



November 24, 2014

OASC LEADERS WELCOME THE REMOVAL OF MANDATORY AGRISTABILITY PARTICIPATION FROM ENROLLMENT CRITERIA FOR PROVINCIAL RMP PROGRAM

YEAR LONG REVIEW CONFIRMS RMP'S VALUE AND LEADS TO CALLS FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO FIX BROKEN AGRISTABILITY PROGRAM

In the spring of 2011, farmer leaders across commodity groups came together with the provincial government to design a made-in-Ontario solution to help bring predictability, stability and bankability to their business operations. Established with much fanfare, a new provincial cost-shared Risk Management Program (RMP) was created to help stabilize the industry as many costs and prices are global in nature and far beyond the farmer's control.

In the fall of 2013, Premier Wynne tasked the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food and senior ministry staff to work collaboratively with Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition (OASC) leaders to review the RMP program and ensure the existing program and its funds were best serving farmers.

After a year of working with senior Ministry officials, our detailed analysis, measured against clear criteria have led OASC to conclude that the current RMP program is far superior to any of the other alternatives with respect to assisting job creation, bankability and predictability.

Through that review, it also became clear the mandatory requirement that all RMP participants also enroll in the federal AgriStability program was doing more harm than good given cuts to the AgriStability program and other challenges with the way AgriStability is currently operating.

The provincial government and farmers have worked well together in the creation of RMP and must continue to do so in order to convince the federal government to fix their broken safety net programs and work together in the interest of all of Canada's rural and urban economies.

OASC would like to thank the Premier for establishing the informal joint RMP working group, as well as Minister Jeff Leal, Deputy Dr. Deb Stark and a long list of Ministry officials who treated us as trusted partners. We believe all ministries would be wise to examine the approach utilized by OMAFRA for use as a model for future government / stakeholder collaboration.

QUOTES:

"Our year-long review confirmed our belief that Ontario farmers are well served by the design of the provincial RMP program. The changes announced today came at the request of OASC and we are pleased Minister Leal has listened to and acted on our concerns."

Henry Van Ankum,
Chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario
Chair OASC

“Ontario is a national leader in providing risk management support to farmers. We worked directly with farm leaders across commodity groups to develop Ontario’s own Risk Management Program (RMP). Farm leaders, together with government, have determined that RMP is far superior to any other program in terms of assisting job creation, bankability and predictability for the agri-food sector. We need federal business risk management programs that, like RMP, work for Ontario’s farmers. Unfortunately, program cuts and design flaws have resulted in an eroded federal AgriStability program that is no longer meeting producer needs. I support OASC’s request to remove the AgriStability requirement for participation in the provincial RMP. This will allow Ontario farmers to have greater flexibility to choose the portfolio of tools that best meets their needs.”

Hon. Jeff Leal, MPP
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

“The removal of the AgriStability requirement for participation in the provincial RMP program will help send a clear signal to the federal government that recent cuts to AgriStability and program design flaws have left federal safety-net programs wanting and in need of major improvements.”

Bob Gordanier
President, Beef Farmers of Ontario
Vice Chair, OASC

“We did not come to the decision to ask for this change lightly. There is nothing we want more than federal safety-net programs that work, programs that are properly funded, predictable, bankable, efficient and reflective of each of Canada’s unique regional needs. Without changes, AgriStability has a hard time passing any of those tests.”

Judy Dirksen
President, Ontario Veal Association

“Farm leaders are happy Ontario Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal is willing to bring his voice and office to our cause as we invite federal and provincial politicians across the country to join us in ensuring federal safety-net programs work for farmers in every region of the country”.

Dennis Fischer
Chair, Ontario Sheep

“While OASC leaders continue to encourage farmers to protect their businesses by participating in both RMP and AgriStability, there was a growing concern that problems with the AgriStability program would lead to farmers opting out of both programs.”

Amy Cronin
Chair, Ontario Pork

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