



The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queens Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

The Honourable Jeff Leal
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
1 Stone Road West
Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2

27 August 2014.

Dear Premier Wynne and Minister Leal,

RE: Removal of milkweed from the Schedule of Noxious Weeds

On behalf of Sustain Ontario - The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, we are writing to express **our congratulations** on this spring's passage of the proposal by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to remove milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*) from the Schedule of Noxious Weeds. We applaud the objective to enable the restoration of monarch butterfly populations that have been severely impacted by the depletion of milkweed species across the continent. As noted in the proposal, milkweed is an important part of the native and naturalized vegetation in the province and provides important habitat and a larval food source for the monarch butterfly.

We commend your initiative to support monarch butterflies, an important pollinator species facing serious decline.¹ In 2013, monarchs experienced one of the worst years in history due to a number of factors along their extensive migration route from Canada to Mexico. We are hopeful that this trend will be reversed by the Ministry's action to reduce factors that are jeopardizing these pollinators' longevity and the ability to maintain healthy food and farming systems.

Your steps to remove milkweed from the Schedule of Noxious Weeds will help to support conservation efforts in Ontario that include widespread planting of milkweed over large landscapes, including urban areas, to offset the ongoing loss of milkweed/monarch habitat

¹ E.Rendon-Salinas & C. Tavera-Alonso, December 2013, "Forest surface occupied by monarch butterfly hibernation colonies in December 2013," Alianza WWF-Telcel.

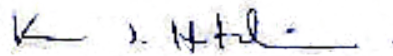
across the continent.² As noted in the ministry's proposal, the presence of milkweed on lands that are not being actively farmed would pose a "low to negligible risk" to agricultural or horticultural activities; and there are now more management options available to farmers to address milkweed on actively farmed lands to reduce the threat to grazing livestock. Moreover, restoration efforts can rely on the majority of milkweed species that do not pose a lethal toxic threat to grazing livestock.³

Thank you for your attention and willingness to address this issue. We look forward to hearing about increased planting of milkweed and other measures that your government intends to take to support the recovery of monarchs and other pollinators in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Bryan Gilvesy
Sustain Ontario Advisory Council Chair



Karen Hutchinson
Sustain Ontario Advisory Council Vice Chair



Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker
Sustain Ontario Director

² See for example, www.monarchwatch.org; <http://monarchjointventure.org/our-work>; www.davidsuzuki.org.

³ See 'Poisonous Milkweeds', <http://monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/campaign/the-details> and OMAFRA Weeds Act FAQ http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/faq_weeds_act.htm#can