

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

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de l'Agriculture, de
l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales**

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September 9, 2021

His Worship Stephen Molnar
South Central Ontario Regional Economic
Development Corporation
smolnar@tillsonburg.ca

Her Worship Alison Warwick
South Central Ontario Regional Economic
Development Corporation
awarwick@thamescentre.on.ca

Dear Mayor Warwick and Mayor Molnar:

As the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs I very much appreciate that I did not have to wait long for the opportunity to meet with you and your delegation during the 2021 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.

My ministry and I are committed to continuing to work with you to address your concerns and to strengthen and build your community.

Thank you for sharing your priorities when we met. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend SCOR's efforts to work with various organizations on the development of projects that support the agriculture industry in Ontario.

Our government maintains a high level of support for rural Ontario's growth through projects that aim to attract local investments, create jobs and boost economic development. Through the Rural Economic Development Program, since September 2019, \$11.4 million has been committed to over 220 economic development projects. This year, the intake for this program opened on August 30, 2021, with a closing date of October 1, 2021. You can find more information at www.ontario.ca/REDprogram, 2021.

I was very interested to learn of SCORs collaborations with Conestoga and Fanshawe Colleges to fill skills gaps and provide condensed training. This initiative to create a program that allows for on-farm experience while training is integral to building up the next generation of farmers. I have signaled to my team to keep an eye out for an opportunity to head to the London or Norfolk campus so I can see firsthand how effective this initiative is.

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Regarding the points you raised about temporary foreign workers, I want to assure you that one of our government's top priorities is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in agri-food workplaces so that worker health and safety is protected, and Ontario's food supply chain remains strong.

As a shared responsibility, our government is working collaboratively with our municipal, provincial, federal and health partners and the farming community to help farmers protect workers and stop the spread of COVID-19. Since its launch in November, we have taken action to address the 35 action items that make up the Prevention and Control Strategy including my ministry's work with the industry to develop an information resource on housing, designed to help farmers provide a safe living environment for their workers.

Again, thank you for meeting with me to share information about matters of importance for rural Ontario.

Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa M. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent than the last name "Thompson".

Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

c: Ernie Hardeman MPP, Oxford
Jeff Yurek MPP, Elgin—Middlesex--London

COVID-19 Reminders

- For vaccination booking details visit: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>
- Follow your local public health/safety measures: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions>
- Practice physical distancing – stay 2 metres away from others in public
- Get the facts - www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread