

Ontario-Quebec Grain Farmers Coalition want long-term companion programming with regional flexibility to provide stability for farm families

GUELPH (March 9, 2007) – Today’s federal government announcement of \$1-billion in direct aid and a “savings account” falls short of what’s really needed to help grain and oilseed farmers, according to the Ontario-Quebec Grain Farmers Coalition (OQGFC).

“Additional funds are a step in the right direction,” said Peter Tuinema, president of the OQGFC, and an Northeastern Ontario grain farmer. The OQGFC represents over 42,000 farm families in Ontario and Quebec.

“But this announcement is a little light in the details. We don’t know if this is new money. We need clarity on how this aid will be delivered, how these ‘savings accounts’ will be administered. Most importantly, we need to know how it will offer long-term income stability to the family farm as it comes under attack from low prices caused by international agricultural subsidies,” he said.

The OQGFC believes that the federal government should help fund a cost-shared, regional price-insurance programs to supplement the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program.

This would include a long sought-after companion programming with regional flexibility in Ontario and Quebec, allowing grain and oilseeds farmers to participate in an insurance program that would protect them against unsustainable price declines caused by international agriculture subsidies. The OQGFC has asked Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl to contribute the federal government’s 60 per cent share for that effort, but he has constantly rejected this reasonable request on the basis that it is too expensive.

“What we don’t know is if this is new money, if this is a reorganization of CAIS, or if this is the end of CAIS. Farm families have a right to know in which direction the federal government is taking farm supports, and today’s announcement does not make that clear,” Mr. Tuinema said.

“That said, we are satisfied that today’s announcement, if it is new money, will be seen as a sign of good faith that the Conservative government recognizes the difficulties faced by farm families.”

For more information contact:

Peter Tuinema
President, OQGFC
1-519-767-6537
1-519-831-9766