



## What HMGA is doing for you . . .

After a year of operation, it is the realization of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association Board of Directors that there are still some confusion as to what is taking place with both the association and its direction. In the future, all members and non-members will begin receiving an update on a frequent basis. Right now, the HMGA is targeting a newsletter to be released every two weeks, informing our members about what, indeed, has transpired over that time frame so that you, our farming community, can see what works have been done on your behalf.

While this may prove difficult, especially during peak times, this has become a necessity. This association has, over its past year, been working very diligently on a wide range of issues, from conservation authority to media to political – all in an effort to return the Holland Marsh to its former glory as the Crown Jewel of Agriculture in Ontario. What many of you may not realize is that most folks, politicians included, no longer know the value that the marsh provides towards both the economy and the sustainability of our fellow citizens. Our efforts have not proved to be in vain, as there is now a growing sense that this area does, indeed, have great value. An economic study, commissioned by both the HMGA and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation – and one that involved a number of farmers working together before the season started in the Eek Farm – is about to be released to area councils (three of them, plus Simcoe County and York Region) and will be used at the provincial level as well. The HMGA wants to remind these political allies that the Holland Marsh is far more economically valuable than previously thought. When the report is released (the end of September or early October), copies will be available to any of the association members who would like to see your contribution to Ontario's economy. It will come as a surprise.

To those individuals who participated in the original study questionnaire, you have the HMGA Board of Director's thanks. Your efforts helped produce a document that will be able to be used in the next two years in making the political situation better for ALL farmers. In the pages that follow, you will get a brief idea of what the HMGA has provided to our fellow farmers over the past couple of months. We will not be going through the entire year to date but will save that for our Second Annual General Meeting being held on December 3 – with more details to follow. Remember the date.

The HMGA will also be hosting a semi-annual "town hall" discussion in the next few weeks. This is an important meeting and we are trying to make the meeting, the time, and the location as convenient as possible. This meeting will be both an update and, more importantly, a chance to get information from you about the issues you want handled. Membership has its privileges, and we have been working on behalf of all farmers and members who have encountered situations "beyond" their control.

We're a year in – we're doing our best and more, but we still want your input, your suggestions, and your participation. Together, we can put the Holland Marsh back on the map.

# HMGA News

The newsletter of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association - Volume 1 - September 2009



Office of the  
Minister of Agriculture  
and Agri-Food  
Development

## Fancy meeting you . . .

Holland Marsh Growers' Association Board of Directors, their respective family members, and members of the Joint Drainage Board had the opportunity to recently meet and greet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper. It's a little thing but a reminder that agriculture, and specifically farmers, are a dynamic and important part of Canadian life.

## Small but significant . . .

The Holland Marsh Growers' Association is working with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority on a number of projects including tree planting along the canals and river properties this fall. The conservation authority has been very co-operative in dealing with the association and there are a number of other projects that are being worked on, not the least of which is the phosphorous test trials taking place down the street from the Muck Crop Research Station. These demonstration plots (throughout the marsh, again, with the help of farmers) will help show what farmers and the C.A. already know – marsh farmers are small contributor to the overall problem. We will continue to work with the LSRCA to make improvements for all marsh farmers.

The Holland Marsh Growers' Association continues to promote the area whenever possible. In the past couple of months, the HMGA has been in the *Globe and Mail*, *The Star*, the *Toronto Sun*, *Now* magazine, *CBC News*, *CTV News*, and all of our fine local newspapers in the entire area – plus Rogers Television in both Barrie and Newmarket. In addition, we have done radio and been mentioned in news talk shows throughout Toronto about our association, its farmers, and our stance on positions. The association website is nearing the 1-million hit mark, consumers are contacting us regarding questions, concerns about food, and, more importantly, where to find our product. Food service companies want great access to our products, and the Holland Marsh logo is now appearing on boxes and bags. It is a start, but one that shows there is interest in local food and local food production.

What does the future hold in the next couple of weeks and/or months? The delay on the road signs welcoming folks to the Holland Marsh along the 400 may soon end. Working within the confines of someone else's time allotment is difficult but the signs have not been abandoned. There are signs throughout the Holland Marsh (proper) telling folks about the upcoming partnership with the Holland Marsh farmers and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto.

There is more television taking place as well. Three-days of taping were completed in mid-September for a new food show called, *Fresh Life*. The HMGA will be a large part of the show, with segments throughout 13 episodes. The association also owns the rights to the spots and will be putting them up, once complete on the website [www.hollandmarshgold.com](http://www.hollandmarshgold.com), Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (all social media websites). It is the growing interest in food that is making all of this possible – and the timing is now to push forward a pro-active, aggressive agenda with all stakeholders, including government, retailers, and consumers.