



Winners named in Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture competition

(Toronto, Ontario, November 7, 2011) – Tammy Fischer of Teeswater, Ontario and Hayley Mullen of Toronto, Ontario have been named this year's winners in the 27th annual Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture competition.

The competition took place Saturday, November 5, 2011, at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Fischer took first place in the senior competition for her speech outlining the top five facts about farming that every Canadian should know. She noted how farmers work hard and use technology to produce safe, affordable food, and that the vast majority of Canadian farms – well over 90 per cent -- are family owned. She said farmers must improve communications with urban Canadians to dispel myths about food safety and so-called factory farms.

Mullen won the junior category for her speech about how the role of women in agriculture has changed in the past 50 years. She explained how traditionally women were not recognized as farmers in the national census, despite their significant contributions on the farm as equal partners as well as earning off-farm income. Now, she added, women's presence in many aspects of agriculture, including academia, has a much higher profile.

In the senior competition, the first runner-up was Martin Straathof of Arnprior, Ontario, followed by Zane Perreault of Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. The other senior finalists were Robin Callaghan of Reaboro, Ontario, Garrett Keirstead of Norton, New Brunswick and Mackenna Roth of Delaware, Ontario. In total, 19 competitors from six provinces took part in the senior competition.

In the junior competition, first runner-up was Dasha Metropolitansky of Oakville, Ontario, followed by Shelby Drew of Canton-de-Hatley, Quebec. The junior competition drew six competitors.

Finalists in both the junior and senior division receive cash prizes, with the senior champion receiving \$1,000 and the junior champion receiving \$500.

Canadian Young Speakers for Agriculture is a national, bilingual competition that gives participants an opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and concerns about the Canadian agri-food industry in a five- to seven-minute prepared speech.

Since the first competition was held at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in honour of the International Year of the Youth in 1985, it has gone on to become the premier public speaking event in Canada for young people interested in agriculture.

Sponsors of this year's event were Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Aumell Agri-Consulting, BDO LLP, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canadian 4-H Council, City of Guelph, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Farm Credit Canada, Farmers Feed Cities, Gay Lea Foods Co-operative, Gordon Maxwell legal counsel, Hampton Inn and Suites (Toronto airport), John Deere Canada, Monsanto Canada, Food and Farm Care, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, RBC Royal Bank, Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and Syngenta Canada.

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