

Lisa Thompson, MPP
Huron-Bruce

Queen's Park Office:
Room 425, Legislative Building
Toronto, ON M7A1A8
Tel. (416) 325-3467
Fax (416) 325-3490
E-mail: lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org

March 29, 2017

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Mitzie Hunter
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay St.
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

The Honourable Jeff Leal
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
11th Floor
77 Grenville St.
Toronto ON M7A 1B3

Dear Premier Wynne, Minister Leal and Minister Hunter,

I would like to thank you for your recognition of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month in the legislature. I particularly appreciated how the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in his comments on March 7th, emphasized that, "Improving agri-food literacy helps us eat healthier, supports a sustainable environment, and creates jobs in Ontario." It is these exact sentiments that had inspired me two years ago to introduce my Private Member's Motion, *Growing Agri-Food Jobs*.

As you may recall, in 2015 my motion called on the government to implement a component in the grades 9 and 10 Careers and Guidance curriculum that would highlight the career opportunities in the agri-food sector. As you may also recall, the motion passed with support from all parties, a welcomed acknowledgement of the vast potential for employment in an industry that contributes \$36.4 billion annually to Ontario's economy.

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In his remarks of March 7th, I was pleased to see the Minister highlight some of the efforts currently being engaged in to support the sector, including AgScape's Teacher Ambassador Program, the support of Foodland for the Local Food Strategy program, and the "6 by 16" program run by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, just to name a few. However, I was disappointed that there was no mention of my motion, nor an update on where the government is with respect to seeing it implemented.

Minister Leal, as you said in your remarks, inspiring and educating students on the opportunities in the agriculture industry is crucial to ensuring it continues to be the productive sector that it is. I couldn't agree more.

But today as I referenced in question period, without education in all regions of the province, I am afraid that the industry will not be able to meet the Premier's 2020 agri-job challenge. In fact, the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) has predicted that the labour gap will actually double by 2025. We need to begin to take serious steps towards tackling this problem, otherwise it will only continue to get worse.

I do very much appreciate the immediate discussions my question generated between you, as well as the conversation I had with Minister Hunter. I look forward to working with her to see the intent of my Motion implemented in a timely fashion. I will follow up directly with Minister Hunter to further this initiative.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important task. Together we can ensure Ontario students are aware, appreciate, and pursue the incredible career opportunities in the agri-food sector.

I look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,



Lisa Thompson, MPP
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