

June 17, 2024

Economic Development Policy Branch
1 Stone Road West
Guelph, ON N1G 4Y2

Submitted through the Ontario Regulatory Registry

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Proposal 24-OMAFRA011: Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 701/20 - General, made under the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) proudly represents more than 38,000 farm family members across the province, supporting our members and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. OFA works to ensure the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability of our farm businesses. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

The viability of our food supply chain is in jeopardy without the ability to safely and securely produce, process, and distribute farming products to Ontarians, Canadians, and the world. Ontario's agri-food sector welcomed the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020*. The Act was developed to respect the right to peaceful public protest while giving the justice system the tools it needed to help protect farmers, farm animals, and the agri-food system from the risks posed by trespass, and unauthorized interference and interactions with farm animals. Mitigating the risks posed by biosecurity breaches, exposing livestock and poultry to diseases and stress, and preventing contaminants from being introduced into the food supply helps to maintain a strong, reliable agri-food system. OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide our perspective on proposal **24-OMAFRA11: Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 701/20- General, made under the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020**.

OFA was pleased that the Ontario Superior Court of Justice recently upheld the Act in its entirety after a 2021 court challenge and that the legislation was determined to be completely constitutional. OFA supports the government's proposed amendments to sections of Ontario Regulation 701/20- General under the Act, which would clarify the definition of "harm to a farm animal", and the provisions relating to false pretenses, and journalist and whistle-blower exceptions.

Consent under false pretences provisions in the legislation and corresponding regulation are integral in maintaining animal safety and food security. False statements and exceptions for obtaining consent under false pretenses can lead to potentially serious biosecurity breaches and put the health and safety of humans, animals, and ultimately the food system at risk. The proposed clarifications to the regulatory provisions pertaining to false pretenses and exceptions reflect the original intent of the regulation and will help strengthen the legislation's objective of animal safety and food security.

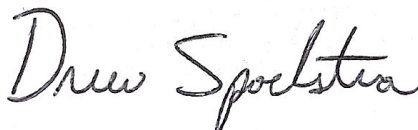
Ontario farmers are proud of the care they provide their animals, following strict codes of practice to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their farm animals. OFA has zero tolerance for animal abuse or neglect and believes that animal welfare is of the utmost importance. We believe anyone who suspects that animals are being abused has an obligation to report to the appropriate authorities, including local police departments and to Ontario's Animal Welfare Services.

OFA supports the right to peaceful protest, however, believes that no individual or group has the right to enter private property or places of business, or to interact with animals without consent, to ensure the protection of the agri-food system, from farm to table.

Home and work are uniquely connected for many Ontario farm families. They depend on the safety and security of their farms to raise livestock, and grow and produce food to maintain a strong, reliable food supply. When people trespass on farms or in barns, or interact with farm animals without consent, they are doing so at someone's place of business and their home. This negatively affects the mental health and well-being of Ontario's farmers, and puts the safety and security of farmers, their families, their employees and their animals at risk. OFA believes Ontario farm families deserve to feel safe in their homes and places of business.

The *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act*, and the corresponding O. Reg 701/20 are critical in protecting livestock and poultry, farmers and agri-food employees, and the entire food system from risks created by trespassers who enter places where farm animals live, or who engage in unauthorized interactions with these animals. OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments on proposal **24-OMAFRA11: Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 701/20- General, made under the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020.**

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra
President

cc: Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness
Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors