

# **T H E O D Y S S E Y R E P O R T**

**An outtake from the Odyssey report with reference to environmental stewardship**

**(see the full report on-line)**

**<http://www.adaptcouncil.org/images/odysseyReport.pdf>**.)

## **Introduction from the Odyssey Report**

**In late 2000, a group of Ontario farm leaders recognized that the pace of change in agriculture, both domestically and internationally, was quickly outstripping existing agricultural policy. A new strategic vision was needed that would build on existing strengths and capture future opportunities, as well as identify challenges that might disrupt the farm sector and its current farm practices.**

**In February 2001, Roger George, a former President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, was invited to chair a group of farm leaders from a cross section of agri-culture (page 3). Leaders from the two general farm organizations: the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, along with the supply managed sectors and the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council which represented non-supply managed commodity groups, acted as the steering committee for this new group.**

**Funding of \$135,000 was obtained from the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) under the federal Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development program (CARD).**

**Ontario's farm groups paid the costs of their representatives on the committee and provided many administrative services and staff support.**

**The name "Odyssey" was chosen as being descriptive of a long wandering journey or adventure down winding paths unknown. Thus, the Agricultural Odyssey Group was born. The Odyssey Group had a single mandate, that being to examine issues that may impact upon the agricultural sector during and beyond the first decade of the new century and present policy options and recommendations to the Ontario farm leadership. The ensuing debate was held outside the normal political constraints of farm organizations to allow for an unbiased and frank look at the issues. It was a chance to be bold in our thinking and honest about the state of our industry and our farm**

organizations. While the mandate was concise, the scope of the project was immense, reflecting the complexity of the agri-food chain and international agriculture in general. Over the course of the project, the Odyssey Group held public meetings across Ontario with farmers and their organizations. A broad spectrum of other stakeholders was also consulted. These included government officials, members of academia, food processors and distributors, multi-national corporations, consumer advocates, taxation and legal experts, former farm leaders, leading-edge business leaders, and rural groups. We also drew on advice from other Canadian provinces. Contact was maintained with the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Future Opportunities in Farming that ran concurrently with the Odyssey Group. A special effort was made to consult with rural youth who will be most affected by today's planning.

This report is in two parts. Part 1 contains individual modules which identify a group of broad issues that agriculture has to address in order to remain vibrant and profitable. This section offers recommendations and policy advice to Ontario's farmers and their organizations. Many of these recommendations will also need government and/or stakeholder co-operation and partnership. The second part of our report addresses the ability and necessity of the Ontario farm organizational structure to be able to collaborate on major policy and procedural changes with its government and private partners.

The report addresses the need for some long-term political and public policy initiatives to ensure that consumers have a food system in which they can be confident. We must strive for a system that meets the highest standards of food safety and quality yet embraces the principle of Ontario agriculture being profitable. A prosperous agriculture sector is important to the entire province. There are many issues for which agriculture will become increasingly responsible that benefit all of society not just agriculture or rural communities, e.g. water quality and environmental stewardship, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and maintenance of wildlife habitat. In order to provide these benefits, agriculture requires the support of the Ontario public and must be a profitable economic sector.

## Environment Section from the Odyssey Report

## **B a c k g r o u n d**

**Practical and sustainable farm environmental practices have been, and will continue to be, central to sound agricultural and public policy. Ontario farmers are no strangers to proactive environmental initiatives. Of all the things that may impact our future, the need for increased environmental stewardship by all citizens and businesses may be one of the more predictable. Safeguarding the environment with practical and scientific farm practices is certainly one of the areas where farm organizations and their members in Ontario have invested considerable time and money over the last twenty years.**

