



## ONTARIO-QUEBEC GRAIN FARMERS' COALITION

### COALITION DES PRODUCTEURS DE GRAINS QUEBEC-ONTARIO

Representing 41,000 farm families through:

Ontario Grains & Oilseeds      La Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec

La voix de 41 000 familles agricoles

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### **IT'S DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN AT THE AG FPT MEETINGS: Improvements to Federal Business Risk Management programming discussed again**

**Toronto** – Ontario and Quebec Grain Farmers from Windsor, Ontario to Rimouski, Quebec appear to be suffering from a bad case of déjà vu when it comes to the federal government's Business Risk Management strategic review. For the fourth straight FPT meeting, the ministers discussed the federal government's BRM strategic review and agreed that improvements need to be made. "We appreciate the recognition by the Ministers that there are shortcomings with federal agricultural programming, however, we are concerned that we are being stalled and delayed," said Leo Guilbeault, Ontario chair for the Ontario-Quebec Grain Farmers Coalition.

Due to the shortcomings of the Federal government's agriculture programming, provincial governments have had to respond with programs to stabilize farm income during tough times, known as business risk management. In the case of Ontario, the provincial government worked with Grains and Oilseeds farmers to develop the Risk Management Program (RMP) to fill this programming vacuum. RMP is a proactive, self-directed and producer designed program. Similar to an insurance program, farmers pay into the program to provide bankability and predictability to a sector that suffered through negative margins in the early 2000s. "In order to be eligible for RMP, farmers are also required to purchase production insurance to protect against weather and disease; this is a proactive and forward thinking program," added Mr Guilbeault.

"We have a federal solution and it is called AgriFlex," said William Van Tassel, President of the Coalition and Quebec grain farmer. "We believed we had a breakthrough during the 2008 election when the Conservatives and the Liberals promised an AgriFlex fund in their platforms - to partner with the provinces to deliver needed programming but as it turns out, we were duped, as the AgriFlex fund announced in the Economic Action Plan 2009 specifically excluded the business risk management component," added Mr Van Tassel.

The version of AgriFlex announced in the Economic Action Plan lacked the flexibility to fund provincial business risk management programs. The federal government has instead told farmers and the provinces that "Ottawa knows best".

Farming has had its challenges. The viability of the sector has come under attack from excessive international subsidies; unfair trading practices; volatile world prices and currencies; and rising fuel, fertilizer and labour costs. And there always is the unpredictable: poor weather, disease or crop failure. No commodity group has been immune to one or many of these factors at one point or another. Some have suffered through prolonged hard times. Some farmers in one part of the country suffer more than farmers of the same commodity in other parts due to weather, market access or unfair agricultural subsidies. "Agriflex with the Business Risk Management component addresses these regional challenges," concludes Mr Guilbeault.

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