

The Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins  
Minister of Health & Long-Term Care  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Re: Lyme Disease Strategy

Dear Dr. Hoskins

Landscape Ontario represents the Landscape Horticulture industry. The industry employs over 70,000 people working outdoors installing and maintaining Ontario's gardens, landscapes and green infrastructure.

The purpose of this letter is to ask the Government of Ontario to develop a strategy to mitigate the risk of Lyme disease. Recently one of our members contracted the disease. She told me that most people are unaware of the symptoms and most doctors misdiagnose. She also told me that having Lyme disease was the absolute worst 8-9 months of her life. Originally her doctor told her that the symptoms would just go away. If she had accepted the diagnosis she would probably be suffering Stage 3, chronic Lyme disease.

Recently the Ontario Lyme Alliance sent me a letter outlining the following and asked that we provide you a letter urging you to develop a strategy to fight the disease.

Lyme disease is a potentially debilitating illness that is a growing threat to Ontarians who spend time outdoors. The bite of a tick infected with Lyme bacteria can cause terrible fatigue, pain, memory loss, and scores of other symptoms that often prevent patients from working or attending school. Without early and appropriate antibiotic treatment, the disease leads to multi-system breakdown, which often mimics other conditions such as fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, lupus, and Parkinson's disease. The number of infected ticks is rapidly increasing in the province and Ontarians can be bitten by an infected tick anywhere outdoors - in fields, cottages, camping grounds, hiking trails, golf courses, and even their own backyards.

There are increasing populations of infected ticks in Ontario. The Public Health Agency of Canada has identified some of the risk areas as being the shore lands of Lakes Erie and Ontario and Kingston east to Cornwall and north to Ottawa, but there are many other yet unidentified areas. Recently the Rouge Valley in Toronto was also identified. It is projected that by 2020, 80% of residents of Eastern Canada (including Ontario) will be living in areas known to have established populations of ticks. This will expose even larger numbers of Ontarians to the risk of acquiring Lyme disease. Right now, Ontario is not prepared to deal with what the Public Health Agency of Canada has called "a likely epidemic of Lyme disease."

There are several reasons why the way in which this disease is dealt with in Ontario needs to be changed and improved through a new provincial strategy:

- Cases of the disease are often misdiagnosed or undetected in Ontario due to a lack of awareness and poor public and physician education.
- Canadian blood testing for the disease has very limited reliability - a fact that has been recognized by Health Canada

The Ontario Lyme Alliance (OLA) has been advocating for a provincial strategy to address these issues, which would safeguard Ontarians from this terrible disease. The OLA has met with politicians and various government and medical organizations, such as Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, in order to instigate changes so that Lyme disease is better managed in Ontario.

Landscape Ontario supports their campaign.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony DiGiovanni". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony DiGiovanni

Executive Director