



Communication confusion around programs

by Ron Bonnett, President Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Government programs for farmers are only useful if they are well communicated and fill an identified need. In July the federal government announced the Canadian Farm Families

Options Program with an application deadline of October 31. As of September 25th applications for 20 million dollars of the available 550 million dollars had been submitted.

There is a definite need for additional income for many farm families, however, there does not seem to be widespread support

for this program. There may be a number of reasons for this: the qualification criteria may have diminished the number of potential applicants; minimal gross income requirements, maximum family income contributions and committing to long-term retraining do put restrictions on many farmers.

There are a number of business management support programs tied to the Canadian Farm Family Options Program. Farm Business Assessment, Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services and the Canadian Agricultural Skills Service are all valuable tools, but they should not be viewed as a solution to farm incomes devastated by foreign subsidies.

Farmers are facing impossible economic conditions. Governments need to respond with programs that work.

It seems obvious that most of the 550 million dollars will NOT be needed for this Canadian Farm Families Options Program. Government documents indicate that 45 per cent of the funds paid out have gone to farm families in one province – not Ontario.

Communication is more

than just promoting new and existing programs. It is listening and responding to feedback received. Farmers are saying the Families Options Program is not the solution. The government has an opportunity to respond to this message.

OFA is calling on Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Strahl to re-direct the money to the provinces so it can be used to get money into the hands of farm families working to hold onto their operations.

That money would be very helpful to pay for 60 per cent of the cost of federal-provincial programs such as Self Directed Risk Management for producers of honey, maple products and horticultural crops not covered by production insurance. It would also be useful to jump-start the Risk Management Program grains and oilseeds producers have been requesting.

There's confusion in agricultural circles as well

because of names attached to various government programs. As well as the federal government's 'options' program, Agricorp, a provincial agency, recently mailed Ontario CAIS participants fee option notices.

In the past, our governments have attached terms such as 'transition' and 'disaster' to programs available to farmers, so differentiating between such programs has been an unnecessary challenge. These are just two examples of how terminology can create confusion.

To create effective farm programs, communications must be two-way. Governments need to listen more and act on advice provided, and be better prepared to provide clear program details to farmers.

Ontario farmers and their organizations want to be able to provide consumers with the best possible products, and to be able to do it with a minimum of confusion.

URGENT

SAFETY NOTICE to fuel oil consumers without a Comprehensive Safety Inspection

The Canadian Oil Heat Association (COHA) in conjunction with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA), the regulatory agency responsible for fuels safety in Ontario, including furnace oil distributors, wishes to inform all fuel oil consumers of the following:

Ontario regulation 213/01, passed in June 2001, requires that all fuel oil (including furnace oil) consumers have a safety inspection of their oil systems by certain deadlines. Failure to comply will legally require that distributors terminate the fuel oil supply to any premise until a comprehensive inspection of all oil-related equipment has been completed.

This safety inspection verifies that the operational condition and installation of your oil system complies with national safety standards and codes put in place to maintain the safety of you and your family.

To ensure continued oil delivery and safe use of your oil equipment, the COHA and TSSA request that you provide your distributor the opportunity to inspect your system.

Furnace oil consumers that have not had a comprehensive inspection completed should immediately contact their fuel oil supplier to arrange for this important safety inspection.



For more information, contact the Canadian Oil Heat Association at 1-800-257-1593 or visit the website at www.coha.ca. For more information on fuel safety visit TSSA's website at www.TSSA.org

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