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## **BEEF AND PORK FARMERS SEEK GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR PRICE INSURANCE PROGRAM**

*~ Ontario Farmers' Pre-Budget Submission Urges Partnership to Protect Vital Industry and Local Food Supply ~*

**GUELPH, ON** - (February 1, 2011) – The Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Ontario Pork met today with Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, as part of the pre-budget hearings, to advocate for government support of a risk management program (RMP) to protect against market fluctuations and to share in and limit risk.

The submissions are part of a joint effort by the beef and pork industries to enlist both the Provincial and Federal governments to partner with them in establishing insurance programs similar to the successful pilot program implemented and recently extended by the Ontario Government for the Grains and Oilseeds industry.

“Establishing a Risk Insurance Program for our farmers this year **is our number one priority**,” says Curtis Royal, President, Ontario Cattlemen's Association and owner of Royal Farms in Simcoe County. “Over 80,000 Ontarians make their living on farms and more than 700,000 Ontarians work in the agri-food industry. We form an integral part of Ontario's economic success, especially rural Ontario.”

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association represents 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario and Ontario Pork is the marketing board that represents Ontario's 2,000 pork producers.

In the past few years, Ontario's beef and pork industries have experienced a severe downturn. Ontario's beef cow herd has declined 18.4% since the beginning of 2003 while sow herd has declined over 20% since 2007. This downturn is the result of several

factors including BSE, H1N1, and a high Canadian dollar, bringing increased competition from imports. With multiple economic threats occurring over an extended period of time, the current AgriStability program alone is not enough to sustain these industries.

“We have conducted major consultations with our members and the broader farming community and there is overwhelming support for a risk management program,” says Wilma Jeffray, Chair of Ontario Pork and a farmer of hogs, cattle, grains and oilseeds in Bruce County. “This program would offset the difference between the current market price and the average long-term cost of production, eliminating the need for ad hoc government support for both the beef and pork industries in the future.”

Under the proposed insurance program, participating Ontario farmers in the beef and pork industries would pay premiums to the government representing 30% of the long-term cost of the insurance program. The farmers are asking governments to contribute according to the traditional 60/40 Federal/Provincial split and for the province to act immediately to kick start and fund their share of the program.

“The program is affordable, and it would capitalize on a growing consumer demand for locally grown, safe, environmentally responsible food,” says Royal. “By partnering with Ontario’s local farmers, the Provincial and Federal governments will help sustain local food production and strengthen the rural economy.”

Ontario Cattlemen’s Association and Ontario Pork are continuing to work with the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition (OASC). The two industries are actively lobbying the Federal government as well.

For more information, visit: [www.beefporkrmp.ca](http://www.beefporkrmp.ca).

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