

March 22, 2024

Matthew Rae, MPP
Perth Wellington
55 Lorne Ave E, Unit 2
Stratford, ON
N5A 6S4

Dear MPP Rae:

On behalf of the board of directors of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), I want to express our support for your Private Member's Bill – **Growing Agritourism Act, 2024**.

Agritourism provides an important connection between urban and rural Ontario and for many Ontarians it provides an opportunity to access and support local food, reconnect with nature, and learn about where their food comes from. For farmers, it offers new market opportunities for their businesses, diversification of income, and helps to positively shape consumer perceptions of modern farming and food production.

In 2022, OFA conducted a local food and agritourism survey of our membership. 492 respondents replied to our survey and indicated they are, or would like to offer some level of agritourism on their farm. More than 40% of respondents indicated that selling value-added products ranging from baked goods and wool to preserves and prepared meals, as well as providing on-farm experiences provided opportunities to both diversify farm income and raise awareness of the farm and agriculture sector with urban neighbours. Also in 2022, OFA partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario to undertake a State of the Ontario Tourism Industry report.

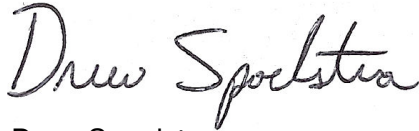
Both the survey and the Tourism report, pointed to the need for the OFA to continue to work with all levels of government to provide and promote the economic environment and conditions to help these farm businesses grow and succeed. Ways we can do that together include removing barriers such as red tape, unnecessary regulatory and financial burdens, and mitigating risk for farm businesses involved in agritourism.

This Bill serves to address one of those barriers or risks to the farm operation, identified by our members by providing a reasonable *limitation of liability* resulting from any harm a participant may sustain during participation in an agritourism activity. OFA would be pleased to work with the Ontario government, farm and business insurance providers and other stakeholders to support this Bill, and work towards a consistent, province-wide

approach to ensuring visitors, participants and farm operators are aware of inherent risks of visiting a farm and limiting the liability of the farm owner.

OFA is pleased to support the Growing Agritourism Act, 2024 and happy to share the results of our member survey and speak to the private members bill at the appropriate time in the future. Thank you for your advocacy and support of Ontario's growing Agritourism sector.

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors
Ontario Chamber of Commerce