

## OFA Commentary

Betty Jean Crews

# OFA anxious to meet with government

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is anxious to work on a direction for the provincial government that will demonstrate a serious commitment and provide positive results for agriculture in Ontario.

We're working with Ontario commodity organizations to develop a focused agenda to form the basis for a meeting with Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario minister of agriculture and food.

A series of budget-cutting announcements by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff over the summer months has left Ontario farmers with serious doubts about the support this government has for agriculture.

As OFA President Ron Bonnett said recently, "Farmers cannot afford to be frustrated by program and regulatory uncertainty."

Premier McGuinty told Mr. Bonnett and other farm leaders attending the recent international plowing match at Meaford that he and the minister are willing to meet to discuss plans for agriculture's future. We're working now with government staff to arrange a roundtable session where we hope to establish a positive direction for agriculture and Ontario's economy.

Following discussions with our partner commodity organizations, three primary topic areas have been identified for presentation to Premier McGuinty and the minister. We want to talk about preserving farming's viability. We want to talk about regulatory compliance issues such as those for recent environmental requirements, and about food safety — all of major importance, not only to agriculture's future, but also to strengthening the province's economy and meeting consumer demands.

In a recent letter to Premier McGuinty, the OFA stated: "An investment of time and resources in the farm sector is a positive investment in Ontario's future."

Individual commodity leaders, in addition to highlighting the obvious income-related issues such as BSE and declining commodity prices, spoke about opportunities. Biofuels, industrial products from agriculture and branded high quality food products were identified as priority investment areas that need to be part of an overall agricultural strategy.

The roundtable Premier McGuinty and the minister have committed to attending is necessary to provide assurance to farmers that they do have a business future in Ontario. Until now, the lack of meaningful communication with farmers has created a culture of mistrust, frustration and anger among Ontario farmers.

As farmers, we recognize the pressure on governments to create the appearance of decisiveness by implementing a strong regulatory system in response to citizens' concerns. This system must recognize that there will be economic and other impacts on producers. Governments and producers must ensure that regulations developed are reasonable, effective and economically sustainable.

The recently-released Haines report is just one of a number of food safety-related initiatives that will have impact on the farm community. These programs can't be developed in isolation. Issues of overlap, effectiveness and cost must be part of implementation discussions.

Without comprehensive answers on these issues, the future viability of farming can't be determined and farmers can't accurately plan their future.

We look forward to meeting with Premier McGuinty and the minister this fall to develop the important details and the future programs farmers need to plan their future.

Bette Jean Crews is a member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture executive committee.

## Church holds dinner

Hungry for some great food and quality family time?

Ebenezer United Church, 12274 Guelph Line, will hold its traditional roast beef dinner buffet Saturday.

It will feature home baked pies, ice cream and other foods and beverages.

The dinner will be served between 4:45 and 7:30 p.m.

Tickets cost \$12.50 for adults, \$7.50 for students and \$3.50 for children.

Tickets can also be bought at the door. For advanced tickets, call (519) 824-3770 or (905) 854-2423.



Learn how to talk to others about their smoking.

CALL THE  
CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY'S  
TOLL-FREE

**SMOKERS' HELPLINE**  
**1-877-513-5333**

# HR@Work

Special Human Resources Supplement

## Shaping Organizational Excellence

Look for this informative supplement in the November issue of your local Business Times Newspaper or email [careers@metroland.com](mailto:careers@metroland.com) for a free copy.



**M** [www.metroland.com](http://www.metroland.com)  
Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd.

# Emerald Isle Home Decor

## Everything for the Holidays!

**Christmas Decorations Arriving Daily**

**Let us help you entertain in style!**

**No Payments, No Interest for 6 months O.A.C.**

**Only 7 Weeks 'Til Christmas! Order your Christmas Furnishings Now!**

HOME ISLE DECOR

**TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU**

**MILTON**  
400 Main St. E.  
905-693-9948

**GEORGETOWN**  
265 Guelph St. E.  
905-873-2753

OPEN 7 DAYS • SUN 12-4