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**national farmers union**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NFU CALLS FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR ONTARIO COMMUNITIES**

The federal and provincial governments should move quickly to provide assistance to rural communities devastated by a major windstorm earlier this week, says Dave Lewington, Youth President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Lewington, who farms near Lavigne, Ontario, was among those who saw firsthand the damage left by 200-kilometer per hour winds that ripped through the area. While his own farm sustained significant damage, he counts himself among the luckier ones.

“I lost a greenhouse and a couple A-Frame buildings for livestock,” he said. “But many of my neighbours will have to rebuild almost everything.”

Lewington said the municipalities of West Nipissing, Mattawa and several others have declared themselves disaster areas in the wake of the windstorm, which knocked out electricity supplies to approximately 170,000 Hydro One customers. More than a day after the storm, about 50,000 people were still without power. Lewington said most farmers in the area are relying on portable generators to supply essential electricity to livestock operations.

He said it may take some time before accurate estimates of the damage are compiled, but the federal and provincial governments should move quickly to get disaster assistance to those farmers and communities that were hardest hit.

“Most of the farms in the area are beef and dairy operations which were badly affected by the BSE crisis in recent years,” noted Lewington. “Many of them may not have insurance because they couldn’t afford the expense due to the low market returns. Now when things were just starting to recover, they’re hit with this new disaster.”

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