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What was the federal government thinking?

RIDGETOWN, ON. – Dropping more than three-quarters of a billion dollars to one specific sector ignores the entire hurt within the agriculture industry and completely goes against the position that Ontario's collective commodities have been fighting for: fair and equitable treatment for all.

“This was an outrageous display of favouritism by a government unsure of how to respond to the real issues within agriculture,” said John Jaques, the Chairman of the Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario. “Just a few days after the ‘One Voice’ members met with the minister comes an announcement that totally disregards any of our input.

“All of agriculture is hurting and no sector, no commodity has been immune to what has taken place over the past three years. Input costs have accelerated at a time when margins and returns to farmers are in a spiraling, free-fall resulting in negative returns for the first time in agriculture's history. It hasn't finished yet – and still the federal government continues to ignore the cries from the countryside.”

The lack of consideration for the rest of agriculture clearly shows the flaws within the agricultural ministry – no vision and plan for the future.

“And the simple fact that the federal government is utilizing 2003 ENS (eligible net sales) data which is, in actuality, NISA data, shows that CAIS has not done the job that was promised,” Jaques said. “We have a flawed national program designed to deal with national crisis' and a lack of leadership to implement vital change needed to revive an industry important enough to merit federal and provincial ministers – something that is rare for government at either level.”

Jaques said the ‘One Voice’ movement, including those within horticulture, will not stop their lobby efforts on behalf of everyone in agriculture in Ontario.

“We need to continue to get our message out to both levels of government that all of agriculture is in dire straits and all of agriculture needs a hand-up so that all farmers are confident that the crop they will grow and harvest for the upcoming season – if there is one, will provide a return that is fair, equitable, and just at a time when consumers are getting everything for less.

“What other choice do we have?”

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