



Pushing agriculture's Clean Water issues

by Paul Mistele, Vice-President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

The idea of life in rural Ontario under the proposed Clean Water Act has been a major concern for many since its introduction months ago. Now a new level of concern is developing as people examine the provincial government's plans for consultations on the Act by the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

A schedule of five dates and hearing locations have been advertised, and in spite of efforts by the Ontario

Federation of Agriculture to have additional dates and locations added at this time, there's been no flexibility shown by the committee. We wanted additional hearing locations in southwestern Ontario to make it possible for residents there to participate with the same accessibility as the rest of the province.

This request was made to the committee chair in a letter sent May 23 and called for "extensive public hear-

ings across Ontario to facilitate consultation with citizens who will experience the greatest impact of this legislation - Ontario's farmers."

Anyone wanting to make an oral presentation to the committee at a hearing location faces a deadline of August 8 at 5 p.m. to submit that request. Hearing dates and locations are August 21 to 25 in Toronto, Walkerton, Cornwall, Bath and Peterborough, respectively. The request to appear at a hearing location must be sent to the committee clerk, Trevor Day, by mail, email or fax. Details may be found on OFA's website, www.ofa.on.ca

The Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition has reviewed the proposed legislation. It has identified a number of concerns the Act would create for rural residents in the province.

Initially, OFEC called on the government to withdraw its proposed legislation and take the time necessary to "craft enabling legislation that would set out clear and achievable objectives along with a framework indicating how those objectives will be met in a reasonable time frame with minimal social, cultural and economic impacts."

When that approach was stonewalled by the government, OFEC then produced

a list of nine key concerns with the proposed legislation. Topping that list is the purpose statement of the legislation and the multiple-barrier approach being offered.

Ontario farmers and their organizations have long been recognized for their work at protecting the environment and drinking water sources - after all, we live in the country and our drinking water comes primarily from wells on our properties. We believe measures being proposed by the Act go well beyond ensuring safe, clean drinking water for residents of the province.

The proposed legislation lists a number of definitions

that, because they aren't specific, leave a lot of space for concern by rural property owners. There are also concerns with levels of authority created for the source protection committee being proposed, membership of that committee, the lack of compensation for loss of land use by farmers, and no provision of an appeals process.

It is critical that rural residents familiarize themselves with the legislation and make comment to the Standing Committee on Social Policy - the deadline for written submissions is August 28 and the contact information is on OFA's website.



BIG CATCH - The annual Wheatley Fish Festival benefited from sunny skies last weekend with excellent attendance for most events. These included a 3 pitch mixed baseball tournament Friday, a Saturday breakfast at the Legion put on by 1st Wheatley Scouts and a car trunk yard sale at the Wheatley Friendship Club under the auspices of the Heritage Society. The highlight of the day was a parade from the arena complex to Pier Road Saturday morning. Here, Brett Bowman is dressed for the parade as his grandfather, Grant Bowman, looks on.

Byrne soybeans recognized in Japan

Essex lawyer Joe Byrne is being recognized for the quality of his soybean crops.

Byrne, who farms in Lakeshore with his brothers Jim and Brendan as well as his nephew Jim Byrne, grow "identity preserved" soybeans. The family has sold their crops for years to a company that supplies to dis-

tributors in Japan.

The Japanese government is interested in high quality crops that are not mixed with any other identities or varieties, Byrne said.

The Mitsui Corporation is presenting an award to Byrne and his nephew. Byrne, Jim Byrne and his wife Denise, will leave for Tokyo on

Saturday and return Aug. 12.

"It's great to be participating in this and a great learning opportunity for us," Byrne said. "It speaks well of the quality of products we have in Essex County. We've always known that this is one of the best farming regions in the world. This award bears testament to that."

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