



Carol Mitchell, MPP

Huron-Bruce *Spring Report 2006*

Huron-Bruce Constituents:

This summer newsletter will highlight the many accomplishments of your government. I am proud to be part of a government which has provided more money to rural areas than any previous government. Our rural communities have received more than money – they have received the full attention of this government.

Healthcare, education, roads, water, energy and agriculture are areas where the government has provided leadership. It is vital that our government work with our rural partners to achieve results for our communities. To build strong communities we must work together.

Leadership involves tough decisions. Many of these have not been popular in the short-term but our government is building for the future.

Agriculture is a key sector in Huron and Bruce. We have been hit with a “double whammy.” First the BSE crisis which was caused by a cow found in Alberta, but which caused great hardship in Bruce and Huron. I arranged meetings with the Minister of Finance and our cattle producers from Bruce & Huron. He was concerned with their plight and financial aid was forthcoming.

Next, we encountered low prices for corn and soybeans. Again I met with farm leaders and arranged that they bring their case directly to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture. Our government provided financial support.

Part of the problem facing grain and oilseed producers has been due to the U.S. farm support program and European farm subsidies.

Faced with starvation at the end of both world wars the countries of Europe embarked on a program to guarantee an adequate supply of food regardless of cost. The question of subsidies remains a volatile one and has created great stress within the European Union.

In Canada we compete with agricultural products which are subsidized. We do not have the budgets to match them. For



The Lighthouse Project at St. Anne’s Catholic Secondary School, Clinton.

years we have pushed for a roll back of subsidies but there are too many vested interests that enjoy the status quo. In Canada under the leadership of Eugene Whalen, the Minister of Agriculture under Pierre Trudeau, supply management was introduced. It provided a way for farmers to control their supply and have a sustainable income. Those who are within the “free market” have not enjoyed this market stability such as the beef and grain sectors.

Agriculture is at a crossroads. In 2008 the Agricultural Policy Framework expires and needs to be re-negotiated. Now is the time to determine what course to take with Agriculture.

This involves everyone. Our rural communities are diverse and agriculture is an important part. What shape will agriculture take in the 21st century?

I have included a series of questions in this newsletter. I encourage everyone to complete them. You may return the questionnaire or do the questions on the website www.carolmitchell.ca. I will hold public forums in Hensall, Belmore, and Cargill to discuss the responses and to hear from you.

Carol Mitchell, MPP
Huron-Bruce

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The government has provided leadership in meeting the challenges facing farmers and rural communities:

- \$125 million to assist Grain and Oilseed producers, vegetable and horticultural producers and livestock, poultry traceability system.
- Ontario support for farm income stabilization and support programs will total \$834 million over the 2003-04 to 2005-06 fiscal years
- \$172 million announced over the next 3 years in business risk management programs.
- \$20 million in nutrient management assistance in 2005-2006
- \$900M over five years to support rural municipal infrastructure. 5 municipalities have received funding through the Canada-Ontario Rural Municipal Infrastructure Fund
- \$520 million Ethanol Growth Fund over 12 years

Education

The government has delivered on its promise to improve education in rural Ontario:

- \$31 M to keep rural schools open
- \$170,468 to St. Anne's Catholic Secondary School to fund a Lighthouse program which will allow the development of an agricultural-based pre-apprenticeship program
- \$2,378,174 in funding for repairs in the 4 local school boards
- 1100 new teachers in elementary schools across the Province
- Increased support for kids with special needs
- Training new lead teachers in literacy and numeracy
- Banned junk food in vending machines

An unprecedented \$6.2 Billion over 5 years in funding for post-secondary education.

Health and Long-Term Care

New ideas and new funding are transforming health care in rural Ontario:

- \$2,649,556 for new and modern medical equipment in Huron-Bruce hospitals
- Created 150 new Family Health Teams including Goderich, Seaforth, Hensall, Walkerton and Wingham
- \$344,678 to help purchase furniture and equipment for the Maitland Valley Medical Centre in Goderich
- \$319,835 for Bruce County and \$600,166 for Huron County to strengthen land ambulance services in the area
- Additional funding to help hospitals balance their budgets in Huron-Bruce
- \$325,973 for new and modern medical equipment in Alexandria Marine and General Hospital
- Free vaccines for kids
- Signed an agreement with the Blue Water Rest Home for funding for renovations and improvements
- Increased funding to Grey-Bruce Health Services to help reduce wait times for hip and knee replacements, cataract surgeries and MRI exams
- \$384,430 in Diabetes Program Funding for hospitals in Huron-Bruce



The latest Family Health Team was announced in Hensall.

