

Nutrient management plans advance

By BETTE JEAN CREWS, ONTARIO FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Ontario government has taken a major step forward with its Nutrient Management regulations. Details were announced by OMAF Minister Peters at the June meeting of the directors of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture - details that will make compliance with the regulations less onerous to achieve.

From the time the idea of a Nutrient Management Act was first presented about three years ago, farmers and their organizations have been fighting for improvements to funding and more realistic regulations. With the minister's announcement to OFA's directors, a number of major hurdles were cleared.

Until those details were presented to OFA and the farmers in Ontario, many farmers and their organizations continued to tell government officials that compliance with the regulations could force farmers out of the business. It was also made it clear that many of the requirements in the regulations were not based on scientific data.

The McGuinty government's announcement at the OFA meeting addressed many of those earlier concerns and issues. Increased funding to help farmers who are required to comply with the regulations means that up to sixty thousand dollars in provincial funding will be available to each eligible farm unit, up from the previous forty-five thousand dollars.

Now, when farmers combine these dollars with funding available under the Canada-Ontario Farm Stewardship Program, it will mean that as much as 90 per cent of a project will be funded by government dollars. Farming operations required to spend in excess of one hundred thousand dollars to comply with regulations will undergo a special government review of funding applications.

News that regulations under the Act will be science-based is encouraging for the farming industry. Farmers need to know their efforts at protecting the environment will produce measurable results that society can see and appreciate. We're told the proposed changes to the regulations will allow for the inclusion of new and expanding livestock farming operations through a phase-in process.

Some of the other encouraging proposals for change include a revision of priorities for construction and siting of manure storage facilities, streamlining the process for developing nutrient management plans and strategies for livestock farms, and simplifying the regulations by allowing more flexibility for farmers.

With these changes in place, there have also been changes in deadline dates. Farmers should contact OMAF at 1-877-424-1300 and check OFA's information advertising for these changes.



Correction

The cutline for the above photo should have read Celebrities (clockwise from top right corner) Elvis Stojko (3 Times World Champion Figure Skater), his kung fu instructor Sifu Glen Doyle (3 times Canadian Kung Fu champion) and Russ Jackson (CFL Player of the Year) joined Moffatt Autoworks' Tyler Moffatt as they washed cars to raise money for McMaster Children's Hospital and Milton District Hospital. The Compass apologizes for last week's error.

\$300,000 raised for hospital



Milton District Hospital Foundation Board presents a cheque for \$300,000 to Halton Healthcare Services. Making the presentation were some of the directors of the Board, left to right, Len Lee, Stephen Baker, Heather Penman, Bob Pyatt, Kim Mason, Rosa Martins and Brad Grant.

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