

September 5, 2025

Hon. Stephen Crawford
Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement
College Park, 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Sent via email to: stephen.crawford@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Crawford,

Re: ORR #25-MPBSD008 – Use of Promotional and Other Engagement Activities to Increase Participation in Ontario Public Sector Procurements

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, proudly representing more than 38,000 farm families. We advocate for our members and the agri-food industry on legislation and regulations at all levels of government, ensuring that the sustainability and growth of farm businesses and rural communities are prioritized in policy development.

We are pleased that your Ministry is seeking input on how to increase Ontario and Canadian business participation in public sector procurement. This is a valuable opportunity to expand access to Ontario-grown food in Broader Public Sector (BPS) institutions, including schools, hospitals, long-term care homes, colleges, and universities.

Enhancing promotional activities, market engagement, and market creation initiatives will help ensure more Ontario food reaches Ontarians while maintaining best value for money. To achieve this, OFA recommends:

- Supporting BPS institutions with **Food Origin Audits** to set benchmarks and track progress in local food procurement.
- Providing **local food literacy training** for food service managers and staff.
- Facilitating **vendor fairs** to connect BPS institutions, Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs), and local producers.
- Embedding **local food procurement goals** within RFP processes and amending the BPS Directive to include procurement standards.
- Offering **workshops for farmers** on procurement timelines, requirements, and opportunities.
- Appointing a **Local Food Champion** to promote knowledge transfer and identify new opportunities.
- Developing a **communication strategy** to raise awareness of procurement opportunities among local producers.

- Encouraging BPS institutions to adopt **streamlined applications, smaller order volumes, and advance notice** of procurement needs to align with seasonal production.
- Providing **funding for small-scale processing facilities, shared kitchens, and co-packing lines** to build supply capacity.

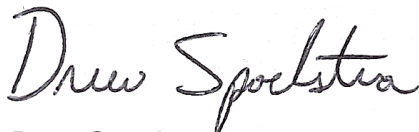
Ontario's agri-food sector is one of the most diverse in Canada, producing more than 200 commodities. Since the introduction of the *Local Food Act, 2013* and the *Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, 2022*, significant research has identified barriers to expanding local food in BPS procurement. These include scalability challenges, seasonal supply limitations, insufficient affordable processing infrastructure, and procurement systems tailored to large, centralized suppliers.

Currently, many BPS institutions rely on GPOs such as Sysco, Gordon Food Services, and Chartwell. While efficient, this model can unintentionally exclude smaller Ontario producers. By reducing barriers and embedding local food priorities into procurement frameworks, Ontario can better connect BPS institutions, GPOs, and farmers—delivering nutritious, safe, and locally produced meals at competitive prices.

Ontario agriculture is internationally recognized for its quality, safety, and high regulatory standards. Strengthening local food procurement in the BPS will not only improve the nutritional value of meals served but also support farm businesses, stimulate Ontario's economy, and enhance the long-term resilience of our agri-food system.

OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on ORR #25-MPBSD008. We look forward to working with your government on solutions that expand opportunities for Ontario farmers while supporting public institutions and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,



Drew Spoelstra
President

cc: Hon. Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness
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>.