**In the mid-1980's AGCare, a coalition of farm groups, was formed to deal with agricultural pest management and related environmental issues. Over the ensuing years, many initiatives have been undertaken by AGCare and farmers to educate themselves and the public about responsible on-farm chemical use and storage. As well, they have also explored ways to reduce the amounts of product used and safely dispose of unwanted product and used containers. New standards were set for on-farm pesticide storage, and every user of agricultural pesticides has to undergo industry-sponsored pesticide certification written every five years. A series of award-winning Best Management Practices (BMP) manuals were produced by the farm sector and stakeholders with the help of federal Green Plan funding. In 1991, Ontario's farm groups formalized their commitment to sound environmental practices by forming the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition (OFEC). This active coalition, comprising all major Ontario farm groups, has emerged as a leader. Its work has gained national and international attention highlighting that Ontario farmers are utilizing best management practices (BMP) to ensure that their stewardship not only has minimal environmental and societal impact, but actually creates environmental benefit and sustainable production. With the release of its 1992 "Our Farm Environmental Agenda," OFEC identified 17 key environmental issues that required long-term policies and a daily commitment from farmers. Among these issues were water, soil and air quality, nutrient and farm input management as well as a concern for natural habitat such as wetlands and woodlots. Central to the "Agenda" was a plan to develop Environmental Farm Plans (EFP). The resulting Environmental Farm Plan concept was designed in co-operation with scores of technical advisors from interested ministries and professional organizations. The EFP workbook, with its 23 modules that cover virtually every aspect of Ontario's environmental farm stewardship, has been recognized internationally as one of the finest tools available to assist farmers in**

**managing environmental concerns under their specific circumstances.**

**It should be stressed that without an initial commitment from the federal “Green Plan” of \$5 million the subsequent initiatives would not have been possible. Further funding has come from the Agricultural Adaptation Council’s federally funded CanAdapt program and other federal environmental initiatives. The modest investment of public funds has been matched several times over by on-farm capital improvements and environmental management changes made by Ontario farmers. This would lead us to believe that, like research, environmental investment by governments is an effective use of public funds that levers private investment and needs to be built upon.**

**Since 1993 over 20,000 farmers have taken the EFP course. With more than 11,000 producers, representing more than 50% of the farm acreage in Ontario, submitting their own plans for peer review, the exercise has been invaluable in bringing environmental awareness to the farming community. In that time, OFEC and all the farm groups have sought to promote environmental excellence. More importantly, the commitment to the EFP program has kept the farm community in the forefront, anticipating future environmental issues and developing policy options to address the changes in agricultural practices as well as changing societal needs and views.**

**The overriding objective of Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition is to ensure that Ontario’s farms can grow and prosper using both traditional, but proven, and new production methods, while minimizing environmental and societal impacts. A nutrient management plan, as part of a farmer’s overall environmental strategy, is a key component of safeguarding our water and ensuring that the farm industry works co-operatively with municipalities, its rural non-farm neighbours and Ontario legislation.**

**It is against the backdrop of over 15 years of proactive environmental farm leadership based on science and expert advice, that the Agricultural Odyssey Group has examined where future public and regulatory pressures may arise, and how identified and anticipated issues must be addressed.**

## **Issues to Consider**

**It is an unfortunate fact that it often takes a disaster to focus attention on issues on which many advocacy groups may have expounded for years. The East and West coast fisheries, reforestation,**

increasing urbanization and depleting rural economies, are but a handful of resource issues where the warnings have been sounded for decades. We could add Canadian agriculture itself to the list. The year 2000 Walkerton E-coli tragedy and ongoing local municipal water quality alarms such as in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, have focused government and public attention around the long-term safety and supply of our water. Recent polls suggest that 50% of Canadians do not trust their tap water.

Ontario agriculture is in a good position to play a significant role in helping to safeguard this most precious of all commodities because of the experience gained over the last decade, and the ongoing work being done by OFEC and farm groups. The proven ability of agricultural industry leaders to help design and implement practical environmental standards for Ontario's farmers is a valuable advantage for which governments should be extremely grateful.

There will be the need to trade-off voluntary environmental farm compliance with a more structured and transparent system that is built upon the strong environmental foundations established by the industry. An Angus Reid poll conducted in January 2001 found that 82% of respondents either strongly agreed (52%) or somewhat agreed (30%) that farms need environmental plans. This same survey stated that only 12% were willing to allow farms to voluntarily comply with environmental guidelines. However, there must be a means to compensate farmers for providing society with the benefits that a more rigid environmental farm policy will bring. Conversely, there has to be strong penalties for producers who do not comply, thus threatening the entire industry.

As noted in the federal Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), there is an increasing need for governments to work together with industry towards a comprehensive solution. The APF acknowledges that governments should provide the tools for farmers to take advantage of new technologies and practices as well as provide effective, accessible programs to assist farmers in making cost-effective investments on their farms.

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is the obvious vehicle on which to build greater stewardship values. It has been acknowledged as a world-leading initiative and been used as the basis for many similar projects in Canada and internationally. The EFP modules will need regular upgrading to take account of current best management techniques as well as new scientific findings. One of the conclusions

noted in a report on Environmental Farm Planning in Canada commissioned by the Environment Bureau of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada was the need for secure financial and technical resources to carry out the key projects defined by the EFP process, combined with formal recognition by governments that continuity of support will be assured.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 1:** We recommend that stable, long-term funding be committed from public resources to the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program including regular upgrading and assessment and provision of funds to implement capital projects identified by the EFP process.

A transparent review process and a farmer action plan will serve to protect the farmer as much as society. Mandatory farm plans should pose little threat to most operators. Identifying polluters has to start with the farmers themselves and it is far better to lead the way with proactive industry-initiated activity than to have an industry subjected to regulation and constant inspection by government agencies. Just as few farmers will tolerate animal abuse, so too must they help to self-police the environment. However, in making these plans mandatory there may have to be some changes made to the EFP process in order to maintain confidentiality. The aggregate information has always been publicly available, however individual producer information has been, and must remain, confidential.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 2:** We recommend that Environmental Farm Plans should be mandatory for all registered farmers and be a criterion for accessing environmental grants.

**“We need a vision of agriculture for all sizes of farm operations. Environmental practices should be financially feasible for all farming operations and perhaps that means having government assistance.”**

**– quote from a farmer at Odyssey Group public consultation, Fournier, July 13, 2001.**

Linking environmental grants to a completed EFP is a logical step toward making funds available to farmers for being custodians of the countryside. The principle of cross-compliance should be cautiously examined as a method of providing funding to producers as part of a

**pact with society. Environmental cross-compliance is common in the agricultural policies of many international jurisdictions. However, we do not support environmental practices being linked to other programs, such as safety net enhancements. We believe that environmental initiatives are supported by the agricultural community and society in general and thus should stand alone in terms of compliance and funding.**

**Just as many municipalities cannot afford to upgrade their water systems, and just as many rural non-farm septic systems need expensive improvements, so too do some farm practices. Environmental practices are not standard across farm types or size. It has been stated by politicians, the media and the public that intensive farming and so called “factory farms” are the cause of many problems. While these larger operations are not immune to problems, they have more ability than many small operations to capitalize environmental safeguards and practices into their operations, either in the facility design stage or retroactively. All categories of farm operations have the potential to cause or solve environmental problems. Applied properly, manure is economically valuable in crop production. However, if it is allowed to get into watercourses by mismanagement or leakage it can be a disaster with major implications to the farmer. Any operation, whether farm, municipal treatment facility or industrial plant, needs long-term accessibility to land for spreading its nutrients whether animal manure, commercial fertilizer, biosolids, or crop residue. Therefore, environmental requirements must apply equally to all industries not just agriculture.**

**The Nutrient Management Act, Bill 81 was passed by the provincial government on June 27, 2002. The Odyssey Group is reluctant to comment on the terms of this legislation when the specific regulations are not yet known. Under the assumption that the Act will set clear new standards for all land-applied agricultural nutrients we would make the following recommendations.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 3: We recommend that within 10 years, all farms must have a long-term nutrient management strategy.**

**A major challenge faced by farmers in identifying areas of concern and developing guidelines for implementation is cost. Many farm commodities have no pricing mechanism which will factor in the cost of either environmental or food safety excellence. Unlike many on-farm improvements, there is often no obvious financial benefit or**

breakeven point for many acts of environmental remediation. It is not like investing in new genetics, technology or machinery where a pay back can be pencilled in. Borrowing to fund a major environmental farm project is certainly possible. Lenders may be anxious to mitigate any possible environmental liability on their security by offering environmental loans, but many farmers are less willing to borrow for a non-revenue producing purpose. The dilemma is who should pay for the environment, for clean water, for wildlife habitat, and other societal benefits?

Farmers have embraced the concept of environmental stewardship and planning. The next steps will not be achieved without offering them ways to offset or recoup the millions of dollars that it will take to ensure that Ontario agriculture is a world environmental leader. Lack of knowledge or understanding of the problem by farm operators can be dealt with, but their lack of capital, for what can be expensive remedial work, presents a huge roadblock to progress.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 4:** As initially recommended in the Food Safety Module, we recommend that governments implement a levy on retail purchases of food and beverages to be used to assist with food safety and environmental improvement practices.

Capital items such as manure storage and watercourse fencing might be done, using EFPs and watersheds as the basis for need. Contributions by governments and the private sector to a “green” trust fund that would be administered by existing farm organizational infrastructure would provide on-going capital. An Agricultural Green Fund could be established to offer grants in selected areas of need.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 5:** We recommend that federal and provincial governments, farm groups, and municipalities collaborate on structuring an Agricultural Green Fund to fund environmental capital projects.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 6:** We recommend that new and innovative financing models be developed by government, private lenders, foundations, and/or other interested groups. Major lenders should consider favourable loan terms for environmental projects in recognition that their liability on security

is less-ened by such projects.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 7: We recommend that the provincial government consider revolving, low-interest loans for environmental initiatives.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 8: We recommend that Revenue Canada allow accelerated depreciation of capital expenditures for environmental projects on farm operations.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 9: We recommend that insurance companies recognize farmers with approved environmental and disaster plans by reducing premiums.**

The Agricultural Policy Framework notes that a consistent Canada-wide approach to agricultural sustainability would demonstrate to foreign buyers that Canadian products have been produced in an environmentally responsible manner. This could be an advantage in capturing new markets and a greater share of existing ones. At the same time, all Canadians benefit from a cleaner, healthier environment. Although environmental initiatives may improve the appeal of Canadian products, it is not clear that they will generate a premium or return on investment to the farmer.

It is unlikely that Ontario consumers, who benefit from exposure to an internationally competitive market for supermarket products, will be willing to pay a premium for food to support environmental excellence. There may be niche markets where “environmentally branded” products can command an off-setting premium. There will also be the converse where consumers, or more likely, processors, demand environmentally “superior” product for no additional cost. Finding additional value in the marketplace for environmental excellence may prove elusive for most.

In order to maintain a profitable and environmentally conscious agricultural sector in a more urbanized and rapidly growing province, some issues will need to be adopted by the farm groups in an “environmental pact” with society. Such a pact would recognize that farmers have a major environmental role to play, but also accept the fact that society has some costs to share. The very nature of primary production prevents most farmers from passing along costs that may be needed to ensure environmental excellence for the benefit of

society as a whole. This issue was noted in the report of the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food released in June 2002. The Committee recommended that, "... the rural Secretariat's next action plan, which will be developed from 2002 to 2004, include a specific component on agriculture and the environment so that the important role of farmers is defined and recognized. The Committee further recommends adequate compensation for measures aimed at protecting the environment and the landscape in recognition that farmers play an important role in the stewardship of the land."

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 10:** We recommend that when designing any new environmental and agricultural policies, our governments do so in conjunction with all stakeholders and recognize that benefits to society should be funded by society and not borne solely by the producer.

Consumers also continue to be concerned about pesticide usage from a personal health perspective as well as the environmental impact. There are pesticides available that utilize new technology and offer lower environmental risks. However, the adoption of these products in Canada has been delayed due to the relatively small size of the market in Canada (as compared to the United States) and the high costs to the crop protection companies associated with conducting the necessary research. The protocols for registration in Canada are very similar to those of the United States however the timeframe for registration appears to be considerably longer. The consequence is that Canadian agriculture, and society as a whole, is penalized in terms of competitive advantage and environmental stewardship. As noted in the Interim Report of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Future Opportunities in Farming, Canadian farmers need newer tools to compete in international markets and ensure safe products for consumers. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency, which is responsible for pesticide registration in Canada, should streamline the registration process especially for minor-use products.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 11:** We recommend that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency should make greater efforts to harmonize the Canadian pesticide registration process and application requirements with those of other OECD countries.

Municipalities must have consistent and long-term local planning to

allow farmers to farm efficiently while maintaining environmental integrity. There is a real danger that municipal government, politically controlled by non-farm rural residents, could pass bylaws, which adversely affect farming practices based on personal lifestyle preferences rather than on science and proven environmental practices.

“Probably the key concern for most consumers is the use of chemicals in the production of food, whether hormones in livestock or pesticides in fruits, vegetables and grains. Despite assurances about the safety of pesticide use, consumers continue to be apprehensive...A Canadian poll by Environics in 1995 indicated that 89 percent of Canadians supported the objective of a 50 percent reduction in pesticide use within five years, even if this practice resulted in produce costing more and looking less attractive. And in an Angus Reid Group poll in early 2000, 23 percent of respondents identified chemical use as the most important issue facing agriculture, virtually tied with genetic modification of food and the sustainability of agriculture itself.”  
– excerpt from *Another Season’s Promise*, by Ingeborg Boyens, 2001.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 12:** We recommend that legislation must protect farmers’ ability to operate their farming operations utilizing recognized management practices.

Experience shows that the integrity of public water sources can be compromised by extreme weather conditions. It must be the responsibility of municipalities to ensure that municipal wells are a safe distance from farm operations. This may mean that municipalities may have to acquire some of the land surrounding their existing wells or compensate farm operators for production losses if the land must be taken out of production.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 13:** We recommend that municipalities must be held accountable and responsible for the costs involved in ensuring municipal wells are a safe distance from farm operations.

**Society is quick to point to farming as a pollution source. However, a new national plan is needed to rebuild aging infrastructure in municipal water systems. Private septic systems and uncapped abandoned wells (water, oil and gas) are sources of potential problems that must be addressed. This major capital investment must extend to farms and other industries.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 14: We recommend that a national plan for improving the integrity of municipal, private, agricultural and industrial septic systems and the decommissioning of abandoned water, oil and gas wells be developed and implemented.**

**Canadian agriculture has been slow to take advantage of the public's desire to use private lands for sport and recreation. Areas of relatively poor land could be the most lucrative for some farmers in co-operation with interest groups. The concept of individuals or society as a whole paying for access to natural areas on farms is more advanced in Europe (see Addendum A, page 50). Discussions with recreation and conservation groups should be held to examine areas where pilot schemes might be tried.**

**Other alliances with sports or environmental groups could provide incentives to farmers for preserving wildlife and natural habitat. A wildlife management plan could be developed in conjunction with Ministry of Natural Resources officers to guard against excessive or inappropriate taking of wildlife.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 15: We recommend that farm organizations investigate partnerships with interested groups to develop relationships leading to farm properties, where appropriate, being used for recreational or sports activities for a fee.**

**While agreeing in principle with the intent of the proposed legislation to protect endangered species, agriculture remains insistent that full compensation must be paid to farmers for losses or damage incurred as a result of modifying their farm practices.**

**“As farmers, we need to look at what we can do to help the environment but it is also the responsibility of the town and city to do their parts as well.”**

**– quote from a farmer at Odyssey Group public consultation, Codrington, July 12, 2001.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 16: We recommend that full compensation be paid to farmers for losses or damage incurred as a result of modifying their farming practices in order to comply with any legislation concerning protection of endangered species.**

**In addition, public policy and conservation efforts have been very successful at protecting wildlife, reintroducing species, and preserving and expanding wildlife habitat. However, wildlife can disrupt, damage and harm agricultural crops and livestock, the land they are raised on and the infrastructure and equipment needed to raise them. Wildlife can also spread undesirable insects, weeds and diseases. In some instances, the damage to agricultural operations from wildlife has reached alarming levels.**

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 17: We recommend that farmers be reimbursed for collateral damage due to wildlife as a result of public policy that has reintroduced or increased wildlife and/or wildlife habitat.**

**Global warming concerns, while not a daily worry for most farmers, may have a significant long-term impact on our farming practices and indeed the mix and location of the crops grown. Research suggests that agriculture is responsible for about 10% of total emissions of greenhouse gases. If we add the carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels in agriculture, the total rises to 15%. The emissions occur as nitrous oxide from manure, legume crops and water-saturated, well-fertilized farm soils. Manure storage and ruminant animals are sources of methane gas, carbon dioxide comes from fossil fuel combustion in tractors and farm vehicles, crop drying, greenhouse and farm building heating.**

**The 1997 Kyoto agreement means that agriculture will likely be a part of Canada's strategy to reduce overall emissions. However, lack of reliable data on the effects of farm practices on greenhouse gas emissions complicate any national strategy. Only in fossil fuel usage on farms do we have accurate data on which to base any changes. While the exact impact of greenhouse gas emissions from farm practices is not known, there is a possibility that in order to comply**

with global emission reductions, agriculture will be called upon to play an important role in Canada's air pollution reduction strategy. Many of agriculture's efficiency goals and best management practices can assist in greenhouse gas remediation. Improved ruminant nutrition, perhaps through genetics may lead to less methane production during digestion and lead to greater livestock feed efficiency. Accurate soil fertility measurement combined with more precise fertilizer application technology leads to less fertilizer usage and consequently less release of nitrous oxide. Better manure storage and management means less nitrous oxide loss, and more nitrogen to fertilize crops. Reduced soil tillage results in lower fossil fuel usage. Fuel ethanol and bio-diesel made from agricultural crops assist in the reduction of fossil fuel usage and total emissions of greenhouse gases. Technology that produces plastics from corn, as an example, can also lead to significant reductions in our dependency on hydrocarbons, while creating a bio-degradable product.

At a time of global warming and increased pollution and associated health problems in large urban centres like Toronto, Canada has been slow to encourage the use of renewable fuels. Half the vehicle fleet of Toronto Hydro runs on bio-diesel. That the fuel comes from the United States (New Jersey) is an indictment of long-term Canadian planning. Recent announcements regarding provincial and federal tax exemptions for bio-diesel are a positive first step. Agriculture has so many good news stories to tell and all are a testimony to past investments and evidence that a renewed public investment will return handsome dividends over time to Canadians.

When we look ten years or more down the road at projected Ontario population growth, it is reasonable to expect that there will be increased pressure on farming practices as southern Ontario becomes more urbanized, and as society as a whole recognizes the fragility of our soil, water and air. Rural areas will be seen by society, especially the urban dwellers, as much more than a place where safe, affordable food is produced. In addition to agriculture, rural lands will be used as recreation areas, wildlife habitat, conservation areas, woodlots, and water catchment areas. Non-farm rural residents will scrutinize their farm neighbours like never before. There will be competition for water-taking. Some municipalities will seek to curtail some types of farm operations. Increased regulation will focus on nutrient management and pest management practices. Wildlife habitat and species at risk

will bring about new challenges. In general, a farmer in 10 years time can expect to have less latitude for environmental issues than today, but he or she will have far greater management tools, environmental knowledge, and proven practices at their fingertips. The Agricultural Odyssey Group argues that any further requirements of farmers to remediate existing and potential on-farm environmental problems will need a new fiscal approach from public policy makers and others in tandem with the work done by farm groups and the agricultural community to date. Environmental support is generally viewed favourably by the WTO and our trade partners. It is the means by which many jurisdictions around the world give support to their farmers and one that must be recognized by our federal and provincial governments. (See Addendum A for examples).

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 18: We recommend that federal and provincial governments and large urban centres adopt aggressive taxation and other incentive policies to encourage the use of bio-diesel, ethanol-based and other renewable fuels. Further, that the environmental and health benefits of these renewable fuels be communicated to the public.**

In the shorter term, inconsistent rainfall patterns may place increased pressure on water supply and quality, bringing about conflict between agricultural and domestic water needs of a growing urban Ontario population. The issue of water-taking from surface water courses for agricultural use is already receiving increased attention. With the continuing growth of the non-farm, rural population and more focus on the recreational uses of Ontario's waterways, there will be increased competition for access to and use of our water supplies.

**ENVIRONMENT RECOMMENDATION 19: We recommend that agricultural organizations remain vigilant and engaged in negotiations and policy reviews regarding the issue of water-taking to ensure that producers have access to water for irrigation and livestock needs.**

**“Governments that invest in jobs and the economic viability of agricultural communities signify their support of the concept of an Ontario or Canadian industry**

supplying Canadian consumers.”

– The Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers’ Marketing Board presentation to the Odyssey Group, August 28, 2001.

“Ontario was the first province to file a conservation-based regulation to prevent the transfer of water out of major water basins, including the Great Lakes. The Water Taking and Transfer Regulation, which came into effect April 30, 1999, prohibits the transfer of water from three water basins: the Great-Lakes-St. Lawrence, Nelson and Hudson Bay basins. As well, the regulation tightens requirements for the issue of permits to take water from Ontario waterways.

Along with other initiatives to protect drinking water, the ministry, in partnership with conservation authorities and municipalities, is providing \$6 million over the next few years to establish a groundwater monitoring network. Over the next year, we will begin to work with conservation authorities and municipalities to install electronic monitors to measure water levels in wells across

Ontario; establish a provincial groundwater information base; complete hydro-geological mapping to show availability to groundwater; and undertake chemical analysis of groundwater supplies.”

– excerpt from Ministry of the Environment, Business Plan, 2000-2001,

[www.gov.on.ca/MBS/english/press/plans2000/env.html](http://www.gov.on.ca/MBS/english/press/plans2000/env.html)