

**Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs**

Office of the Minister

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MAR 28 2017

Matthias Oppenlaender
Chair
Grape Growers of Ontario
mattcon@vaxxine.com

Handwritten signature of Matthias Oppenlaender in black ink.

Debbie Zimmerman
Chief Executive Officer
Grape Growers of Ontario
d.zimmerman@grapegrowersofontario.com

Handwritten signature of Debbie Zimmerman in black ink.

Dear Mr. Oppenlaender and Ms. Zimmerman:

Thank you for writing in follow up to our conversation about Ontario's processing vegetable sector.

To be very clear, the policy of our government is to support regulated marketing and the 21 marketing boards which currently exist in Ontario.

Last August I reiterated this support when issuing the directive to the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC) in respect to proposed changes to Regulation 440:

"Develop a plan for engagement and consultation with interested parties and stakeholders concerning any proposed amendments to the regulatory framework for the vegetables for processing industry. To be clear, it is the expectation of the Government of Ontario that such amendments, if any, will be consistent with the needs of both producers and processors and will contribute to the government of Ontario's broad policy objectives of supporting regulated marketing and increasing the number of agriculture-related jobs in Ontario."

This directive remains in place, and I am looking forward to receiving the OFPMC's recommendations that will address the 2018 crop year and beyond.

Over the fall and early winter, I have been closely monitoring the situation with regard to the 2017 contract negotiations between Ontario's growers and processors in the processing vegetable sector. I heard from growers, processors and the OFPMC that some negotiations had reached an impasse, jeopardizing the 2017 crop season.

That's why on March 3, 2017, I acted to protect farm families, processing jobs and the sector's approximately \$89 million of farm gate receipts by appointing Elmer Buchanan as the temporary Trustee of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG) Board. Mr. Buchanan assumed the existing powers of the OPVG Board, including the power to appoint producers to negotiating agencies, and had a mandate to complete the 2017 negotiations in a manner consistent with the current regulated marketing regime. It is expected that a newly elected board will be in place by the end of the year.

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I want you to know that my actions were not entered into lightly and were in response to a unique situation in the processing vegetable sector. In an effort to respond to this pressing situation, our government acted to help save the 2017 crop season.

My full statement is posted on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' [website](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/farmproducts/minister-state-2017.htm) (www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/farmproducts/minister-state-2017.htm) if you would like to read it.

I am pleased that the impasse has been resolved and that the OPVG and our three major tomato processors worked together to reach negotiated agreements for the 2017 growing season. I appreciate everyone's hard work during the negotiating process to ensure that a deal was reached. You can read my full statement about the negotiations on my ministry's [website](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/farmproducts/minister-state2-2017.htm) (www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/farmproducts/minister-state2-2017.htm).

These actions do not impact any other marketing boards regulated under the *Farm Products Marketing Act*. As I have stated on numerous occasions, our government has not wavered from its commitment to maintain regulated marketing in Ontario. This includes the ability of marketing boards to negotiate collectively on behalf of their members where such a requirement is included in the powers delegated to that board, as is the case for the Grape Growers of Ontario.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Jeff Leal
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Minister Responsible for Small Business

c: Allan Schmidt, Chair
Wine Council of Ontario

Richard Linley, President
Wine Council of Ontario

Jim Clark, Chair
Winery & Grower Alliance of Ontario

Patrick Gedge, President and Chief Executive Officer
Winery & Grower Alliance of Ontario

Jim Clark, Interim Chair
Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission



Good Things Grow in Ontario
À bonne terre, bons produits