

\$1 billion transfusion for Agriculture Will it help farmers?

By ANN KORNUA

Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Andy Mitchell announced \$1 billion in immediate federal assistance for financially affected Canadian farmers facing record low farm incomes. It is meant to be an aggressive effort to restructure the nation's agriculture and agri-food industry. This initiative could bring profitability back into one of Canada's important sectors. The announcement came on March 30th after a turbulent year for farmers facing such issues such as the closed US border to beef markets and the disagreements over urban sprawl and the greenbelt plan.

This two-part plan is intended to ease financial pressures on farmers and transform the industry by addressing the root causes of declining farm income.

"Many farmers have been devastated by some of the most difficult years ever faced by the industry," said MP Gary Carr, "this immediate assistance program will alleviate some of the burden in this very important sector."

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The \$1 billion government initiative Farm Income Payment program works by supplementing current federal, provincial, and territorial programs that last year paid a record \$4.9 billion to farmers. It will provide assistance to all sectors, but will especially benefit those farmers into cattle, other ruminants and grains and oilseeds.

"This is an important step in tackling the challenges being faced by many of my rural Halton constituents. This is a good news announcement, and I hope our farmers will see the benefits first hand," said MP Carr.

Asked for his opinion on the \$1 billion in assistance, Robert Marshall, chairman of the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, wondered if it was enough, "the assistance is for all of Canada and with some 600,000 people engaged in agriculture across the country, the aid only comes to \$1,667 per farmer".

Mitchell made in his announcement a further adjustment that will permit producers who have deposited more than the required minimum deposit in CAIS to withdrawal the excess funds in their accounts. This change will allow funds available immediately including \$117 million to 14000 producers in provinces where the government of Canada administers the program. To find out more information regarding the Farm Income Program log onto www.agr.gc.ca or call 1-866-85-06.

Upper Credit Humane Society "Roaring Twenties" Dinner Dance

By ANN KORNUA

The Roaring Twenties are coming back this April 16th for the Upper Credit Humane Society's Dinner and Dance. It is the Society's annual fundraiser and proceeds will go to help care for the animals and to find homes for pets.

The event will take place at the Caledon Golf and Country Club in Caledon on Saturday April 16th. Tickets are \$80 for a gourmet dinner that will offer a choice of stuffed chicken breasts in a port wine glaze or, for the vegetarians, a savoury grilled mushroom strudel in a light pastry. There will be a silent auction, a teddy bear raffle, dance contests, best costume prizes and a few surprises.

"This is our major fundraiser and this is really where we get most of our money for the year. We found that this year people have been very generous with donations towards the silent auction. We try to not to offer the same items in the auction every year. We are greatly thankful for the support from the community," said Judith-Anne Kolu.

For ticket reservations call the Upper Credit Humane Society at (519) 833-CATS (2287) or check out their website. Find out who is up for adoption by logging onto www.uppercredit.com.

Remember the bad old days when an Ontario budget meant higher gas, liquor and tobacco taxes? Well the bad old days are back.

My view by TED CHUDLEIGH, MPP

In the run up to this spring's Ontario budget the McGuinty Liberals have signalled their willingness to increase taxes, and it might not just be sin taxes that increase. After four consecutive balanced budgets under the PCs, the Liberals were unable to manage a fifth after their election, despite having six months to wrestle down problems like SARS, Mad Cow and West Nile Virus. This year, government revenues in Ontario have increased almost 10 per cent or an additional \$7 billion. Despite the increase in money to spend the Liberal deficit has ballooned and the McGuinty government shows no sign of the fiscal responsibility necessary to bring it under control.

Dalton McGuinty tried to squeeze the federal Liberals for some cash but they wouldn't even throw him a bone. So Ontario's Liberals have only one avenue left - your pocket.

Like a pickpocket at a fair, the Liberals will simply reach in and take your hard earned money, likely without you even realizing it immediately. However, a little here and a little there and suddenly you've got a lot less discretionary income.

Hey, Dalton McGuinty did it last year when he increased taxes and lowered health coverage. He promised a balanced budget last year, and then he promised to balance it by 2007. Now here's a bold prediction; the Ontario Liberals will never balance the budget.

