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THE HALTON COMPASS

REGIONAL NEWS, NOTES AND NEIGHBOURS

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If you ate today, thank a farmer

By BERNADETTE WARD

If there is to be any viability to agriculture in Ontario, a massive infusion of cash is needed now say farmers, thousands of which descended upon Queen's Park to deliver their message on March 2.

A \$300 million figure was referred to a number of times as the magic number of dollars needed immediately. According to some farmers, the situation is so dire, that spring planting may not happen.

"The message is that agriculture is important, it's important to everyone that eats in this province," said Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Agricultural Association.

Farmers from across the province and from every sector of agriculture stood together in frigid weather, brought together in common cause and regardless of the area of agriculture the speaker was from, the message was the same.

**"WE NEED A GOVERNMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FARMERS,
 NOT FIGHTING AGAINST THEM,"**

Farmers want money, respect and they want to be heard.

"We are hurting. There is no sector immune, no region is untouched - something has to change. We need a new deal," said Len Troup from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Bonnett noted that some 650,000 people are employed in agriculture in Ontario, second only to the automotive industry and he pointed to the millions of dollars being funneled to the automotive sector.

"How much support do we get?" wondered Bonnett.



Farm tractors parked all around Queen's Park circle on March 2 while their owners raised their voices in protest. Owners of the tractors fired up their engines and circled Queen's Park to signal the end of the rally.

PHOTO BY BERNADETTE WARD

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The growth of cyber-bullying

Halton School Board task force finds that 20% of students are involved

By BERNADETTE WARD

Canadian statistics indicate that 20 percent of students are involved in bullying and as a sign of the times, the Halton District School Board is creating a framework to deal with the latest downside to technology - cyber-bullying.

"Schools across the province are recognizing this is an area they really want to address," says Bill Taylor, principal of Acton High School.

Where once you might find something nasty scrawled on the washroom wall, available to only a handful of people, the Internet has now opened the door for nasty notes to potentially reach thousands, points out Taylor.

According to experts such as Dan Olweus, a researcher and Barbara Coloroso, the well-known parenting guru, the effects of bullying are many and include reduced self-esteem and self-confidence - and that's the least of the damage. Bullying has also been implicated with depression and on the extreme end, adolescent suicide.

Bullies themselves do not escape unscathed. They tend to fare poorly in life due to their inability to deal effectively

and appropriately with people.

"Bullying in any capacity can have devastating effects," says Taylor.

That's why the Halton District School Board assembled a taskforce to develop recommendations surrounding the issues of bullying and cyber-bullying.

The task force completed its work in December and the next step is a plan to implement the recommendations in Halton schools.

Jackie Oxley, school and community liaison for the Halton District School Board, and a member of the taskforce, indicates that there should be something out this coming September.

"Unless students feel that their school is a safe and caring place, learning is compromised," says Oxley.

Recommendations will look at revising school conduct policy and at the training required for both students and staff in order to deal with bullies and their victims.

Bullies and their victims are not the only groups that

need help, says Taylor. The other group that stands out is that of the bystander.

"If a bystander intervenes, bullying stops right away," he says.

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