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Ontario budget does nothing to address the farm income crisis

“All program and financial plans for rural Ontario should address two basic questions: Will they result in even one farmer being able to eliminate the need for an off farm job; and, will the plan attract even a single young person into farming? By those measures, this budget is a major disappointment for those who care about food in Ontario,” said Grant Robertson, Ontario Director of the National Farmers Union, commenting on today’s budget.

Robertson continued: “When the current government was asking for the votes of farmers in the last election they promised to make Agriculture a lead ministry. This last budget before the October election demonstrates that the concerns of farmers and the farm income crisis are not even minor priorities for the provincial government.”

Statistics Canada data shows that the last 5 years have seen the worst realized net income for Ontario farmers in history.

“A huge salary increase for MPPs was a priority before Christmas, but those who produced the food for Christmas dinner are still left struggling,” said Robertson. “Ontario families care about where their food comes from. They want to know that the family farmers who produce their food do not have to subsidize their grocery bill with off-farm jobs.”

While the relatively modest investments in promoting Ontario farm products to Ontario consumers and for some other marketing initiatives are welcomed by the National Farmers Union there is nothing in this budget that will take a single step forward to deal with the farm income crisis or the decline in the viability of farming for Ontario’s rural youth.

The NFU has called for real investment in Ontario’s farmers and this province that would stop the downloading of provincial initiatives onto the farm gate,” said Robertson. “Farmers are good stewards and business managers and want to make their living from the marketplace, but government policy has failed farmers over the life of several governments. To keep this generation of farmers and ensure a next we must start to turn the policy direction around. This budget fails to even take baby steps in the right direction.”

