

June 1, 2025

15 Floor, 315 Front Street West
Toronto, ON
M7A 0B8

Submitted via Ontario Regulatory Registry

To whom it may concern,

Re: ORR # 25-EDU005: Proposed new regulation to enable the Minister of Education to direct school boards to dispose of property in specific circumstances.

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), thank you for the opportunity to comment on ORR #25-EDU005.

The OFA is Ontario's largest general farm organization, representing over 38,000 farm families. We advocate on behalf of our members and the broader agri-food sector to ensure government decisions support the sustainability and growth of rural communities and farm businesses.

Farm families rely on access to essential services and infrastructure, including schools. In rural Ontario, schools are not just places of education—they are community hubs, offering childcare, adult learning, recreation, and gathering space. The closure or loss of these facilities threatens the viability and resilience of rural communities.

We respectfully raise the following key concerns regarding the proposed regulation:

- **Geographic Jurisdiction:** Ontario's school board jurisdictions are too large for board-wide student space to be a meaningful basis for school closures. Travel time and distance significantly affect students' access to education and well-being.
- **Community Impact:** Rural schools are critical to the social and economic fabric of their communities. Their loss has far-reaching consequences for families, local services, and rural economies.
- **Rural Lens:** Decisions must consider rural realities—long bus rides, limited access to extracurriculars, reduced parental engagement, and fewer employment opportunities for students. Larger, more distant schools can negatively impact learning outcomes and community involvement.
- **Public Use of Public Assets:** We support prioritizing the reuse of surplus school properties for public purposes—not only provincial priorities but also local infrastructure and services that serve the community.

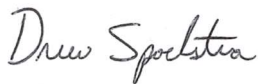
We encourage the government to work collaboratively with school boards, municipalities, transportation providers, and community stakeholders to find practical, place-based solutions that reflect local needs.

Investments in rural schools, educators, and student transportation are essential to supporting student success and community sustainability. Agriculture is a high-tech and evolving sector that relies on a well-educated workforce. That education begins with strong, accessible local schools.

We urge the Ministry to recognize that decisions about school closures are not only financial or operational—they shape the future of rural Ontario.

Thank you for considering our input. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure rural voices are heard and respected in shaping Ontario's education policy.

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors

This submission has been approved by OFA Board of Directors and will be posted to OFA's website: <https://ofa.on.ca/resources>.