



# HMGA News

The newsletter of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association - Volume 5 - February 2010

## What's Up for February . . .

By the time you get this, it should be right around a dual event – the January 28 Holland Marsh Hoe-Down and the January 29 Food Safety and Traceability course. Both events are free and welcome to all members and being fully encouraged by the Holland Marsh Growers' Association. In fact, you are being more than encouraged because of the importance of each. The Hoe-Down (see attached) is a fun event that celebrates the marsh and provides a mid-winter party for all as a reminder of the importance of the Holland Marsh. The Food Safety meeting (included) is vital because that IS the direction of the future and the association is moving towards compatibility with retailers, food service, and consumers on this issue: even if our stakeholders aren't completely sure of the direction needed just yet.

As some of you know, the HMGA held a water-taking permit session in December that was a huge success. Because of that, we are holding another on February 18<sup>th</sup>. The time is 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the St. Mary's Community Hall in Bradford (off Fredrick Street) which is the same location for the last meeting. All of those who missed the last meeting should be attending this session. There is a certain amount of irony that attached with this newsletter is the letter from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and a map which is a key to being able to get a near "hassle" free permit but all farmers still must fill out their forms and submit and file with the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). All of this is being done so that the idea of one permit for the entire system is the approach in the future.

## Our new OFVGA rep . . .

Being a part of something is difficult enough but stepping up to the plate and taking one for the team is even more so. With that in mind, the Holland Marsh Growers' Association would like to congratulate Jason Verkaik, who will be the muck crop representative on the board of directors on the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA). This is the provincial body that represents the interests of horticultural farmers and our access to the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC), which Jason will be attending as our representative the first week of March in Quebec City. This area has been without representation for some years from these bodies and the time is now to be able to influence effective policy change that reflects not only the best interests of the Holland Marsh and area but the best interests of agriculture – which we seem to understand better than most. Congratulations Jason – you'll do fine.

## Labour Discussions . . .

The HMGA would like to extend its gratitude and thanks to those members who took time out of their busy schedule to attend a special meeting on labour with MPs Rick Dykstra (Citizenship and Immigration) and Peter Van Loan (the MP for the area and now the newly appointed Minister for International Trade – congratulations on that). This meeting was vital to the best interests of our farmers and a large contingent came out and echoed the same message that will be taken back to Ottawa – leave the off-shore program (FARMS) alone because it works. Period. Mr. Dykstra seemed both genuinely surprised and pleased at the number of farmers in attendance (the most of any meeting he has had to date) and the responses – because they were genuine, real, and no one was afraid to state their opinions in a forthright manner. Thank you to all that attended the event because we need this program as we move forward.