

May 17, 2025

Hon. Victor Fedeli
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
18th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Re: *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025* (ERO 025-0391)

Dear Minister Fedeli,

The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) applaud the Ministry's recognition of the need for special economic zones with faster permitting, streamlined permits and approvals, and simplified requirements. Ontario's greenhouse sector is of critical and strategic importance to the province with OGVG representing over 170 greenhouse farming families tending to more than 4,300 acres of fresh cucumbers, peppers, and tomatoes. Ontario's Greenhouse sector supports food security and provides over \$2 billion dollars throughout the significant multi-sectoral agri-food value chain. The sector supports over 32,000 jobs including technicians, marketers, and farmers among many other highly skilled roles.

Agriculture is critical to Ontario and must be included in Special Economic Zones as it is among trade exposed sectors such as energy, mining, and manufacturing. Ontario's greenhouse sector exists in integrated pockets throughout the province. From high density regions like Leamington and Kingsville to essential pockets in Chatham-Kent, Niagara, Hamilton, and Ottawa, the sector has maintained consistent growth, averaging 6% annually over the past decade. Establishing special economic zones inclusive of agriculture will enable an accelerated pathway to develop the infrastructure required for growth in those zones. The greenhouse sector's growth is limited by lack of access to two-way electricity, natural gas, and limited water infrastructure. Bringing infrastructure inputs necessary for greenhouse development is also beneficial for residential, commercial, and industrial developments needed for economic growth. Establishing economic zones must synergize with the established local industries and environment to maximize success and ensure prosperity of the economic zone.

Introducing Special Economic Zones will help in simplifying processes for projects that are critical to securing Ontario's economy. The proposed legislation can work for or against Ontario sectors depending on their recognition in the regulatory framework. In support of the *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*, OGVG asks the province to:

- Ensure agriculture is reflected in special economic zones
- Working towards streamlining and harmonizing all permits, approvals, and requirements for building greenhouses and associated infrastructure
- Take a wide view of the needs of the associated value chains supporting the core business of the special economic zone.

Special Economic Zones are a critically needed tool to cut red tape and support Ontario's critical and strategic sectors. With the growth of greenhouse development globally, supporting domestic greenhouse infrastructure will keep food affordable, provide choice, and ensure food security for Ontarians. We remain available to assist and support red tape reduction, economic growth and food security.

Sincerely,



Richard Lee
Executive Director