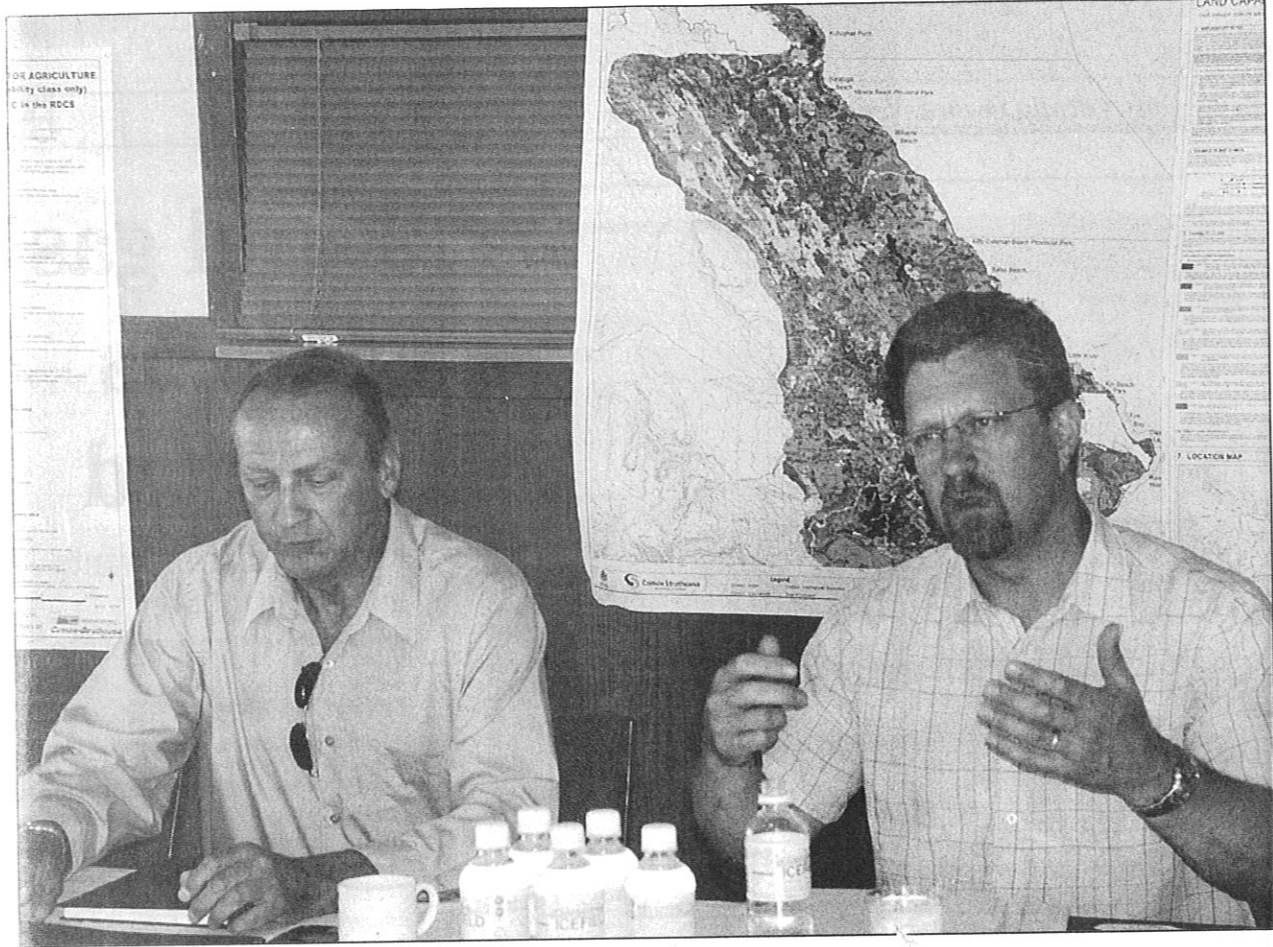


Federal agricultural minister here talking to producers



Federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl, pictured with North Island Conservative candidate John Duncan, was in the Valley on Tuesday to speak mainly with agricultural producers about changes to agricultural policy. Agreements between the federal and provincial/territorial governments are set to expire in 2008 so new policies—"to address the pressure farmers are facing in a rapidly evolving world," according to a federal press release—are being developed. "We're just kind of making the rounds and talking to people about federal issues of all sorts," Strahl told the Echo. "It's basically their agenda. It's a good time to be invested in this because of where we are on federal-provincial policy." With the federal defense minister also in town for an announcement at the air force base yesterday (Thursday), Strahl was asked whether or not the visits to this closely contested riding were an indication that an election may be coming soon, but said it was "more of an indication that Parliament is not sitting so ministers get a chance to be out and about."