

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask.
S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226
E-Mail: nfu@nfu.ca



national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 11, 2007

**Risk management program stalled,
farm organizations excluded,
latest problems in Ag. Department.
NFU calls on Premier to fire the Minister.**

On June 8th, the Ontario Minister of Agriculture Leona Dombrowsky announced she would study the implementation of a risk management program through a 3-year pilot project. Two years ago, however, the Minister was presented with a Risk Management Program created by Ontario's grain and oilseed producers. In the intervening two years, no alternatives have been put forward by government, and no action has taken place to suggest what the government found objectionable.

It was a broad coalition of farmers that placed the Risk Management Program on the table several years ago. Further, that coalition was supported by the Farmers Feed Cities campaign.

"If this is a real announcement, why are there no details?" asked Ontario NFU Coordinator Grant Robertson. "Farmers and at least two of Ontario's general farm organizations—the NFU and CFFO—placed a clear and thoughtful plan in front of the Minister. It has been there for two years. What, exactly, is not good enough for this government that further delay is necessary? Two years is an awfully long time to wait for this non-decision."

Robertson noted that it is also troubling to see the Minister of Agriculture announcing that she is excluding some members of the coalition, including the NFU, from the development of her risk management program. "If the Minister is truly seeking creative solutions to the farm income crisis she would not exclude organizations with expertise from the policy development process simply because the organizations have dared to be critical of government," said Robertson.

These latest two blunders come on top of a long list of costly errors, including failure to deal with farmers' concerns with Agricorp, using the Minister's position to raise re-election funds, failure to address the growing demographic crisis in primary food

production in Ontario, and an unwillingness to present meaningful solutions to the farm income crisis in Ontario.

“The government is not providing effective leadership to a farm community facing financial crisis. Its gaffs, misjudgments, and photo-op re-announcements continue to mount. These latest two are just the most recent, and the most serious, in a long list. The need is critical for an effective Minister. How can farmers have confidence in a Minister that is not seeking input from all farm organizations and deliberately turns her back on a significant number of Ontario’s farmers? The National Farmers Union can see no alternative but to ask the Premier to replace her,” said Robertson.

The government’s June 8 release states categorically that development of this new program, at some undefined future time, will take place “with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and representatives of the grain and oilseed sector.” Robertson commented: “There are three general farm organizations in Ontario. The Minister has gone out of her way to make it clear who she thinks is a friend of government and worthy of her attention, when all three have grains and oilseed farmers as members. It is not only a shocking action but should call into question the Minister’s tenure in her position.”

“How can other farm organizations have even the slightest confidence in this Minister to take an even-handed approach to farm policy,” said Robertson. “The Minister has made a mockery of the democratic choice of farmers in this province already by ministerial staff solicitations of re-election donations from farm organizations, and now this deliberate action of excluding a significant portion of farmers who do not happen to belong to the government’s well-heeled, supportive farm organization.”

— 30 —

For More Information:

Grant Robertson, Ontario NFU Coordinator:	(519) 353-4033
Darrin Qualman, Director of Research:	(306) 652-9465