Renewable Energy

Rural Ontario is meeting our energy needs through the production of biodiesel, ethanol and wind:

- Set a standard price for renewable energy through a Standard Offer Contract
- \$4.1 Billion agreement reached with Bruce Power for the refurbishment of Bruce A Units 1 and 2, bringing on-line an additional 1,500 MW of new base load capacity through 2036
- 474 Megawatts of electricity approved through 5 clean, renewable energy projects through an RFP process. Including 2 in Kingsbridge, 2 in Kincardine and 1 in Ripley.

Carol Mitchell's Private Member's BILL 49 An Act to Celebrate & Recognize Rural Ontario

Rural Ontario Day Act establishes a special day. It will celebrate the rich history, recognize the current situation and address future growth of rural Ontario. When passed the Act will set the Wednesday in the middle of Agriculture Week, which is the week preceding Thanksgiving, as Rural Ontario Day.

Questionnaire

Section 1 – The Family Farm / Corporate Agriculture

1. When defining the “family farm” should the following criteria be considered:
 - a) The size/acreage of the farm yes no
 - b) The gross income of the farm yes no
2. To qualify as a farm should both a minimum and a maximum size be defined? yes no

Comments:

Section 2 – Income Management & Support

In 2008 the agreement establishing Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization (CAIS) expires and a new agreement may be established.

1. Caps: should there be a maximum amount per farmer given out in the program? yes no
2. If you selected “ Yes” in the previous question, what should be the maximum?
 \$100,000 \$200,000 \$500,000
3. Select factors to be considered when allocating money under a new program.
 - a) a farm size should be a minimum size. yes no
 - b) a farm should have a minimum income of \$15,000. yes no
 - b) anyone who wishes should apply regardless of acres or gross income. yes no
4. A family farm at one time produced a variety of crops. Should a subsidy program be designed to encourage the mixed farm? yes no
5. Should the program be crop specific? yes no
6. Should there be a dedicated tax to fund agricultural programs? yes no
7. Who provides the labour should be a major consideration when defining the family farm? yes no
8. Should smaller sized acreages be encouraged, i.e. less than 50 acres? yes no

Risk management

9. Should the farmer be responsible for the majority of the risk in farming? yes no
10. Should Ontario encourage farmers to produce crops that do not compete with heavily subsidized crops from other countries? yes no
11. A number of programs currently support farmers: reduction in property taxes (\$300 million), tax free fuel and no PST on farm purchases. If a new program is established should all these other programs be put into the new program?
 yes no

Comments:

Section 3 – Healthy Food

Food production is what agriculture is all about. One means of reducing our health costs has been to focus on prevention & a healthy diet is the key.

1. There are complaints about too many regulations, but consumers want safe food. The first meat inspection laws were enacted because of concerns for food safety. Do regulations on food safety help ensure consumer confidence?
 yes no
2. If the cost of organic food was similar to other food products would you be more inclined to purchase it? yes no
3. Ontario food is marketed with a “ Foodland Ontario” label. Have you purchased Foodland Ontario produce this month? yes no
4. If the ‘Foodland Ontario’ program was expanded to include meat would this be a determining factor when you purchase meat? yes no
5. There is public concern about pesticide and herbicide use. Ontario regulations are designed to protect the consumer and the operator. Should imported food be subject to similar regulations? yes no
6. Should genetically altered food be identified when it is sold? yes no
7. Should the country of origin be identified on all food sold in Ontario? yes no
8. A proper diet is the best way to stay healthy, feel better and reduce health care costs. Should the province continue to restrict the sale of “junk” food as it has done in elementary schools? yes no
9. Eating patterns have changed over the last few years and “good old country cooking” is becoming a thing of the past. How many meals per week do you prepare at home that are NOT from processed foods?
 None 1-5 meals 5-10 meals more than 10 meals

Comments:

Section 4 – Let me know a little bit about you.

1. Select your age group. under 25 25 - 45 46 - 60 61-74 75-
2. Where is your principle residence located? an urban area (town, village, hamlet) rural area
3. Are you actively farming? yes no
4. If yes how many acres do you farm (owned & rented)?
 100 acres or less 101-1000 acres 1001-2,000 acres over 2000 acres
5. What was your farm’s gross sales over past year?
 under \$15,000 \$15,000-30,000 \$30,000-60,000 \$60,000-99,999 over \$100,000

Let me contact you:

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Please mail the completed questionnaire, or fax to 519-428-3149 or online www.carolmitchell.ca .

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