



July 26, 2024

Honourable Graydon Smith
Minister of Natural Resources
5th Floor, 99 Wellesley Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3
Sent via email: Graydon.Smith@pc.ola.org

RE: Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits

Dear Minister Smith,

On behalf of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA), I am following up on the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's (OFA) letter dated July 19, 2024, which the OFVGA was copied. The OFVGA appreciates and supports the positions put forward by the OFA.

While the OFVGA promotes agricultural practices that support positive environmental outcomes for the province, regulatory approaches must be practical and developed in collaboration with the sector to avoid unintended consequences. Individual growers have long been stepping up to advance their environmental stewardship. A recent grower survey demonstrated that the majority of growers are implementing practices and technologies to utilize inputs more efficiently, including water and soil resources.

It is crucial that approaches by government and conservation authorities enable rather than discourage growers as they innovate and implement strategies to further their stewardship of precious resources for the long term, including for drainage, erosion control, and irrigation.

We must ensure that wetland mapping is verified correctly and in partnership with the landowner. The OFVGA has recently learned of growers in southern Ontario where erroneous wetland mapping nearly led to costly fines for growing crops on land that was unknowingly designated as wetland, despite it being in cultivation for several decades. To OFA's point, these instances use time and money from the farm to address, and become a distraction from their goals to produce food and contribute to Ontario's economy, all while protecting the environment.

The OFVGA appreciates OFA's leadership on this issue, and welcomes being engaged with government to discuss alternative approaches to meeting the conservation authority mandate while still ensuring fruit and vegetable farmers can produce food without the threat of burdensome regulations or lost productivity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Brenn".

Shawn Brenn
Chair, OFVGA Board of Directors



cc:

Hon. Rob Flack – Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Hon. Lisa Thompson – Ministry of Rural Affairs

Steve Clark – Government House Leader

Her Worship Robin Jones - Rural Ontario Municipalities Association

Mr. Colin Best - Association of Municipalities of Ontario

Ontario Federation of Agriculture