

**Ministry of Natural  
Resources and Forestry**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère des Richesses  
naturelles et des Forêts**

Bureau du ministre

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Toronto ON M7A 1W3  
Tél.: 416 314-2301



354-2023-1357

December 7, 2023

Peggy Brekveld  
President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
[peggy.brekveld@ofa.on.ca](mailto:peggy.brekveld@ofa.on.ca)

Dear Peggy Brekveld:

Thank you for your letter outlining your request regarding the development of ministry policies to support the timely release of Crown land for agricultural purposes in Northern Ontario. I recognize the important role agriculture plays in our provincial economy and in the development of our local communities, including those in Northern Ontario.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for the planning, management, sale and disposition of public land (also referred to as Crown land) under the *Public Lands Act*. The ministry's current framework supports opportunities that may provide for the socio-economic development of our communities, where these opportunities are compatible with environmental and ecological integrity and relevant policy direction. As you mention, this policy direction includes the [Applicant's Guide to Applying for Crown Land for Agricultural Purposes in Northern Ontario](#).

All applications to buy or rent public land are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and are screened against the ministry's Class Environmental Assessment for Resource Stewardship and Facility Development Projects. The ministry must also fulfill its obligations to consult Indigenous communities when contemplating conduct or activities that may adversely impact Indigenous or treaty rights. Applications must also align with the land use planning direction for the area, available in the [Crown Land use Planning Atlas](#).

My ministry understands that to better support growth and prosperity in Ontario's northern regions, access to public lands needs to be provided in a straightforward and timely way. We are committed to creating an environment where those seeking to access public land for economic development projects go through a straightforward and simple process, helping our rural and remote communities build brighter futures and foster growth for generations to come.

You may have noticed in the [Fall 2021 Red Tape reduction statement](#) that we committed to reviewing ways to streamline the disposition process and make it easier to

purchase public land to support economic development. As an important stakeholder organization, we will ensure that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is engaged as we improve our processes.

We also continue to work closely with our partner ministries, including the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to evaluate proposals for public land from the agricultural industry and to identify opportunities to improve our application processes.

Thank you again for writing and for the efforts of your organization in supporting agriculture in Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graydon Smith', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Graydon Smith  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

c: The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
Wendy Beaton, Corporate Secretary, Ontario Federation of Agriculture