



Kellie Leitch, federal Minister of Labour and the Status of Women, meets with area agricultural women along with Brandon-Souris Conservative MP Larry Maguire at a farm south of Brandon on Friday afternoon. (Colin Corneau/Brandon Sun)

Leitch, Maguire sit down with women in agriculture

BY ASHLEY ROBINSON

Sitting around the McRae family's kitchen table at their farm south of Brandon, a group of Westman women had a chance to voice their agricultural concerns directly to a federal minister.

Kellie Leitch, the minister for labour and status of women, made the trip to Brandon yesterday afternoon following an invitation from Brandon-Souris Conservative MP Larry Maguire to speak to the women, all of whom are involved in the agriculture industry.

"Getting first-hand input from women leaderships on farms in Manitoba is outstanding for me," Leitch said. "We haven't cornered the best ideas in Ottawa we need to get those great ideas that we

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should be implementing."

The women spoke about the lack of young people entering the agriculture industry.

Lois McRae's family are fourth-generation beef farmers. Both her son and daughter work on the family farm but she still worries about other young people entering into the industry.

"We're just going to have to try and educate more youth to come into agriculture and give them some training that will encourage them to be part of the agriculture industry," said McRae, who hosted the meeting.

Leitch says the Harper government is working to address these problems with different incentive programs. One that she pointed to is the "It Starts With One — Be Her Champion," a program designed to have people mentor women under the age of 35 into their industry of work.

"So whether it be Larry Maguire who used to be a farmer or some of the women at this table, I know they'll be stepping up to champion a young women to enter into agriculture," Leitch said.

Another concern raised

around the table was that of people needing more education on the agriculture industry. Both Leitch and Maguire said that this is more difficult to address since the provincial government is in charge of education.

"The young farmer programs, there's Ag in the Classrooms to make people more aware that we talked about here today as well," Maguire said, noting the agricultural education programs that are already running.

Leitch's own riding, Simcoe-Grey in southern Ontario, is also an agricultural-based economy. Through the discussions she found that a lot of the concerns here in Manitoba are the same as in her own riding.

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