

Liberal minority means farm groups will work with other parties as well

Canadians have voted and the results will mean a considerable difference to the way business is done in the House of Commons in Ottawa. But many of the changes brought about by the election won't make a significant difference to the way the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) approach government.

Both organizations take a non-partisan approach to dealing with government because our leaders know they must be prepared to work with winners selected by the electorate — and this is always subject to change.

When all the votes were counted June 28, Bob Speller, Canada's most recent minister of agriculture, had been defeated in his riding. The OFA appreciated Mr. Speller's work and his desire to improve agriculture in Canada, and now it will be up to Prime Minister Martin to name a successor.

Then, it will be up to farmers and their

OFA Bill Mailloux Commentary

organizations to work with the new minister.

Because agriculture spans the mandates of a number of ministries, the OFA and other farm organizations will also end up working with ministries and government officials dealing with environment, taxation, labour, international trade, and the list goes on. The business of agriculture has become increasingly complex.

Now that Canadians have elected a minority government, farmers and their organizations will also spend more time working with the other parties to ensure they clearly understand and support the farm position.

During the election campaign, the OFA and its county and regional federations made contact with all rural candidates, providing them with details of agriculture and its issues. With that preliminary material in their hands, the OFA looks forward to furthering the development of working relations with these MPs.

Agriculture has experienced some difficult times in recent years — low commodity prices, unfair international trade, and the devastating impacts of BSE. We have been able to secure significant improvements in the safety net programs provided by our federal and provincial governments

working in partnership. That work will have to continue.

The OFA will continue its work with the CFA to ensure Canadian farmers are properly represented as World Trade Organization negotiations continue. We have set our sites on expanding access to international markets during these negotiations, and we will continue to insist on maintaining the supply management marketing systems that have been so valuable to our country for farmers producing dairy, eggs, chicken and turkeys.

At recent WTO talks, Canada's representatives came away feeling they had achieved a certain level of success, getting the message into the minds of other countries' delegates that the Canadian balanced position is good for all nations — developed and developing.

Another critical issue for Canadian farmers is the harmonization of regulations with competing countries for the use of pest management products. For too long our producers of fruits and vegetables have seen their competitors in other countries using superior products while our government holds off granting the necessary approvals.

At the OFA, we understand the need for good, ongoing relations with our MPs and we're prepared to take all the necessary steps to ensure the next agriculture minister and the country's new MPs understand and support our industry. Make sure you introduce your MP to the business of farming.

Bill Mailloux is vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Foundation fundraiser brings in \$25,000

The Conservation Halton Foundation's third annual Summer Solstice charity auction was a tremendous success, organizers say.

Held June 18, the event raised almost \$25,000.

"We had more people come out this year and support the tremendous cause of expanding and renovating the Visitors Centre at Mountsberg Conservation Area," said Lisa Penny, event chair and foundation board member.

The new Visitors Centre, which will open in 2006, will have more space for learning programs, improved facilities and better access for people with mobility challenges.

John Riddell, manager of Mountsberg Conservation Area, said: "We have over 50,000 people coming to our park every year — for recreational activities like hiking and birding, and learning programs such as our Birds of Prey program and Ways of the Woods Day Camp."

He said the new centre will ensure visitors have a great experience at Mountsberg, and will allow more people to enjoy the park and facilities.

"On behalf of the staff at Mountsberg, we thank everyone involved with Summer Solstice for supporting this project."

Organizers also wish to thank everyone who attended and participated in the auctions, especially lead sponsors Dufferin Aggregates, Scotiabank and AON Reed Stenhouse.

The Conservation Halton Foundation is a volunteer charitable organization that raises funds for Conservation Halton, the environmental agency that conserves natural areas in its watershed that includes most of Burlington, Oakville, Milton and parts of Halton Hills, Mississauga, Hamilton and Puslinch Township.

For more information about the foundation or the Mountsberg Visitors Centre project, call (905) 336-1158, ext. 255, or visit www.conservationhalton.on.ca.

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