



Moving the funds to farmers

by Geri Kamenz, President Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Hearing about government support money and getting that money into your hands can be two very different things. Farmers were pleased when they heard Prime Minister Stephen Harper announce a billion dollars for Canadian agriculture at the beginning of March. It wasn't exactly the companion program announcement we wanted, but it did recognize cost-of-production increase and an improvement to CAIS.

The budget has now passed, but we're still waiting for delivery details for that money, at least the

\$400 million targeted for easing production costs from the past four years. Seems it's much easier to announce such funding than it is to work out the details of getting it into the hands of producers.

OFA and its national partner, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, will be working with government officials over the next few weeks to find the most appropriate delivery mechanism. We also have to encourage our provincial government to add its contribution to the package.

Getting these dollars into

the hands of farmers is an urgent issue for many. A recent media story quoting a retired University of Guelph professor, George Brinkman, provided some scary figures about the high level of debt Canadian farmers have accumulated – almost \$47 billion, an increase of 300 per cent since 1981.

The Brinkman story pointed out that farmers in the United States, because of their lower level of debt, are able to earn \$100,000 for every \$400,000 of investment. In Canada, our farmers can only realize \$15,000 on every \$400,000 of investment or debt. Because of their high debt situation, the Brinkman story states that the average Canadian farmer will need 73.3 years to pay off the farm's accumulated debt.

Considering a number of

factors, Brinkman says low interest rates in Canada have kept Canadian farmers in business in recent years. He predicts the next crisis Canadian farmers will encounter will come in the form of higher interest rates.

Earlier this year, I dealt with rural poverty in an OFA commentary. Just recently I made a presentation to the Senate Committee examining the rural poverty issue. Others from rural Eastern Ontario participated in that session with Senator Joyce Fairbairn, and the picture became abundantly clear – as agriculture languishes with low income and high input costs, the entire rural economy is slowly crumbling.

Senator Fairbairn was told about banking institutions closing their doors in

small rural communities because of dwindling populations. The same situation applies to other businesses, once able to thrive in rural Ontario.

Speaking for agriculture, I told the hearing that agriculture has a bright future in today's economy – demand for the energy that agriculture can produce and the safe, high quality food products available at the local level, give us cause for optimism.

Money to invest in agriculture is a key missing ingredient. We need targeted investment from the public sector to allow agriculture to survive and

thrive in today's economy – right now farmers have no money of their own to invest to keep producing and to sustain the rural economy.

I told Senator Fairbairn that farmers "are quite prepared to create new wealth, but they need strategic investments in order to do that."

That's why it is so critical that our governments work co-operatively with us to develop the distribution strategy for the \$400 million the Prime Minister wants us to have – preferably before we head to the fields in a few weeks.

Junior Farmers kick off new year

The annual March Conference signifies the start of a new year for Junior Farmers. Eighteen Essex-Kent (Kessex) Junior Farmers attended the conference held in Stratford the weekend of March 23.

A local Kessex member, Adam McLeod of Cottam, was elected to the provincial executive as the Executive Director of Membership.

Commenting on his new position, McLeod said, "I feel very honoured to hold the position of Executive Director of Membership. Some of my hopes for the upcoming year are to develop clubs in Middlesex and Elgin county, as well as many more. I also really want to try to attract more members and people to come out to the fabulous provincial events because once this occurs they won't be able to help it but want to attend the next one."

This year's workshops included financial investing, laughter therapy, workplace etiquette, and negotiation skills. In addition there was a presentation on business marketing and following the presentation groups of JF members designed a method of bettering Junior Farmers.

One group presentation was chosen to be implemented. The group altered the logo, name and website to be more friendly towards non-farmers and non-members.

There was a semi formal banquet and dance in which new positions were sworn in and awards were granted. Heather McLeod of Cottam received Member of the Year, Brian Sterling of Pain Court received Most

Improved New Member, and the club scrapbook got third place.

Hincks/Dellcrest Rural Treatment Center near Georgian Bay, commonly known as "The Farm", was chosen as the provincial charity for the year.

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Please note 9:30 a.m. start

Woelk Shop Tools - selling at 9:30 a.m.: Sears 10" band saw; Craftsman handled router and Craftsman router w/table; Sears table scroll 5/8" saw; Craftsman radial arm saw; 16" scroll saw and table; 12" drill press; 10" table saw; pressure washer; plus numerous misc. shop items. **Woelk Antiques, China, Glass and Collectibles:** 12" blue water pitcher signed; blue painted bowl and pitcher; various jugs and pitchers; pink depression glass; lg. quantity china including hand painted Nippon, Noritake, Japanese and Belgium; collector plates and numerous misc. pcs. china and glass; quantity of quilts and linens; Russian dishes and samovar; coal oil lamps and numerous small collectibles. **Woelk Furniture:** Sklar Peplar mahogany 9 pc. DR suite w/table that seats 12 when extended, 6 cane back chairs w/needlepoint seats, lg. hutch and side table; stand for bowl and pitcher; chesterfield and loveseat; lamps; desk; dressers; approx. 6 pcs. wicker furniture; beds; cedar chest; sewing machine; deacons bench, children's toy furniture; etc. **Antiques and Furniture from two Windsor Estates:** lovely 140 yr. old Rosewood sofa, ornately carved and reupholstered in burgundy velvet; two drop leaf tables; antique parlour and DR chairs; marble top dresser; lg. wool carpet in rose w/floral border; 2 sm. oriental rugs; BR set; floor and table lamps; prints and paintings; 3 Shelley cups and saucers; Carltonware fruit bowl; misc. glass and china; old violin; old medical satchels and medical tools; Heintzman upright piano; quantity of toys; cedar chest; BR suite; 80 hp Mercury outboard motor; 9.7 hp Johnson outboard motor; fishing equip.; quantity of golf balls; db. pedestal wooden desk; other misc. items.

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