministry address key barriers to the growth and sustainability of Ontario's agricultural sector. Our topline feedback is summarized below:

- Ensure sufficient ferry capacity is in place to accommodate the movement of agricultural inputs, equipment and production for farm businesses on Wolfe, Amherst and Howe Islands in eastern Lake Ontario, Pelee Island in Lake Erie, and Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron. While these islands are predominantly farm communities, ferry services need to be able to accommodate seasonal recreational and tourist traffic while ensuring farm production and support services move freely during critical planting, development and harvest windows.
- While the Marine Transport Strategy review intends to solidify our inter-modal transportation system, improve efficiencies, and reduce costs and shipping delays, considering Canada's economy is reliant on exports, we recommend the Ministry of Transportation work with transport stakeholders to reduce the risks of critical transportation infrastructure delays and work stoppages.
- Each year, Canadians export almost \$US 200 billion in agricultural production and processed food and beverages; annual imports are about \$US 135 billion¹. As climate uncertainty and

¹ World Integrated Trade Solution; United Nations Statistical Division, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/CAN/Year/2021/TradeFlow/EXPIMP/Partner/all/Product/Total>

political unrest increase globally, Canada must continue to be seen as a stable source of high quality agricultural and agri-food products. Delays transporting livestock and harvested crops to markets risks impacting the quality, safety and security of our food systems and the health of our livestock.

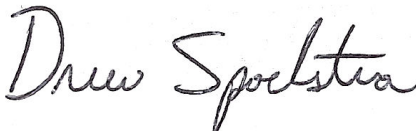
Billions of dollars' worth of goods move through Ontario every day. Exports of these goods are major components of Canada's economy. The efficient movement of goods and cargo across our borders is critical to supporting our post-COVID recovery and keeping the economy moving.

This is no more evident than in the agricultural sector. Over 90 percent of Canada's farmers are dependent on exports, as is about 40 percent of our food processing sector². Ensuring the reliability of our seaway transportation is critical to the agricultural sector and many other sectors reliant on international trade. While Canada strives to become a leading global source of safe, healthy agri-foods, it is essential that all of our transportation modes remain stable, effective, efficient, and reliable.

We support the Ministry's intention to complete the provincial ferry review and develop a strategic ferry policy. While we understand the pressures of accommodating thousands of seasonal travellers, it is important that decision-makers consider the predominantly agricultural communities on islands connected by ferry services in the Great Lakes. Planting, growing and harvest seasons are brief and farm production is contingent on weather. It is important that farmers have stable access to transport production to the mainland and to get inputs, veterinary services and equipment repair support in a timely manner, during brief crop cycle windows and critical stages of livestock development.

OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide input from an agricultural perspectives on Ontario's marine transportation sector. We look forward to working with the provincial government to support infrastructure development that protects human health and the environment, while ensuring the sustainability of agriculture in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra
President

cc: The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation minister.mto@ontario.ca
OFA Board of Directors

² Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance <https://cafta.org/agri-food-exports/#:~:text=We%20export%20half%20of%20our,of%20our%20food%20processing%20sector>.