

PRESS RELEASE

**Frank Valeriote, M.P.
Guelph**



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For Immediate Release

Valeriote studying the future of Agriculture in Canada; Committee to visit Guelph's Ontario Agricultural College Monday

On the heels of February's highly successful Guelph Rural Conference, Guelph MP Frank Valeriote is engaged in a cross-country investigation of the future of the Canadian agricultural industry with the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food. Over the past week, the Committee has held hearings in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba with diverse agricultural stakeholders. Witnesses have outlined a variety of critical issues ailing the industry and made recommendations on policy responses to address them.

"One thing has been absolutely clear- Canada's agricultural industry is facing grave demographic problems" said Frank Valeriote. "The average age of Canadian farmers is 52 and rising. We have lost 62 percent of farmers under the age of 35 in last 15 years, to the point that only 8 percent of Canadian farmers are under the age of 35 today. We have been engaged in discussions toward finding solutions that will encourage young Canadians to either sustain existing family farms or start their own."

Mr. Valeriote said today that it has become clear that the federal government has failed to show leadership in creating agricultural policies that would enable Canadian family farms, large or small, to survive and thrive or encourage our youth to choose farming as a career.

"The current suite of failed Government programs are only treating the symptoms suffered by farmers who can't even feed themselves. If we don't immediately endorse Canadian food sovereignty as a priority our farmers will become the employees of large consolidated corporations rather than proud stewards of the land." Valeriote observed.

"With over 3600 Canadian farms closing each year the government's inaction is unacceptable. We have been told in our consultations that Canada is risking its very ability to feed itself. We have been warned that rural Canada will become a "ghost town." We risk losing an industry indispensable to our economy, and a way of life that is vital to Canada's national character. We must implement fair trade and farm programs that recognize the reality of farmers trying to survive in a tough industry with unfair international competition. Fair trade and internationally harmonized standards and regulations will help ensure that international competitors do not have an advantage over Canadian producers."

The Ontario segment of the tour begins on Monday May 3, when the committee will be visiting the University of Guelph to tour the Ontario Agricultural College, the most renowned Agri and Biotech centre in Canada. Mr. Valeriote was pleased that Guelph was recognized by the committee as an essential stop for the tours itinerary.

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“Guelph has a proud agricultural tradition and the University of Guelph is unquestionably Canada’s leading research center for agricultural and agri-food research and technology. The ideas and technologies produced at the University of Guelph are essential contributions to any discussion of the future of Canadian agricultural opportunities.” Mr. Valeriote concluded.

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