

# Politicians participate in Ag Discovery Tour

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

## Annual event highlights concerns of the farming industry

Agriculture is a sad industry, Stoney Point Agri Co-operative manager Gerald Mailloux told a group of local politicians attending an Ag Discovery Tour around Essex County June 29.

The annual tour, organized by the Essex County Federation of Agriculture, highlighted a number of growing concerns in the farming industry.

"Right now, a farmer really has no control over the pricing of his crops and is subject to the whims of the market," Mailloux said. The co-op manager, whose core businesses are grain marketing, crop input supplies and petroleum products, expressed his concern about an "eroding slope of equity" for farmers and the struggle to compete with prices coming from south of the border.

"The sooner farmers are given something like the Risk Management Program the better," he said.

The commodity specific support program would trigger payments semi-annually whenever prices for a six-month period fall below a commodity's selected support price.

The Ontario grain and oilseed group introduced the option last June as a replacement for Market Revenue Insurance.

Essex MPP Bruce Crozier agreed that farmers desperately need this type of long-term solution.

"I suspect that farming is as difficult as it has ever been," he said. "Over the past couple years the province has put \$800 million into farming, but that's kind of ad hoc. It's something they have to come to



Windsor-Tecumseh MP Joe Comartin, Essex MP Jeff Watson, Essex County Federation of Agriculture President Julien Papineau and Essex MPP Bruce Crozier pose in front of Wagner Orchards Estate Winery in Maidstone during a stop on the ECFA's annual Agriculture Discovery Tour.

the government and get. What they're looking for is a long-term risk management program that will not only take care of the weather and things that affect farming, but also the markets and that's been tough to find a solution for."

Crozier said the only way farming is going to be successful is if both provincial and federal levels of government sit down with the farming community and arrive at a long-term solution.

Essex MP Jeff Watson said the most critical juncture reached so far with regards to these concerns is the current discussion between federal and provincial ministers of

agriculture about what the next generation program for farmers is going to look like.

"The key decision to be made is on what the provincial and federal governments can agree on and about putting the dollars behind it," he said. "This is signaling some sort of hope of a long-term solution. Something for farmers that is bankable and predictable. It will send the kind of message to farmers that both levels of government are behind them for the future."

Attendees of the tour also visited the Ewe-Dell family sheep abattoir in Woodslee, Wagner Orchards and Estate Winery in Maidstone, and heard a presentation from Air In Motion PowerGen Corporation about wind turbines.

Essex County Federation of Agriculture president Julien Papineau said the purpose of the tour is to create awareness among local politicians about some of the pressing issues in the industry.

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