



Representing rural concerns

by Ron Bonnett, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Government standing committee hearings into Bill 43, the Clean Water Act, have attracted a lot of participation and public interest. In her opening remarks, Environment Minister Laurel Broten mentioned that no one tool alone will protect our drinking water. She also mentioned that the government is considering eliminating the idea of a permit system and creating risk management tools.

This would seem to indicate the message of the farm

community is being heard.

Over the last number of months, OFA and our partners in the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition identified a number of key concerns with the approach of the proposed legislation. We met with minister, we have met with MOE staff and we have met with numerous elected representatives from both sides of the legislature. We presented sound, reasoned arguments for the need to amend the proposed bill.

As groups made presen-

tations to the Standing Committee on Social Justice the week of August 21st to 25th the need for changes to the proposed legislation surfaced again and again. It was gratifying to the farm community to see that many of the issues we identified were also identified as concerns by other groups.

In OFA's presentation to the standing committee, we began by focussing on the lack of a clear purpose statement. We said Justice O'Connor was fairly clear when he reported on the Walkerton Inquiry, and "the farm community has been clear that the focus has to be on municipal drinking water sources. If you design things too broadly, you're

likely not going to address the target you want to address."

There was also a call from a number of groups for clearer definitions of terms used in the legislation. Without well defined terms, the standing committee was told there was a risk of inconsistent application of the legislation in all parts of the province. Terms like "exposure," "risk," "pathway" and even the term "precaution" can take on a number of different meanings and to be useful, the legislation must be really clear.

OFA and its partners in the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition have been telling the provincial government that

an adequate compensation package will be necessary to make the legislation workable.

When questioned by committee member MPP John Wilkinson about whether the Ministry of the Environment or the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs should take the lead with funding programs, we said farmers weren't particular as long as adequate funding was provided to implement the requirements of the legislation.

To be fair, we said, environmental initiatives should be funded by the environment ministry because agriculture has enough of its own funding issues with OMAFRA and programs of

that ministry.

Clean water is not an issue that should be mired in partisan politics. We would expect that committee members would examine our proposed amendments and make recommendations for change that support the objective of protecting municipal and communal water systems and an approach that protects farmers and rural communities.

A number of county federations, and most commodity organizations made presentations at the five hearing locations. Residents of the province can make written submissions to the committee until Monday, August 28th. OFA's website, www.ofa.on.ca, has all those details.

Applications for farming awards now being accepted

QUEEN'S PARK – The McGuinty government is recognizing innovation in the province's agriculture sector by launching the Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs said Aug. 25.

"By fostering innovation that starts on the farm, the McGuinty government is

helping Ontario's farmers prosper through new products and new markets," said Dombrowsky. "This program recognizes the innovation that farmers have always shown in running their businesses."

The ministry is now accepting applications for the program. As many as 55 regional awards, valued at \$5,000 each, will be presented. The recipients of

the Premier's Award (up to \$100,000) and the Minister's Award (up to \$50,000) will be selected from the regional winners.

"An investment in innovation is an investment in Ontario," said Premier and Minister of Research and Innovation Dalton McGuinty. "One idea can generate new products, new jobs and new opportunities. That's why we're recogniz-

ing and honouring the spirit of innovation that thrives on our farms, by creating the five-year \$2.5-million Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence."

Farm-level innovation can assist the agri-food industry to meet the challenges facing the sector by, among other things, enhancing profitability in the marketplace, meeting evolving consumer demands and better managing the effects of farming on the environment.

Four broad criteria will be used to identify the winning innovations: uniqueness and originality, stage of development, the impact or benefits of the innovation, and adoption and/or commercialization. Applications must be received by November 30, 2006, and will be reviewed by an independent panel from across Ontario's agri-food industry.

Additional information and application forms are available at www.omafra.gov.on.ca.

OFA offering energy alternatives

GUELPH – As the Ontario Government shifts its dependence from coal to nuclear to meet the province's energy needs, farmers have solutions that are not only renewable but much less threatening to the environment, says Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Earlier this year, OFA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ontario Power Authority, Hydro One, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Energy to review and improve the ways agriculture fits into the province's energy scene.

Agriculture is a major user of electrical energy – everywhere from dairy and poultry production to greenhouse operations, Bonnett said. "This makes a continuous, affordable supply of energy critical to the success of Ontario agriculture."

Production of electrical energy from wind generators and bio-digesters are some of the options being developed. OFA is also launching a program to test and use grains and other bio-fuels to replace some of the coal at the Lambton and Nanticoke generators.

The winner of the Essex County Plowmen's 50-50 Draw held August 19 was

Sylvain Gagnier
of Comber
\$251.50
Congratulations!



East Sister Island

Opportunity to Comment Preliminary Park Management Plan Park Management Planning Process

Ontario Parks (Ministry of Natural Resources), invites your comments on the preliminary park management plan for East Sister Island Provincial Park (Nature Reserve Class).

This stage outlines the preferred management approach by outlining all policies and management direction for the park. In addition, it outlines the implementation priorities for the park and summarizes all consultation that has taken place throughout the park management planning process. You have a final opportunity to comment on the preliminary park management plan for forty-five (45) days after its release. Comments will be accepted until October 16, 2006.

Copies of the preliminary park management plan may be viewed at the Ontario Parks' website at: <http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/invit.html> or are available from the contact listed below.

In addition, an open house to provide interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the preliminary park management plan and/or the park management planning process, has been scheduled for:

Date: Saturday, September 23, 2006
Location: Leamington Kinsmen Recreation Complex, 249 Sherk Street
Leamington, Ontario
Time: 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

For further information, to submit comments and/or to be added to the project mailing list please contact:

Brian Huis, Parks Planning Specialist
Ontario Parks, Southwest Zone
Ministry of Natural Resources
659 Exeter Road
London, ON N6E 1L3
Tel.: 519-873-4617
Fax: 519-873-4645
E-mail: brian.huis@mnr.gov.on.ca

Comments and personal information regarding this park management planning process are collected under the authority of the *Provincial Parks Act* to assist MNR in making decisions and to determine further public consultation needs relating to future park development. Comments and opinions which do not constitute personal information as defined by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, will be shared within the MNR and may be included in documentation that is made available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless consent to disclose is obtained. However, this information may be used by the MNR to seek public input on other resource management surveys and projects. For further information regarding this Act, please contact the individual listed above.

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