

## Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition (OASC)



June 1, 2010

Mr. Ted Arnott, MPP  
181 St. Andrew Street E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Fergus, ON N1M 1P9

Re: Support for a sustainable Ontario food system

Dear Mr. Arnott,

A resolution focused on support for food and farming in Ontario is scheduled to be tabled in the Legislature by MPP Jim Wilson on Thursday, June 3.

The resolution is asking for a commitment from the government of Ontario in support of reforms to the national AgriStability program and for a premium-based Business Risk Management Program (BRMP) to ease the financial burden being felt by so many farmers in Ontario.

The economic situation facing Ontario farmers is dire, but numbers released by Statistics Canada this past week show a continuing decline and a situation that is even more serious than we had anticipated.

The 2009 Ontario agriculture net income was negative \$50 million, a loss that is projected to be ten times greater – at half a billion dollars – in 2010. The future of food and farming in Ontario, without workable risk management programming, is clearly very bleak.

At risk are not just Ontario's farmers and the 80,000 jobs they provide, but also the many jobs across the province in processing and further processing of Ontario's food products. This number is estimated to exceed 600,000 jobs.

These food processing industry jobs, generally concentrated in urban areas, rely on a healthy local agricultural sector to provide the raw products needed to sustain the processing businesses. Likewise, the packaging, transportation and storage sectors rely on a healthy local farming sector as well.

The ramifications to Ontario of losing even part of the agriculture sector, its jobs and its positive economic contributions are catastrophic. Leadership demands that primary agriculture and its economic benefits be preserved. The resolution coming before the Legislature is about food security and the ability to feed ourselves while sustaining a

healthy economy and environment. The importance of a home grown food supply cannot be overstated!

However, our agricultural system has always been a shared responsibility between farmers, the provincial and the federal governments. We want our BRMP to be fully funded and need both levels of government to contribute, along with our farmer-paid premiums to a sustainable program for sustainable farms.

We urge the Legislature to work with us to secure the necessary program changes and to ensure the federal government becomes an equal partner in the delivery of an amended AgriStability program and our Business Risk Management Program.

We need to act now so that all Ontarians can enjoy the benefits of a healthy and vital agri-food industry today and for future generations.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,



Bette Jean Crews, President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Henry Stevens, President  
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario



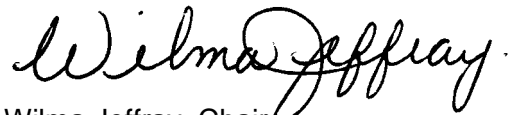
Curtis Royal, President  
Ontario Cattlemen's' Association  
Association



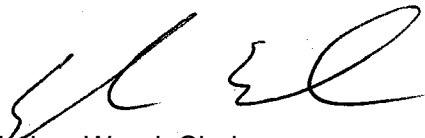
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