

Farmers welcome \$1.79B grants

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

York Region farmers are applauding \$1 billion in federal assistance and \$79 million from the province for cash-strapped Canadian farmers announced this week.

On Tuesday, a few hours after federal Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell announced the federal money in Guelph, the province reported it would put up \$79 million toward the relief for the province's stressed grain and oil seed sector.

For local farmers facing low farm incomes, "this is very good news", Dr. Terry O'Connor, York Region Federation of Agriculture president, said.

Mr. O'Connor did, however, express concern at how both levels of government address agricultural problems.

'We need to find ways to improve Canadian markets so we're not so dependent on the big elephant to the south.'

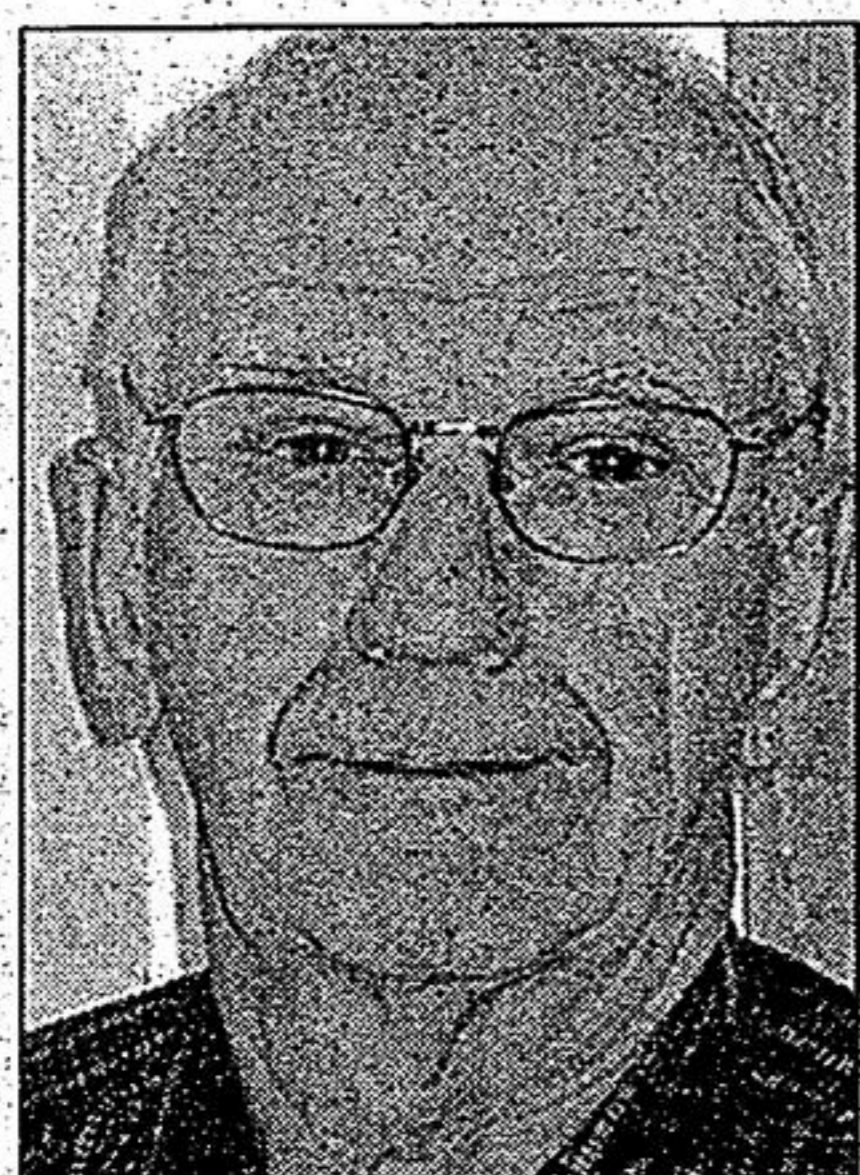
"The governments need to look at this on a long-term basis," he said.

"We need something long term to prevent these disasters."

Cattle farmers who have been devastated by the U.S. border closing as a result of the mad cow crisis especially need long-term answers to their problems, Mr. O'Connor said.

"We need to find ways to improve Canadian markets so we're not so dependent on the big elephant to the south," he said.

The Farm Income Payment program begins



TERRY O'CONNOR: York Federation of Agriculture president says funding 'very good news'.

delivering the money in April.

The federal program includes a general payment of \$841.5 million for all eligible Canadian producers. About 55 per cent of that payment is expected to go to grains and oil seed producers. Cattle and producers of animals such as sheep and goats will receive about 18 per cent of that payment.

"At a time when the marketplace is demanding bold innovation, farmers across Canada have been devastated by some of the most difficult years ever faces by the industry," Mr. Mitchell said. "We need to immediately provide some stability to producers, across all sectors, and to move forward in a transforming way, which will take us beyond this frustrating cycle of crisis."

Bob Friesen, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, also welcomes the farm aid.

"This announcement comes at a crucial time for Canadian producers, particularly in the grains and oilseeds, ruminant and horticultural sectors," he said. "It is an important first step in helping to move producers past current challenges."



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