

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? An organic standard will ensure consumer and producer confidence in organic food and products

Earlier this month, I co-sponsored legislation with NDP MPP Peter Tabuns to create an organic standard in Ontario. The legislation, titled Bill 153: the Organic Products Act, will ensure that consumer confidence in organic products in Ontario remains high.

The federal government adopted the Canada Organic Standard in 2009 for products labeled organic with the Canada Organic logo or sold across provincial borders. However, in Ontario, anyone is free to use the term 'organic' on any product.

This inconsistency in the use of the term 'organic' leads to consumer confusion and potentially an erosion in consumer confidence. When consumer confidence is reduced, it hurts the businesses of hard working organic farmers and producers. Quebec, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Manitoba have already enacted organic legislation to address this gap.

The organics industry is growing. Canada is now the fifth largest organic market in the world and is expanding by more than 10 per cent annually. Ontario is the largest organic market in Canada with in excess of \$1.4 billion in sales. Yet, the Canada Organic Trade Association rated Ontario lowest amongst all provinces for regulation, support and development of organic products.

Bill 153 will allow the creation of a 'made-in-Ontario' solution that could include a certification program more appropriate for small-scale and direct market producers. The goal is to start a conversation with farmers and producers about how certification will continue to ensure consumer confidence in organic products. The intent of Bill 153 has already received support from the three largest farm organizations. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the National Farmers Union ? Ontario, all agree that we need to look at an organic standard to ensure consumer confidence.

If you have questions about bill 153, I encourage you to contact my office at 519-941-7751 or by email at sylvia.jonesqp@pc.ola.org. Finally, you can learn more about Bill 153 by visiting www.sylviajonesmpp.ca and sign my petition.