They simply do not have the fortitude necessary to make the hard decisions. The sad truth is our economy has already begun to show weakness and without immediate action Ontarians are in for a rough ride. During the last year manufacturing jobs, a key indicator of economic health, have dropped substantially. Oh, sure you can blame the strong Canadian dollar and increased oil prices, but a major problem is tax increases and lack of determination to balance the budget. Without a balanced budget taxes are poised to rise further. What company wants to invest into that type of economic climate? It's a pretty nasty cycle.

According to the Liberal's own financial plan the provincial debt will increase by \$100 every second, of every day, for the next three years. By the time of the next election the Liberals will have added \$9 billion to Ontario's debt.

Other than higher taxes and deficits, the McGuinty Liberals don't appear to have an idea how to manage the province's finances. We all know who is going to pay for these mistakes. Ontarians will pay through higher taxes. They will pay through reduced services and higher user fees. They will pay through job losses from a damaged economy.

It's the bad old 1980's and early 1990's all over again. However, this is the type of nostalgia we can do without.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

I was pleased to see on the front page of the March 25 issue of The Halton Compass, that there is one North Halton Mayor interested in further education for graduating high school students to look forward to. He, and two councillors are actually working at it and doing something positive.

That there are six high schools in North Halton and no college in the area for graduating students does not encourage continuing education.

Congratulations to Mayor Rick Bonnette!

H Shaver, Milton.

Dear Editor

Regarding the article titled "Not in their backyard" in the April 1, edition of The Compass, I wish to clarify one of the statements attributed to me. The article states that "What people can expect to see is an attractive five to seven storey apartment building, much like the ones along Upper Middle Road in Oakville". I mentioned those buildings as examples of what the proposed building could look like.

There is a specification that the building can be no more than seven storeys high unless special permission is given. Aside from that, there is no information available yet about its appearance.

Thank you for the opportunity to correct any misunderstanding.

Sincerely

Wendy Schau
Councillor, Ward 4

EDITORIAL

Most of my generation can tell you exactly where they were when they heard of JFK's death. Will this generation mark the passage of their lives with a similar milestone for the passing of John Paul II? I know where I was. I was at the Milton Chamber of Commerce's Gala Awards Dinner when Father Mark Curtis shared the news with me. It was a great evening for us at the Compass, but it will always be tinged bittersweet in our memories.

To have the Compass win the 2004 Small Business of the Year award was a great honour and a wonderful vindication of our family-like approach to doing business. I am proud of our team, they are passionate about what they do and fiercely loyal to the paper. Buying the Compass turned out to be like gaining an extended family. I'd like to thank our loyal suppliers and our stalwart advertisers, and wish them as good a year ahead as they have given us this year past.

Funny how we had winter gales at the same time as John Paul II passed. Maybe Shakespeare got it right

"The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of Princes".

Meet and greet Ken Dryden

The Honourable Ken Dryden, Canada's Minister of Social Development will be the special guest speaker at a Meet and Greet luncheon event at Georgetown District High School this coming Saturday, April 9th.

Wellington-Halton Hills Federal Liberal Association, established just over one year ago is the host. A silent auction is part of the happenings that get under way at 11.30am, including books from the Minister's hockey playing days.

One of Canada's best-recognized names, Dryden was the star goaltender on a Montreal Canadiens team that dominated the National Hockey League during the 70's. He then went on to become head of the Toronto Maple Leaf organization.

Each of these was a challenge and accomplishment in itself, and now the soft-spoken Dryden has taken on another major challenge in the very important high profile, high-pressure post he has as the federal government's Minister of Social Development. The huge task of the National Child Care program is at the top of the list. Mr. Dryden will address the group at 12.15.

Tickets to attend can be purchased from Members Deb Bodiam in Wellington at 519 843-2483, Carol Lawson in Halton Hills at 905 877-3753, or Association President Jim Gillespie in Erin at 519 833-0530.

For further information please contact President Jim Gillespie at 519 833-0530, or Bruce Hood at 519 833-9979, or 905 876-5992.

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