

# Agriculture

## OFA officials contest government support figures

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**Thomson News Service**  
TORONTO - Federal government officials have greatly exaggerated the level of government support going to farming, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) said Friday.

OFA President Brigid Pyke contested arguments that the federal government provides \$8.8 billion in support to farming. The subsidies this year only come to about \$1.6 billion, Pyke said.

Pyke said International Trade Minister John Crosbie is using exaggerated figures.

"It frightens me that Crosbie may actually believe that his government is shovelling \$8.8 billion at farmers on an annual basis," Pyke said in a news release. "If he does (believe that), he should not only be censured but fired."

The OFA's directors have voted to censure Crosbie's comments.

Crosbie's statements were reported in news articles earlier this week. The Trade Minister took jabs at Don Mazankowski, the federal agriculture minister, saying Mazankowski should be "ashamed" of the amount going to farming.

Crosbie is reported to have said annual federal subsidies came to \$8.8 billion. The federal government is proposing some subsidies be cut by 50 per cent.

According to the OFA news release, the \$8.8 billion figure was calculated by taking the difference between the world price of agriculture products and the Canadian prices. Pyke said it is a peculiar method of calculating subsidies.

"It is the same as saying that because the world price of labor is \$1 an hour and workers in Canada made an average \$8 an hour, that the \$7 difference is a government subsidy maintained by Canada's minimum wage laws."

The OFA news release said Canadian agriculture is facing a "national disaster" and subsidies are needed.

"We have to keep farmers in business through the bad times so that Canadians will continue to have a safe and affordable supply of food in the long term."

Roger George, the first vice-president of the OFA, also slammed Crosbie's calculations.

"Mr. Crosbie must know that average annual cash transfers to the agriculture industry are nowhere near the \$8.8 billion figure cited by him and now other national commentators."

## Interest-free loans made available

OTTAWA - The Canadian Federation of Agriculture applauded Agriculture Minister Don Mazankowski's announcement that interest-free cash advances will be available for Canadian farmers awaiting the opportunity to market their crops.

Interest-free provisions of both the Prairie Grains Advance Payments and the Advance Payments for Crops Programs came to an end last year. With a sudden downturn in commodity prices and a weakening farm economy, the CFA asked that the interest-free provision be restored.

Farm income for 1990, across the Prairie provinces, is expected to be more than 40 per cent under the 1989 level and about 40 per cent below the previous five-year average. Saskatchewan alone is expected to experience a 68 per cent decline in realized net farm income.

"The return of the interest-free provision will go a long way to alleviate the serious cash flow problems faced by many Canadian farmers," CFA president Don Knoerr said. "The government has shown its willingness to listen to farmers," he added.

The CFA president, however, expressed concern. "This measure is temporary, designed to deal with an immediate extreme situation. This is very useful, but there is a major need for a long-term income stabilization program for farmers. This must be implemented soon enough to deal with the net income effect of the current situation. There is also a need for a review of the long term effectiveness of our advance payment programs."

"The interest-free component of these programs is not the only issue that needs review. We also must be certain that an effective delivery system is available," the President said.

## Assistance deadline close

TORONTO - The application deadline for all components of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Farm Income Assistance Program is Oct. 31, 1990.

"We estimate that approximately half of the applications have been received by the ministry so far. With the deadline less than a month away, we are urging farmers to fill out their forms and forward them to us now," said Rolly Stroeter, director of the farm assistance programs branch.

The Farm Income Assistance Program is designed to reduce the cash flow burden resulting from high interest rates and weak commodity prices. It has several components, including interest assistance, grains and oilseeds, fur, and horticultural

crops.

Farm businesses with a 1989 gross farm income of at least \$15,000, which paid at least \$5,000 in farm interest in the fiscal year ended during 1989 are eligible for the Interest Assistance Component. Farm businesses which produced and harvested any of the eligible crops are eligible for the Grains and Oilseeds Component. Ontario-licensed breeders of ranch-raised mink and fox are eligible for the Fur Component. Fruit, vegetable and tobacco-producing farm businesses are eligible for the Horticultural Component.

Eligible producers who have not received an application form or need information can contact the Farm Assistance Programs Branch at 416-326-9895 or their local OMAF office.



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