

# Farmers voice concerns in Ottawa

Continued from pg. 1

"The Ontario government is looking to the federal government to take the lead—that's why we're here."

Allison said during the recent federal election the agricultural issue "came on the radar screen more than any other issues", and he said all parties were receptive to changing the current situation that leaves Canadian farmers competing in a market that is not on a level playing field.

During more than two hours of speeches, farmers from across Canada representing all sectors of farming—dairy, beef, swine, cash crops, nurseries, market gardeners and poultry—made their plight known to the federal government, repeatedly appealing to Prime Minister Stephen Harper to deliver on his promises to help Canada's farmers, by implementing programs promised in the last election campaign.

"We voted you in Mr. Prime Minister, we can vote you out again," was the repeated message of all the speakers.

"Canadian farmers are having the

life kicked out of them with cheap imported foods," said Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) Vice-President Geri Kamenz.

"Canadian farmers are the most productive, most innovative, most technologically advanced and environmentally friendly, yet they get no help from their own government to survive in the industry. We're losing farmers every day— simply because they can't survive. Many here today will not make it through this year if they don't get help. Rural communities across the country are crumbling—we have no help."

Following the demonstration, Campbellville farmer Peter Lambrick said he was pleased with the outcome.

"The solidarity here today is most encouraging," said Lambrick, "Seeing this response across the country—and they all are sending out the same message—that's something we've not seen before."

"Having a government put in place by a lot of rural candidates, I think the message has certainly gotten across today."

Lambrick said the Quebec farmers'

solidarity was "most impressive" and certainly significant in stressing the Canadian farmers' demands.

"They (Quebec farmers) did it with their usual flair," said Lambrick, "which actually puts on one hell of a show. Those people know how to demonstrate, and it's great for the rest of us to see them march in and throw their support behind us."

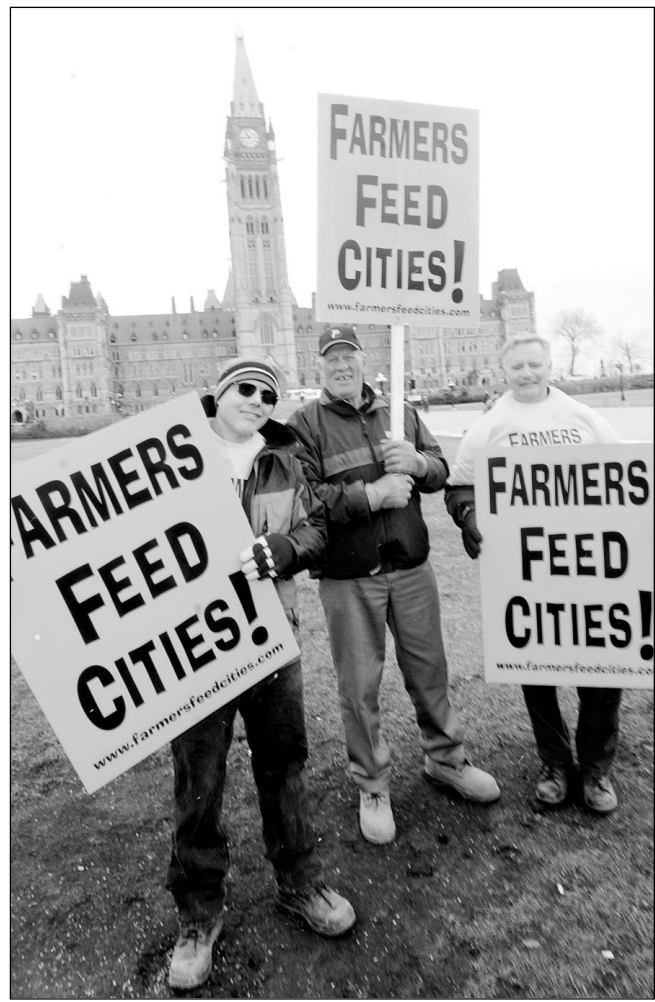
Lambrick said it was symbolic to say the least—politicians can't ignore a group that big.

"I think the day was very successful," added Allison. "In a very short time frame, almost 10,000 farmers from across Canada came to Ottawa and put forth a message to politicians—they are going to have to look at change, no doubt about it. They can't ignore it."

Following the demonstration, Lambrick met briefly with Halton MP Garth Turner to get his view of the demonstration, as well as any indications for the future.

"Garth gave me the sense that the Prime Minister has got the message, but may need time to do other things before things can be put into place for us," said Lambrick. "It's still early days for the Conservatives, and they need to put things in order first."

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Georgetown area farmers (from left) Bill Allison, George Bird and Bert Andrews were among those local farmers who took part in the protest on Parliament Hill Wednesday in Ottawa. Photo by Ted Brown



The Peace Tower on Parliament Hill was framed by protest signs Wednesday as 10,000 Canadian farmers converged to protest the lack of agricultural programs for farmers. Photo by Ted Brown



More than four blocks of Wellington Street in front of the Parliament buildings was blocked by 150 tractors as part of the protest. Photo by Ted Brown

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