

Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition (OASC)



Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Long-Term Thinking
for Today's Issues



ONTARIO PORK



Ontario Grains
& Oilseeds

March 15, 2010

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

We share a common interest in securing a sustainable future for farmers in Ontario and across Canada. But we have yet to see a tangible expression of that interest from your government in a time of great distress across rural Ontario.

Farming in Ontario is about food. We are sure you understand and appreciate the need to secure healthy and affordable food now and in the future for all Canadians. But to secure a future for our food production system we need to stabilize our farm businesses today.

Farming in Ontario is about jobs. Over 80,000 Ontarians make their living on farms. A total of 718,000 Ontarians work in the agri-food industry. As farms die so will the critical mass needed to sustain our processing industry. Jobs will be lost across the agri-food sector.

Farming in Ontario is about rural development. Our farm businesses sustain our rural infrastructure across the province. They sustain our communities that contribute so richly to our culture and the fabric of our province.

Farming in Ontario is about ecological stewardship. Our farm families readily adopt beneficial practices that contribute to environmental improvement, leaving the land and water better off.

But farming in Ontario is threatened by factors beyond the control of our farm business managers. The tools that we have worked with to manage risk no longer work favorably for the majority. Our risk management tools need to be repaired to adapt to the current market circumstances to bring stability and sustainability to farming in Ontario.

Prime Minister, we have developed the tools that are needed. We have consulted with farmers and with Ontario's Minister Mitchell and agree that our proposed amendments to AgriStability will bring stability to thousands of farms. Our proposed Business Risk Management Program, commencing 2009 will sustain these farms for the future.

Minister Ritz reports that the majority of farmers believe AgriStability is working. With respect, that is far from accurate in Ontario. The vast majority of farmers here know that AgriStability does not deliver predictable nor bankable results. They support our proposed amendments.

These Ontario farmers and, indeed, farmers across Canada need an immediate commitment from your government to provide the investment needed to stabilize and sustain our businesses. Without a tangible expression from your government over the next few weeks farms will be lost.


We are prepared to work with you to ensure sustainable farming becomes a priority and to secure a commitment for our farm families.

Prime Minister, our farm businesses await confirmation of your commitment.

Sincerely,



Bette Jean Crews, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Henry Stevens, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario



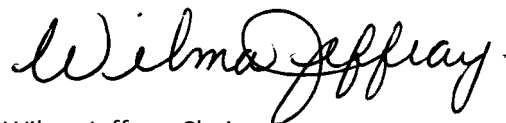
Curtis Royal, President
Ontario Cattlemen's Association



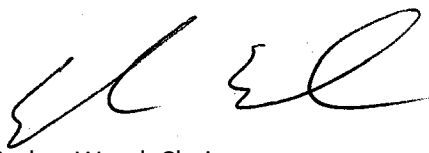
Brian Gilroy, Chair
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association



Leo Guilbeault, Chair
Ontario Grains & Oilseeds



Wilma Jeffray, Chair
Ontario Pork



Markus Wand, Chair
Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency



Judy Dirksen, President
Ontario Veal

cc: Hon. Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada