

THE  
**union farmer**  
QUARTERLY

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*Photo: As part of the Region 7 (Alberta) Convention held on June 23, 2012, members and guests were treated to a fun train ride from Forestburg to Heisler courtesy of The Battle River Railway.*

*(photo by Kathleen Charpentier)*

# Business Risk Management: *Off-loading costs by downsizing programs?*

— by Cathy Holtslander

On September 12-14 the federal and provincial agriculture ministers will meet in Whitehorse to finalize the next five-year plan for cost-shared Business Risk Management (BRM) programs that will come into effect April 1, 2013 as part of Growing Forward 2 (GF2).

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture held hearings over the winter asking for input for GF2. It reported in May, with the NDP and Liberal Party adding dissenting reports. In April the federal Budget cut Agriculture by 10%, and it is likely that a significant part of that cut will be felt in the BRM programs. A federal spokesperson indicated that funds will be redirected from BRM into strategic initiatives, and that the government wants farmers to manage more of their risk privately.

The NFU has analyzed the impact of the last five years of BRM programs under Growing Forward 1, and has come up with a set of ten recommendations to improve them so that they help the majority of farmers, instead of giving the lion's share of support to the tiny minority of farms that make over \$1 million in annual revenues. In our brief, *National Farmers Union recommendations regarding Business Risk Management Programs under Growing Forward 2*, we also point out that many of the risks that farmers are dealing with are created by, or made worse by federal policies that make trade the top priority, make climate change worse, allow GMOs to be introduced without regard to market impacts, and that fail to deal with the extreme imbalance in market power between individual farmers and the large domestic and global corporations that sell inputs and purchase commodities. In a nutshell, our brief says that until agriculture policy in Canada is refocused to support food

sovereignty, we need to have an effective safety net in place in order to keep family farmers on the land.

Our analysis has been hampered by the fact that no specific information about the proposed changes has been released – even though GF2 is about the spending of public dollars by officials elected by Canadian citizens. What we have been able to gather though, is that a severe cut to AgriStability is on the table. If the trigger for the program moves from 85% to 70% (or less) of the reference margin, it will make it so very few, if any, farms will be eligible for support. Minister Ritz has suggested that such a cut would be a needed to prod livestock producers into taking up a new livestock price insurance scheme. There is also a strong hint that farmers will be encouraged to use futures markets and other hedging schemes to manage risk. Both are ways to off-load risk and provide for a transfer of wealth from farmers into the financial sector, particularly insurance companies and stock brokers.

Several provinces have held consultation meetings with farm organizations and federal representatives, and the NFU has been able to participate in these events. We have also provided each of the Ministers with a copy of our brief.

After the BRM portion of GF2 is settled, each province will meet individually with the federal government to decide how to fund and implement various pieces of the “strategic initiatives” portion of Growing Forward 2. These programs will be focused on the areas of regulations, business development, environment, food safety, markets and trade, and science. The NFU will certainly be reviewing these proposals as they become available as well.

To download our brief on BRMs and the summary of 10 recommendations, go to:

<http://www.nfu.ca/story/business-risk-management-programs-under-growing-forward-2>

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# A message from the...



## National President

—by Terry Boehm

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 marked the end of the Single Desk selling agency, the Canadian Wheat Board. In our press release at the time, I said that the date marked a year in infamy in both public policy and the function of democracy in this country. It really marked years of attack on the CWB by Stephen Harper and his government. They issued gag orders on the CWB, changed elector qualifications in director elections during actual elections, and then they ignored the legislative requirement for a farmer vote before changing the CWB. In addition, they rammed through the Bill to destroy the CWB without referring it to the Agriculture Committee and did not accept any amendments to the Bill. They also accepted no amendments to the huge Budget Bill they passed earlier this spring. This is typical of this government's approach. Parliament is only there to rubber stamp what the Prime Minister wants. There is no room for debate, and by extension, no room for democracy.

When Stephen Harper held his press conference in Saskatchewan on August 1<sup>st</sup> marking what he called "marketing freedom" he was really marking his vision of the world – where individual interests trump the common good, our collective responsibility to one another, and our collective wisdom. To Harper, it does not matter that the majority of farmers wanted to keep the CWB. Public health care is an example where we recognize our collective responsibility to each other. We pay taxes to finance a system that benefits us all in time of need. We feel it is part of our responsibility to our fellow citizens. The CWB played a role for western farmers which the majority understood benefited all farmers, even if some individuals did not like it. The same applies for public health care; some do not like it as individuals, but the majority support it.

We elect governments to act in our collective interests, and we believe in the common good. We have individual rights, but we also have responsibility to society as well. Increasingly, what we see in this government is the idea that the individual can do as they want – regardless of whether it harms the majority or even themselves. Some farmers expressed this notion clearly when they said that they did not care if they made more money with the CWB, they just wanted it gone.

We are likely to see a push to enshrine private property rights in the Constitution. We accept this at our peril because property would then become the ultimate measurement of citizenship and what a citizen is. Equality would no longer be the object of democracy, but rather protecting property and capital would become the priority. We just have to look at CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) to see this rationale spelled out clearly. CETA will eliminate restrictions on the flow of capital and will set up extensive investor protection rules that would prevent governments from legislating in the common interest for the common good. These and other CETA provisions also allow the squandering of natural resources that should instead be used for future generations. This is what happens when the interests of private investors – that is, property rights – are paramount for government, as would be the case if property rights were enshrined in the Constitution.

Finally I wish to thank all of you for the tremendous efforts you put in to save the CWB. It was your donations, your petitions, and NFU members who came and organized numerous campaigns, rallies and protests -- including a railway blockade just outside my farm. You have done more than defend the CWB, you have defended democracy in this country!

*In Solidarity, Terry Boehm*



# A message from the...



## Women's President

— by Joan Brady

### The Power of Community

Last summer, not far from our home, the town of Goderich, Ontario was devastated by a Category 4 tornado. The town suffered major damage and one life was lost. It took just seconds for the fabric of life to change forever - and only a few minutes more for people to step forward to help those in need. Emergency care, food, shelter, encouragement and monetary donations streamed in and volunteers were organized immediately for clean-up and restoration efforts.

The power of the tornado was evident in the uprooted trees and the buildings that were destroyed or damaged. The resilience and caring shown by community members was also very powerful, as over time, everyone used their talents and resources to help rebuild the town and secure the future of its inhabitants. This community empathy and spirit is an awesome and constant force, one which is evident across the country and has been responsible for many life-changing experiences and actions. Goderich will never look the same, but I think that it will be a better place.

Crisis is never welcomed, but usually well met. Communities multiply their resources with the passion and dedication of their residents. The people with the most at stake often are able to come up with efficient and innovative solutions to the trials facing their communities. Margaret Mead, a 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural anthropologist says it well: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Yet, much of recent policy and action has been directed at disenfranchising Canadians. The alteration of the CWB and the disregard of the condition requiring a farm vote is still pretty raw, considering the recent dissolution of the single desk. Farmers have lost significant power to meet the challenges of the future.

Seeing the recent broad sweep of reductions in government programming and support, I am concerned that the majority of these cuts have been directed towards public-based programs and assets. In some cases support once directed at Canadian communities and organizations has been re-directed towards private for-profit interests. For example, the foreign aid dollars have

been taken away from international relief agencies (the Canadian International Development Agency at one time matched citizens' donations to aid organizations) and given to corporate interests for "social responsibility projects" - often directed at the problems created by their own industrial processes.

Other cuts have affected critical and publically supported research, including the monitoring of the state of the environment and our natural resources. The loss of this valuable research has alarmed not only Canadians, but some of our international partners as well. Cuts to Statistics Canada, including its agricultural surveys, will challenge our ability to understand trends and will lead to missed opportunities and unnoticed threats. Farm-driven priorities will be diminished as advisory boards and industry-elected representation are cut from funding agencies and think tanks. On the chopping block is the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Council, led by a farmer/industry board in each province, which has administered government funding since 1985. It will be dissolved and its reduced funding will be administered by the federal government.

I am an optimistic person, yet I know that the future is uncertain and we will all be faced with a number of challenges. It will take strong, resilient communities with the power to be involved, and in possession of accurate and useful information to meet the future. Measures to limit citizen's decision-making capacity and privatize public assets will not be the answer. Agriculture is an economic driver, one which should not be overlooked nor sold out to profit-taking investors at the expense of individual entrepreneurs.

The NFU has always stood for the rights of family farmers and communities, both rural and urban, and I am glad to continue to work alongside to strengthen our mutual futures. I am also thankful for the NFU and its members; I believe we are a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens that can change the world. Perhaps we should remind our governments that it is the only thing that ever has.

*In Union, Joan Brady*



# A message from the...



Cammie Harbottle

## Youth President and Youth Vice President



Paul Slomp

## Come one, come all to National Convention 2012

This year we are back in Saskatoon for National Convention and we want you to come! The agenda is shaping up nicely with interesting panels, keynotes and workshops. In celebration of the International Year of Co-operatives, the theme *Co-ops: An Exercise in Democracy* will explore the many avenues and possibilities for co-operatives in agriculture. Over the past few years I have been inspired by many food and farm-related co-ops and I look forward to learning more about how they can contribute to a more resilient farming community in Canada. And what better place to discuss co-operatives than the birthplace of the co-op movement in Canada (or one of them), in the heart of the prairies.

I recently attended a symposium for beginner farmers in New Brunswick and was once again inspired by fellow vegetable farmer Daniel Brisbois of Co-operative Tourne Sol, a co-operative farm in Quebec. His presentation explained how the co-operative model can and has contributed to the successful start-up and continued viability of their farm as well as providing a quality of life for Daniel and the other members. Co-operatives provide an alternative model which in many cases is proving to be a positive solution for both beginning and established farms and farm-related businesses. It was good food for thought and I look forward to continuing these discussions at National Convention.

The National Convention is one of only two chances that the youth get to meet face to face and is a great time to reconnect with old faces and meet new young farmers from across the country. We will be holding a youth caucus and have time to get together on a less formal basis.

If you have any thoughts or ideas on what you would like to have included on the agenda for the youth

caucus meeting or otherwise, please be in touch with me, Cammie, at: [cammie@waldegrave.org](mailto:cammie@waldegrave.org). We would love to have your input and hope to see you there!

### Convention Bursaries Available

If you are interested in coming to Convention but feeling inhibited by the cost of travel... wait! Once again, there will be bursaries available to NFU youth to help cover the costs of attending. There will be four bursaries of \$250.00 available to any youth member from across the country and we would LOVE to be able to give out all four. If you are interested in applying, please email me at: [cammie@waldegrave.org](mailto:cammie@waldegrave.org) for more information or an application form. ***The deadline for applications is October 15.*** The youth are the future of the NFU so please encourage any young members to get in touch and come out. And for all of you youth out there...the NFU is working for our futures, so come and be a part of it (and meet some interesting and inspiring "old" farmers - by that I mean farmer- elders, with all due respect)!

### Silent Auction

When Kalissa Regier stepped down from the Board she told me that even if I didn't organize the silent auction, it would happen—and every year, it does! Thanks to all of you! So once again this year there will be a silent auction held throughout the convention as a fun way to raise funds for the NFU Youth programming. The silent auction is member-driven so if you have any items, handmade or otherwise, that you can donate to the auction, we encourage you to bring them to Convention. Last year, the generosity of members provided funding for our annual youth meetings. Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to seeing all of the goods as they fill the tables in November!

*Cammie Harbottle and Paul Slomp*



# Regional Reports



## ONE (Prince Edward Island)

### REGION



- by Randall Affleck

**HST** - The PEI Government has announced its intention to implement the HST on April 1, 2013. Edith Ling has been attending anti-HST meetings and rallies regarding this policy change. The Federation of Agriculture is in favor claiming farmers will benefit on average \$15,000. The cost of carrying inventory will also go up an additional 10% for farm supply stores resulting in fewer parts in stock. Some seem to forget what a farm bookkeeping nuisance Mulroney's regressive GST was.

**ABP** - The PEI Budget announced that it was capping public funding of the Atlantic Beef Products plant at \$1.5 Million. Last year it provided \$3.2 Million in funding. Since 2005 the province has invested \$40 Million into the plant.

The NFU organized a meeting with ABP President, Mike Nabuurs, in April for NFU members. They were killing 225 fats and 75 culls per week. They were having trouble sourcing animals. Drovers were unwilling to cut ties with Levinoff's, given all the uncertainty of the ABP's future. Now that Levinoff Meat Packing is in receivership, there most likely will be more cattle available to the Borden plant. Logically, with Levinoff's out of the market the prices to the farmers should go up ☺!

**Budget Cuts** - Provincial Department of Agriculture has taken some big cuts. Salaries cut, \$480,000. Hog transportation subsidy, \$800,000 cut.

**Lands Protection Act** - The Report of the Commission on Land and Local Governance recommended that provincial land use policies and a conservation strategy be developed based on sustainable development principles. Early in the spring session the PEI Government announced its intention to establish a five-member Policy Task Force on Land Use that will be holding joint public hearings with the Environmental Advisory Council and make recommendations.

More recently, an independent commissioner will be appointed to study the Lands Protection Act legislation, hold consultations and determine what changes, if any, might be needed. Agriculture Minister George Webster is in favor of changing the current land limits. The PEI Potato board is also lobbying for changes to the limits. In 2011 there were 146 land disclosure statements filed with the Island Regulatory Appeals Commission. Disclosure statements are required whenever land owners are within 75% of the land limits; 1000 acres for individuals and 3000 for farm corporations.

**NDP Atlantic Caucus** - Local President Doug Campbell and I attended a meeting with the NDP Atlantic Caucus to discuss agriculture policy with an emphasis on supply management. Representatives from the NFU, Federation of Agriculture, dairy and egg boards attended.

We tried to lay out the big picture changes to Canadian agriculture and losses to farmers since CUSTA and the policy shift towards increasing exports.

My dairy colleagues indicated that they were happy with Harper's support for supply management, and were not concerned about TPP or CETA. "Every nation has sensitive sectors" they argued. They also expressed the need to tell supply management's positive story.

*continued on page 7...*



*(Region 1 PEI, from page 6)*

**EI Changes** - The Employment Insurance changes stand to cause quite a bit of trouble for farmers in Atlantic Canada. The potato industry in particular will have major challenges sourcing the skilled seasonal labour required if the changes come into effect.

**Weather and Crop Report** - It has been a very dry summer on the Island. All crops are maturing weeks earlier than normal. The potato crop is really stressed as a result, and will likely result in a much lower yield than normal. Those who have irrigation equipment have been running it since July. Cereal harvest yields are at an all-time high this year. Toxin levels in milling wheat are a non-issue this year. Forage quality is great and yields are relatively high, considering

the lack of rain. My pastures are really suffering from lack of water now.

**GPS Snooze** - A young guy planting potatoes in Kinkora one night this spring fell asleep while the GPS was steering the tractor and planter up the long field. At the end of the row the equipment continued on (in sleep mode) between two buildings, but rode up onto a \$2,000 car parked in the yard, destroying it. Nobody was hurt, I believe the tractor was fine and the community is really enjoying the story. Have yet to hear what the new nickname is!

*In Union, Randall Affleck*

## ONE (New Brunswick)

**REGION**



- by Betty Brown

**F**armers in New Brunswick have had another challenging year. Lack of winter snow cover, warm winter temperatures, and a cold, dry spring followed by extreme heat, high humidity and little rainfall has caused crops to mature earlier than usual — some with good yields and others with less than normal. The potato crop is suffering with many varieties dying due to lack of moisture. Last year we had excessive moisture creating problems.

NFU in New Brunswick hosted the annual Region One meeting, Tuesday, August 7<sup>th</sup> at the Duneview Inn, in the town of Bouctouche, which was well attended, and chaired by Randall Affleck, NFU Regional Coordinator.

Randall spoke of the drought conditions this summer, land grabbing and the problems this creates. Randall outlined the importance of the supply management system and the threat of trade deal negotiations. Guest speakers were Sally and Mark Bernard of Barnyard Organics, Freetown, PEI., recipients of the 2012 Atlantic Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year award. They spoke of the successes and challenges they faced diversifying their farm. The winners of the David Frost Memorial Scholarship, Zachary Coates and Denis Levesque, were announced and Allison Dykstra was selected as the first winner of the NFU in NB Scholarship. Ten resolutions were presented and passed and the slate of elected officers was returned for another year. Thanks to Chef Carson and his staff for the lunch and tour of his farm.

The NFU in NB and the Alliance working with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Finance have agreed to changes to the Fuel Tax Exempt Program for the benefit of farmers.

Our membership drive continues, along with the *Buy Local* promotion  
Best of luck in the harvest.

*In Union, Betty Brown*



## THREE (Ontario)

### REGION



- by Ann Slater

*Pastures are parched* was the message from farmers across Ontario in early July. With pastures drying up, many farmers were feeding first cut hay soon after it was baled. Despite the dry spring, frost damage, army worms and alfalfa weevil, at least there was a first cut. Second cut was another story – I am sure I saw some farmers in the fields with a broom and a dust pan.

Livestock farmers have been hit particularly hard. With little to no pasture for much of the summer they have been forced to feed limited supplies of winter hay. Once the winter wheat and spring grains were off, a lot of fields were quickly replanted to oats or barley as a fall forage alternative. Crop insurance protocols have created challenges for farmers trying to salvage some forage from poor fields of corn. Beef and sheep farmers are selling breeding stock because they cannot afford to feed them.

It is not only livestock farmers feeling the effects of the drought. Corn and soybean fields vary from one part of the province to another – sometimes from one road to the next – from total write-offs to potentially bumper crops. It all depends on whether or not some moisture came along at just the right time or you happen to be in one of those few lucky locations with regular rainfalls. Market gardeners have struggled to keep market stands and CSA boxes full and some honey producers are seeing a decrease in their harvest.

#### NFU Calls for Disaster Relief

Regional Council sent a letter to the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on July 16, making the NFU the first organization to alert the minister and the media to the emerging disaster. At that point, OMAFRA field specialists were still saying Ontario farmers were looking at a

banner year with high commodity prices, a drought in the midwest States and good crops in Ontario. The response to our concerns from the Ag Minister and other farm organizations was that programs such as crop insurance were in place to deal with weather challenges and that it was too early to talk about disaster relief because the harvest had not taken place. The NFU pointed out the harvest of first and second-cut hay was over, pastures were dried out and some corn fields were already a write-off.

By the end of July, the Ag Minister had come to the realization farmers in parts of Ontario were dealing with a drought, and on July 30 he sent the federal minister a formal request for an assessment under AgriRecovery. It is now nearing the end of August. Some rain in August helped those fields of oats and barley germinate, but the days are getting shorter. Farmers wonder how they will make it through the year. No word so far from either of the ministers about the disaster assessment.

Renfrew County NFU has been at the forefront of the call for disaster relief and in telling the story to the media and to politicians. They need to be commended for their quick action and hard work on behalf of family farmers.

#### Limestone Organic Creamery Opens

The spring issue of UFQ included a story about NFU members, Francis, Kathie, Olivia and Patrick Groenewegen and their plans for an on-farm dairy. Limestone Organic Creamery opened on July 7. The milk from their cows is processed on their farm just north of Kingston and is sold in glass bottles from the creamery by home delivery and at some local retail stores. A range of other food products from their own farm, other local farms and Organic Meadow Co-op are available at the creamery.

Limestone Organic Creamery is one of three on-farm dairies which opened this summer under a Dairy Farmers of Ontario pilot project to promote small-scale on-farm milk processing. Miller's Dairy near Creemore and Sheldon Creek Dairy near Orangeville, are also selling milk in glass bottles at the farm and to local retail outlets.

*In Union, Ann Slater*





## REGION

**FIVE (Manitoba)**

- by Ian Robson

**I**s federal farm policy designed with “farmers first” in mind as claimed? After the loss of the democratic, farmer-directed Canadian Wheat Board and cuts from the federal budget we now know what “farmer first” means. It means that first the farmer pays more for the same or worse rail service, more for questionable private marketing service, more for elevation, more for basis, more for brokers, more for livestock tractability, more for not much different food safety, more for accountants and lawyers, more for tree shelter belts, more for pastures, more for research, more for seed, and ... well, you get the feeling that farmers are being left all on their own to fend for themselves, whilst traders consolidate power.

Farmers need a translator to interpret Canada's “government speak” when listening to this federal government regarding trade. It is not the farmer who gains -- the corporate trader is getting the advantages. The NFU has shown the increasing value of the exports and farm production is contributing less to our net farm income. Farm support programs have been, and continue to be cut, leaving only the large-scale farmers and dwindled communities, making it ever harder to support local services.

We hope that Bev Stow will be allowed to continue sitting on the Canadian Grain Commission's Wheat Standards Sub Committee. The government says the Committee is too large, so it no longer needs an NFU representative. Is a smaller committee going to decide in the interests of producers if fewer farmers are represented? Or would the corporate plant-breeders rights holders receive greater favour? The Wheat Standards Sub Committee discusses each aspect of the new wheat varieties that the industry will select or dismiss. Farmers and the markets have obtained great benefits as a result of its work, as seen by the

high value attached to the Canadian brand. Without the CWB to measure what the market demands the work of the Committee will change, and the Canadian brand will be lost if inferior wheat varieties are grown.

Without the CWB involved in marketing according to buyer specifications, farmers are going to end up growing middle to low-quality wheat. The seed companies are more interested in volume than quality. They are pushing for regulatory changes that will allow them to force farmers to pay royalties on cereals — not only on seed, but when the harvest is delivered to the elevator as well. The government wants farmers to set up wheat and barley councils funded by check-offs, which would then support these changes under the guise of support for research. Farmers would pay the check-off and then get to pay larger royalties for less measurable benefit.

ICE Futures Canada Exchange started up a wheat futures contract to trade Canadian wheat. Guess what? Most of the trade is being done using Minneapolis or Chicago exchanges, meaning that the trade wants to buy Canadian wheat without paying a premium. Currently, wheat market price is up due to drought conditions of the USA corn crop. With our farmer-directed CWB we would have been able to benefit from these price increases. Now anyone who has a contract is required to deliver at locked-in prices to an elevator that dictates the quality conditions. Not much freedom or choice in that equation.

Region 5's Convention was held July 14. We heard from Terry Boehm on the trade deals. Peter Eggers spoke about Australia GMOs and the Australian Wheat Board, as well as chemistry and biology to support healthy crops while using less fertilizer. Agriculture Minister Ron Kostyshyn spoke about Growing Forward 2 farm support programs. Why do farmers have to be dependent upon insurance schemes to make an income from the work we do?

All farmers have questions about why the market works as it does and why our incomes have not kept pace with those of fellow Canadians. If you are willing to tackle these questions then you should belong to the NFU. Please join to work with your farming neighbours to build a better agriculture future.

*In Union, Ian Robson*



## SIX (Saskatchewan)

### REGION



- by Ed Sagan

Spring seeding season was a wet one this year, with more rain in the eastern part of Saskatchewan. Many farmers seeded their crop until the deadline of June 20, 2012. We have had 23 inches of rain this summer in this area.

From June 20 through 22, I attended the Farm Progress Show in Regina. While there, I attended the Canadian Wheat Board's annual breakfast meeting and also helped Friends of CWB with their booth. Dixie Green and Glenn Tait were also in attendance.

On June 27 and 28, we had a successful Regional Convention at St Michael's Retreat Centre. Our guest speakers were Dr. Jim Harding and Hon. Ralph Goodale. Harding spoke about the long-standing nuclear agenda that has been carried out by different governments in Saskatchewan since the 1940s. Harding is the author of "Canada's Deadly Secret - Saskatchewan Uranium and the Global Nuclear System." Goodale spoke about the destruction of the Wheat Board and his belief that it indicates the current federal government's deep-seated hostility towards democracy and the rule of law.

Dixie Green has decided to step down from the NFU Board, and Matt Gehl was elected to fill her spot next year. I'm looking forward to working with Matt, and I really appreciated working with Dixie. She has done a lot of work for the NFU.

On July 14, I attended Region 5's convention in Onanole, along with Terry Boehm and Peter Eggers.

On July 30 - 31, Kyle Korneychuk and I motored to Winnipeg for a conference call and interview in front of the CWB building. We were glad to see the street theatre protest in front of the building, with NFU members Ian Robson, Dean Harder and other farmers and non-farmer supporters making some good points and getting lots of TV coverage. It was disgusting to see the old sign of Canadian Wheat Board taken down and replaced with a new "CWB" sign.

Last month we had one national conference call, which as well attended. We talked about building the membership. If every member signs up two new members, it would help the bottom line of our union. Members are the lifeblood of the NFU.

It seems more and more farmers are seeding more winter wheat. Our seed plant has been very busy for the last month.

We are having a television interview with the local TV station with some former Directors of CWB and Friends of CWB. We will discuss the court case against the Canadian government. It should be very interesting, by the way.

On August 1, 2012 the moisture test for tough grain will go from 14.5 to 14.0. This means it will take an additional day to get dry grain, and it will be a cost to the farmers for the convenience of the buyers.

*In Solidarity, Ed Sagan*

### Glenn Tait, Region 6 Board Member

Luck always confounds me. I guess that's why they call it luck and not fate. There's the good luck of the nice couple up the road from me who just won the big Lotto Max last year, and for whom I have nothing but warm wishes -- and then there's the good luck Gerry Ritz has had. Gerry's luck has helped him cost the prairie economy millions of dollars.

When Gerry was campaigning to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board he would often point to Australia and say how much wheat acreage had increased since the loss of the Australian Wheat Board. He did not mention this, but as luck would have it, Australian wheat exports were up because they had just come out of a very long and severe drought. Now that Gerry has destroyed our Wheat Board his personal luck continues, with a huge drought in the U.S. pushing up prices here.

In 2008, the CWB used a market rally to garner western Canadian farmers about \$1.25/bu more than our counterparts across the border averaged. Right now we are too busy struggling to get a harvest off in a wet and difficult year to do the calculations, but if my CWB was still doing what it was supposed to be doing, I wonder how much extra it could make on this rally?

*In Union, Glenn Tait*



## EIGHT (B.C./Peace River)

REGION



- by Peter Eggers

In 2004, Ronald Wright's "A Short History of Progress" was featured in CBC's Massey Lectures. In this lecture he described the idea of "progress traps" and how they have led to the decline and fall of civilizations. For example, he said that irrigation by the Sumerian people of the historical southern Mesopotamia region, now known as Iraq, was a progress trap. They irrigated with water from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and it overloaded the soil with minerals, including salt, which effectively turned the land into a desert. The entire Sumerian civilization vanished from the face of the earth.

The Greeks, as we heard at the 2011 NFU convention, farmed their hillsides, which caused soil erosion and the loss of fertility that caused the Greek civilization to collapse. Greece has not recovered from the loss of their biological capital to this day.

I am writing about this because I was thinking about and observing prairie farming and wondered if prairie farmers would run into such a progress trap. The Dirty Thirties gave us an indication of what tilling in combination with drought can do to our prairie soil. Wind and water erosion can still be a problem today, and we thought that it might eventually disable farming on the prairies. Now many of us have adopted direct seeding or minimum tillage. This has decreased soil degradation by erosion. The soil has become a lot more stable, with crops mimicking the natural grassland ecosystem. There is one big caveat with this: we use chemicals to control weeds in annual cropping systems. At this point I wonder if there is any land in this area not sprayed with glyphosate at least once a year!

We have been told that glyphosate was completely harmless and it would break down in the soil as soon as it hits it, or as they say, bio-

degradable. Due to its claim of safety and effectiveness, this product is the best-selling herbicide worldwide. It is used on over 296 million acres annually. However, the claim of it being biodegradable has been invalidated. In fact, research shows that glyphosate stays in the soil much longer than what Monsanto claims.

There has been lots of research completed by various, credible institutions in North America, including Agriculture Canada, Perdue University, and the US Department of Agriculture. Research shows various problems with the use of glyphosate. In 2004 on two fields on our farm in La Glace, Alberta I saw that there was something wrong with this chemical. Now that has been validated by research. After 10 to 15 years of annual use of about 1 litre per acre, corn and soya bean crops in the US can die prematurely - this is known as "Sudden Death Syndrome". The glyphosate chelates the manganese in the soil.

Chelation is Greek for "clawing". Manganese is then rendered unavailable. When this happens iron is also rendered unavailable. Researchers think that the land is ruined forever.

Approximately 40 plant diseases are linked to the use of glyphosate, including fusarium, which has had an enormous impact on Canadian prairie farming. The more glyphosate used, the greater the intensity of the fusarium disease. Chelation due to glyphosate starts at 1/16 of the label application rate. At this point it looks to me that what is supposed to save our soil and is being touted as the thing to do is going to destroy the soil much faster than any other technology we have used to date.

By carefully looking at the research, I have stumbled upon many things that cause me to worry. The land is #1 - our future depends on it.

We should also ask the question of how much grain we need. 70% of the grain grown in North America is used to feed herbivores. 75% of the cattle in Alberta are locked up in confinement. It looks like we have quite a few potential progress traps. We should be cautious about technological ideas as fixes and instead maybe look at nature for guidance.

*"A nation which destroys its soils, destroys itself".*

- FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

*In Solidarity, Peter Eggers*





# NFU National Convention 2012

## — *Democracy in Action*

**C**o-ops: *An Exercise in Democracy* is the theme of this year's National Convention, which will be in Saskatoon November 22 – 24. The Board chose the theme not only because 2012 is the United Nations' International Year of Cooperatives, but also to take a closer look at the potential for co-ops to act as an accessible and democratic alternative to corporations in our increasingly "super-sized" and globally-focussed economy.

There are many types of co-operatives but all are owned by the members who use the co-op. Members can participate in decision-making through their elected boards. Co-operatives have proven to be an important tool for building economic power for farmers in Canada; however there have also been failures and weaknesses in our co-ops. At Convention we will have the opportunity to critically examine co-operatives, and will look at some of the lessons learned from the past as well as from successful food and farm-related co-ops from across Canada today.

On Thursday morning before the formal opening of Convention, Fred Khonje, a co-op developer with the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, will lead a workshop on how to start a co-operative. If you think a co-op might be the right way to organize your business, plan to arrive early, as this session will help you with your decision, and provide you with some valuable organizing tools.

Three of our panels will be focussed on the theme of co-operatives and democracy. Confirmed speakers include Michael Gertler from the Centre for the Study of Cooperatives at the University of Saskatchewan; Harold Chapman, author of *Sharing My Life: Building the Cooperative Movement*; agrologist, co-op economist and avid blogger, Wendy Holm; community organizer and sustainability expert, Yuill Herbert; April Bourgeois, co-founder and former publisher of Planet S and Prairiedog (both run by co-ops); former Saskatchewan Wheat Pool director, Kyle

Korneychuk; BC-based "foodshed animator", Abra Brynne; Muskoday First Nation worker co-op leader, Harvey Knight; and Glenn Harris, founding member of the Landis Elevator Co-operative.

In addition to our co-op panels we will have presentations on pressing agriculture policy issues; including UPOV '91 seed issues, international trade agreements, the Canadian Wheat Board court cases, and supply management. The Convention schedule also includes meeting time for our Women's, Youth and International Program Committees. Everyone is welcome to participate in these sessions.

Andrew Nikiforuk, the acclaimed Canadian journalist and author will speak about the influence of the petro-state on our democracy at our Thursday evening public event. His new book, *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude*, will be available for sale and signing.

This year we are offering a workshop on the convention procedures late Thursday morning. The NFU Convention uses *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance* by O. Garfield Jones. Some of you may not be familiar with these rules, and it can be confusing if you are used to other ways of conducting debate and making group decisions. We want to help first-time convention-goers to understand how our rules work so that everyone feels comfortable participating.

Convention is not all work, of course! The NFU Youth will have their annual silent auction fundraiser – pack some irresistible bid-magnets to donate, and plan to take home some unique prizes yourself. The winners of the Beingessner essay contest will be announced, and the Grassroots Activist awards for each Region will be presented at the banquet. The dance will follow Friday night's banquet, so bring your dancing shoes too! —nfu—

For more information check the website at <http://www.nfu.ca/about/conventions>



# Action against CETA in Ontario

## – NFU members making a difference

–by Ann Slater

Canadian and European negotiators have been meeting monthly in their attempt to finalize the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) by the end of 2012. However, a recent report to civil society from Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada indicates there are still a number of sticking points, including market access for beef, pork and cheese, intellectual property rights and services and investment. A year ago the Canadian government said it expected to finalize CETA by the end of 2011.

Ever since the NFU launched our national campaign against CETA in 2010, Region 3 (Ontario) NFU members have been speaking out about the negative implications of CETA on the future of family farms, rural communities and our democracy. There is a lot of public support in Ontario to push hospitals, universities, schools and the province to purchase more local food as a way to support Ontario farmers and provide citizens with healthy food. The Ontario government has invested money in programs designed to help institutions put local food procurement policies and practices into place. This support for local food purchasing has provided a platform to initiate discussions on CETA with the public and with farmers. Along with other organizations, including the Council of Canadians and District Labour Councils, NFU members and locals have worked to make municipalities aware of how CETA will undermine local purchasing policies, whether that be local food procurement policies or policies to support other local providers of goods and services.

In June 2012, the Council of Canadians reported that over 30 local governments across Canada had passed resolutions requesting that they be exempt from CETA. Over half of these municipalities are located in Ontario, including large cities such as Toronto, Hamilton, and London, rural townships such as Asphodel-Norwood and Drummond/North Elmsley and the counties of Brant and Essex. A similar number of municipal governments and school boards have asked the federal government for more information and a greater say in CETA

negotiations. Presentations and letters from NFU members and locals have helped sway county and municipal councils to take action, and have raised the awareness of CETA among local, provincial and federal elected representatives.

NFU members and locals in Ontario are also working to make the general public and other farmers aware of how other aspects of CETA will affect their lives and livelihoods. In 2011 and 2012, NFU president Terry Boehm spoke at public events organized by Region 3 locals in Walkerton, St. Marys, Belleville and Kingston. NFU members put CETA on the table for discussion at local meetings of other farm organizations like the Grain Farmers of Ontario, and have written about CETA for newsletters like *Ecological Farming in Ontario*. The NFU's *Why We Don't Want CETA* brochure has been handed out at countless shows, fairs, ploughing matches and conferences across the province.

Regional Council has also worked to keep CETA in the minds of provincial politicians and provincial organizations working on food issues. An April letter to the Premier of Ontario attracted media attention, but as of August 26, there has been no response from him. A first draft of an *Institutional Procurement Backgrounder* written by Sustain Ontario as part of its submission to the Ontario government regarding a local food act suggested that trade agreements do not present barriers to public institutions sourcing more food locally. Following feedback from the NFU, a later draft recommends that the Ontario government ensure trade agreements do not adversely impact institutional procurement of local, fresh and ecological food.

The grassroots efforts to protect our seed, our farms and our democratic rights from being bargained away in CETA continue. As I was writing this article, Grey Local was working on a press release to send to their community. The Canadian government has not yet finalized this deal which will give unprecedented power to a few corporations. In conjunction with other Trade Justice Network partners, NFU members and locals will continue to encourage municipalities, other organizations, farmers and eaters to take a stand against CETA.

—nfu—



# Rio + 20: “The Future We Want” ....NOT

-by Nettie Wiebe

*“Commodification, economic growth, financial abstractions, corporate power: aren't these the processes driving the environmental crisis? Now we are told that to save the biosphere we need more of them.”*

- George Monbiot,, *The Guardian*, August 7, 2012

Twenty years after the first United Nations “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro (1992), governments gathered again in Brazil in June, 2012 to assess progress and make further commitments on reducing environmental harm and achieving sustainable development.

But little of that happened.

In the face of worsening ecological crises, energy and food crises, accelerating loss of biodiversity and climate change, the summit agreed to a weak document, “The Future We Want” [available at: [www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html](http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html)] with no firm commitments, no targets and no timelines. Instead, the official summit focused on promoting the ‘Green Economy’, a strategy to integrate all remaining natural resources and ecological systems into the market economy. Putting a price on all living matter and so-called “ecosystem services” opens vast new markets for financial investment and speculative capital. But far from promoting “an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations...and eradicating poverty”, the green economy does the very opposite.

Working as a Via Campesina delegate in Rio, I would have come back from Brazil profoundly depressed if I had only gone to the official summit events. Fortunately, governments and the corporate sector (which has gained a strong foothold in some key parts of the UN system) were not the only ‘show in town’.

In the centre of Rio, occupying an enormous park along the ocean front, more than 20,000 people were gathered in the People’s Summit. Thousands of popular, social, indigenous, women’s, labour, peasant, forestry, environmental and student organizations from Brazil and around the world converged in self-organized and collective venues for discussions, demonstrations, cultural events and actions. The energy, commitment, knowledge, diversity, colour and sheer numbers of participants were astonishing. And the shared determination to protect the earth and the basis of all life inspired hope.

The more than 3000 peasants from Via Campesina Brazil, along with several hundred international Via Campesina participants, had a strong presence in the People’s Summit. We provided effective leadership in food sovereignty, agroecology and climate change forums, as well as engaging in targeted direct actions.

As I marched into a central square in Rio de Janeiro on June 20<sup>th</sup> as one among some 80,000 people (according to Rio news reports) in the People’s Summit mobilization, I felt buoyed by the knowledge that despite the collusion of powerful interests trying to control, manipulate and profit from all of nature, there is a tremendous, worldwide counterforce of people who are struggling for social and environmental justice, peace and life.

—nfu—



*Photo: Nettie Wiebe (front) marching with tens of thousands in Rio demanding respect, rights and safety for women. Banner inscription: Fed up with violence against women.*



# NO TO THE FALSE SOLUTIONS OF GREEN CAPITALISM!

## PEASANT AND FAMILY FARM AGRICULTURE NOW!

### THE FALSE SOLUTIONS OF THE GREEN ECONOMY

Ever since the economic crisis of 2008, the dominant system has been trying to find new ways to maintain itself. In this context governments, corporations and UN agencies have constructed the myth of the “green economy” and the “greening of technology,” which they put forth as solutions to the environmental crisis, equating the capitalist economy with caring for the Earth. But behind the rhetoric what we find is yet another strategy to advance vested economic interests.

This “green capitalism” targets rural areas, and we have seen terrible impacts in terms of land grabbing and the relentless and ongoing privatization of fresh water, oceans, indigenous territories, national parks and biological reserves.

This is how the false solutions are put forth:

**1. Carbon credits and biodiversity bonds:** These are based on the principle that whoever has enough money can keep on polluting and offsetting. In other words, richer countries and large companies can contaminate and destroy ecosystems as long as they pay money to someone else, thereby supposedly conserving biodiversity in some remote corner of the planet.

**2. REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation):** We are told that this is a system for reducing the greenhouse gases that are emitted through deforestation and forest degradation. But in reality management plans are imposed on local communities that deny local people and families the right to access their own lands, forests and water sources in exchange for miniscule, offensively small payments. At the same time corporations gain unlimited access to community forests, leading to biopiracy and other abuses.

**3. Energy from “biomass”:** Agrofuels and the conversion of plants, algae and organic wastes into energy sources to substitute for petroleum have meant that millions of hectares that should be either covered with trees or used to grow food for people, are instead being used to feed automobiles. So-called biomass conversion is nothing more than agrofuels in new forms and with new technologies.

**4. “Climate Smart Agriculture”:** Corporations and governments are using the pretext of adapting farming methods to a changing climate as a means to impose supposedly drought-tolerant GMO seeds and new agrochemicals on farmers. We may lose control over our land, crops, ecosystems, and water, producing toxic foods and putting the population at risk.

**5. “Water use restrictions”:** Under the pretext of conserving scarce water, we are told to concentrate irrigation on “high value crops.” That means that our finite irrigation resources should go to export crops, agrofuels and other industrial crops, while we stop watering the food crops that feed us and our families.

**6. “Technological fixes”:** These are among the most dangerous options, such as geoengineering and transgenic crops. None of the proposed geoengineering solutions, like fertilizing the sea, has shown any real potential for solving the climate crisis. Yet they are so potentially dangerous that an international moratorium has already been declared.

**7. “Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)”:** Under this model all of Nature (water and rainfall, biodiversity, landscape, fauna, seeds, etc.) has a price, leading invariably to privatization and subsequent charges for use. This is the final assault on Nature and life itself, not to mention the livelihoods of people who farm, hunt and fish. When communities contract out their ecosystems in exchange for payments from corporations, the latter will end up dominating our territories.

**8. “Renewable energy”:** Capital is showing a tremendous interest in creating new markets for supposedly sustainable energy sources like wind power, solar and others. Transnational corporations like Siemens are making huge investments in these businesses, which turn out not to be all that sustainable, while the wasteful energy practices used in many industries—like mining—continue unabated.



# THE REAL SOLUTION IS PEASANT AND FAMILY FARM AGRICULTURE

Peasant, family farm and indigenous agriculture actually offer the best solution to cool the planet. Studies show these practices have the ability to absorb or prevent up to two thirds of all annual greenhouse gas emissions. With minimal environmental impacts, family farm, peasant and indigenous families produce more than half of the food in today's world, while occupying a scant 20% of the world's arable land.

Our real challenge is to (re)discover another way of relating to Nature and to one another. It is both our obligation and our right, and so we call on all goodhearted women and men to continue the struggle for food sovereignty, genuine agrarian reform, and for the defense and recuperation of indigenous territories. We want to put an end to the environmental and social violence of capitalism, and rebuild peasant, family farm and indigenous food systems based on agroecology.

Our proposals are at the heart of the changes that we need, and offer a real path toward feeding all of humanity with healthy food while reducing the impacts of climate change.

**1. Food Sovereignty:** By doing away with monocultures and promoting peasant farming systems based on agroecology, which are more intensive and productive, we can generate more rural employment, care for the soil and grow healthy and diverse food. With localized production, marketing and processing we can respect the Earth as that which sustains life.

**2. Agrarian Reform:** Farming must once again be the work of peasants, family farmers and indigenous people. To make this a reality we urgently need genuine and broad agrarian reforms that can put an end to extreme and growing land concentration, a phenomenon that negatively affects all of humanity.

**3. Support for Peasant and Family Farm Agriculture:** Human scale farming, artisanal fishing, rotational grazing, etc. should all be supported by public sector budgets without conditions that put their very viability in question. So-called market mechanisms like carbon trading and payments for environmental services should be immediately dismantled and replaced with real support mechanisms. Nobody should be allowed to evade their obligation to stop polluting by buying the rights of others.

**4. A Different Energy Model:** The shameless discourse that posits the permanent need to generate ever more energy hides both the real destructive costs of unlimited energy waste and the true motives behind these arguments, which are nothing less than the continued concentration of economic power and the destruction of the planet. We need an end to waste and we need decentralized, low impact and renewable energy sources that are affordable and under local peoples' control.

## La Via Campesina in THE PEOPLES' SUMMIT





# Practical Applications of Renewable Energy

-by Cathy Holtslander

This has been a year of weather extremes. Farms have been affected all across Canada – the devastating drought in eastern Ontario (and most of the USA), early spring warming followed by killing frost in southern Ontario’s orchard country, excess rain and flooding in parts of the prairies, frequent tornados and high winds, excess moisture and intensive storm activity in BC. Disease outbreaks, insect infestation and physical damage are all taking a toll. The effects of the excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are becoming more and more dramatic and costly.

While farmers are on the front lines when it comes to global warming impacts, farmers like the Pedersen family - Karen, Ed, Gil and Marcella – NFU members from Cut Knife, Saskatchewan, are also on the front lines when it comes to finding ways to reduce fossil fuel consumption. In February 2012 they held an open house – co-sponsored by the NFU – to demonstrate their solar and wind systems and share what they learned from installing and operating the farm with renewable energy.

In 2008, the Pedersens had a heating problem to solve when their old coal-fired furnace wore out. They wanted to reduce their farm’s GHG emissions, and they needed to make sure their energy system would make good economic sense. They use heat to process their honey and to heat a 7000 ft<sup>2</sup> honey processing and storage building and two houses. After pencilling it all out, they decided to install an active solar hot-water heating system, a photovoltaic electricity panel and four small wind turbines. While preparing to make the investment in equipment they figured out ways to reduce their electricity and heating needs dramatically. Now their farm produces less CO<sup>2</sup> than before, plus their heating and electricity costs will not only be lower, but also more predictable.

The first step was to examine the economics of the various heating options. They looked at installing a natural gas system, using geothermal heat, or installing a solar system. Karen emphasized that it is essential to look at the long-

term operating costs and not just the capital and installation cost of each system. Their experience also showed that their passive solar heated house built 30 years ago had very low ongoing costs.

To come up with baseline numbers, Karen calculated each option’s life-time costs (summarized in the graph on the next page) using current price for fuels, electricity and replacement furnaces. She used the interest rate they got on their 15-year financing, and did not factor in general inflation or government grants. She fully expects the prices of fuels, electricity and replacement furnaces to rise in the future. While the interest rate is likely to rise from current lows as well, that is less predictable.

## Solar Evacuated Tube Heating

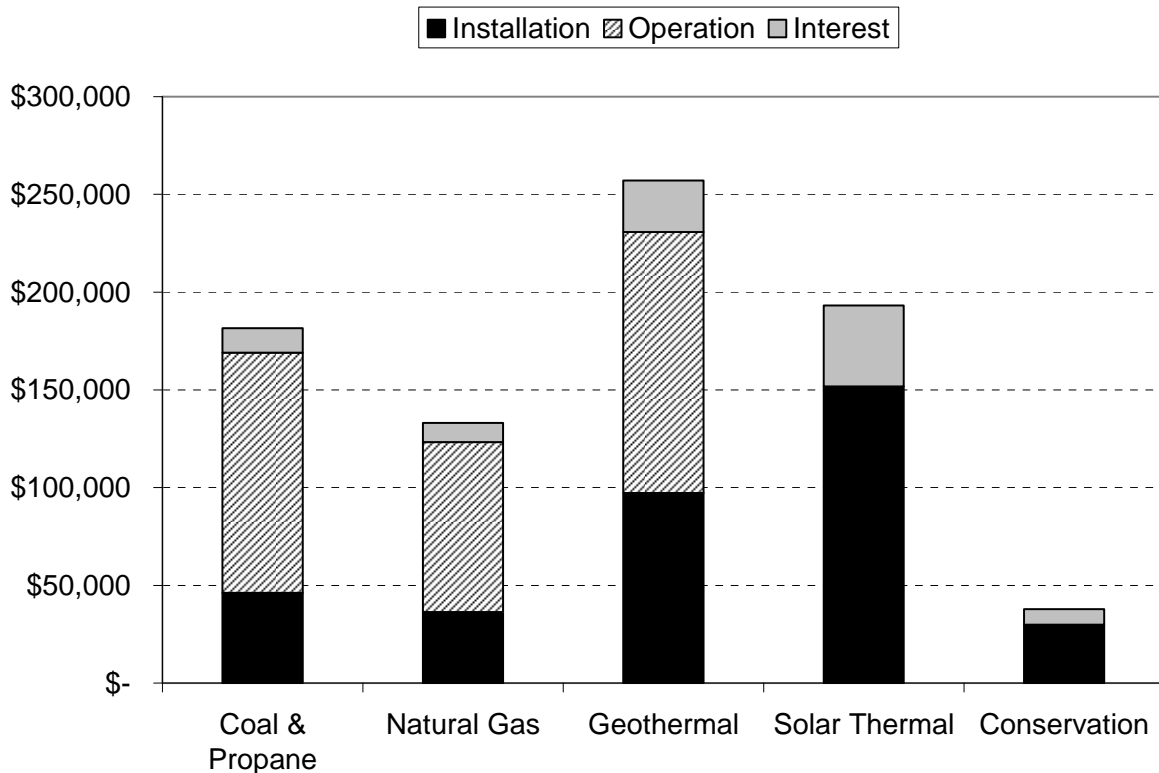
Evacuated tubes are hollow cylinders made of a double layer of glass with a vacuum between the layers. The inner layer is a dark colour so it absorbs heat. The tubes are mounted side by side on panels. Copper pipe filled with a 50-50 water/glycol mix runs through the tubes. The liquid absorbs heat and is pumped into a series of two insulated storage tanks indoors where heat is absorbed by 8000 litres of water. The storage tank temperatures range from 30 to 70 degrees Celsius. The tubes are so efficient that even on a cloudy day the water reservoir was warmed up by 3 degrees. A control panel regulates the pumps and monitors the system. A second pipe system picks up heat from the storage tanks and circulates it through the in-floor heating tubes in the buildings.

A photovoltaic panel supplies electricity and acts as a back-up system to run the pumps that circulate water/glycol through the tubes and prevent the system from boiling over if the provincial power grid fails on a sunny day. The amount of solar energy that would boil the panels is enough to generate the needed backup electricity.

*continued on page 18...*



### System Costs over 25 Years at Current Prices (not accounting for inflation or grants)



Karen was surprised to learn how heavily geothermal heating depends upon electricity. It is cheaper to install than solar thermal, but much more expensive to run. It would only reduce GHG emissions if the electricity source was renewable, so it may not be any more environmentally sound than coal or natural gas. While coal & propane and natural gas appear less expensive, as these fuels' prices rise, operating and installation costs will increase -- plus they contribute to global warming, and in the case of natural gas from fracking, it causes water pollution as well. Clearly, the most cost-effective energy upgrade is conservation.

Once the decision was made to install the renewable energy system, the Pedersens did an energy audit of the buildings and installed conservation measures. About \$30,000 went into insulation, new windows, weather-stripping and even duct tape to seal doors that are not used in winter. Once they started becoming more conscious of heat leakage they noticed all sorts of ways they could easily reduce losses.

It was important to do energy conservation upgrades before buying the new equipment.

Otherwise, they would have purchased a system that was bigger than necessary and paid excess costs for capital, installation, interest and maintenance over the life of the system.

The Pedersens chose evacuated tube active solar technology, not only because it was the most economical, but also because they can service it themselves, unlike gas and geothermal. They already had a central hydronic (radiant heat from hot water) heating system, so they could just change the heat source from coal to solar. The new system does not require daily maintenance as the coal system did. There is no fire risk, and the farm's GHG emissions are significantly reduced. Probably the biggest plus is that they do not have to worry about the increasing cost of energy – the sun is very generous with its rays!

In addition to the photovoltaic panel for emergency power to the solar heating system's pumps, the Pedersens installed four small wind turbines to supply general farm electricity. It is hooked up to Saskatchewan's net metering program, which allows small power producers to feed into the main grid when they are producing more than they need, and to draw upon the grid

*continued on page 19...*



when they need more than they are producing. The program allows a small producer to offset up to 100% of their annual electricity costs, but unlike the feed-in tariff system used in some jurisdictions, it does not pay them if they produce more than they use.

Similar to the preparation for the solar heating installation, the first step in setting up the wind turbines was conservation. They started weekly monitoring of their electricity use in September 2009. They borrowed a “Kill-a-Watt” – a gadget that tells how much electricity each circuit draws. That information allowed them to focus their efforts and make good decisions about how to use less electricity. Between then and February 2012 their annual usage dropped from 35,000 to 20,000 kilowatts per year.

By installing four small turbines instead of one big one they will still have some electricity during routine maintenance or break-downs. If one is off line, the other three will keep spinning. The smaller turbines also start working at lower wind

speeds, and the cost is about the same as for one large turbine. They had no concerns about space, as they used a hilly spot on pasture land where the cows happily graze right up to the pillars. The windmills have not been as trouble-free as expected, however. In future, if the farm needs more electricity they will install more photovoltaic panels, which will provide a better return on investment.

The Pedersens were able to direct 100% of their purchasing dollars for this project to Saskatchewan and Alberta small businesses. The system cost about \$150,000 and was partially offset by grants under programs that the provincial and federal governments have since cut. We can be sure that fossil fuel prices will increase in the future. Alternative energy source prices will probably go up as well, due to the fossil fuels used in manufacturing components. As a result of putting in this renewable energy system now the Pedersens believe their farm will be as competitive as possible into the future.

—nfu—



*Photo: Karen Pedersen in front of the honey house. Evacuated tubes are mounted on the wall, and the photovoltaic panel is mounted on a stand next to the doorway. Karen would be happy to talk with anyone interested in their project – phone: (306) 398-3633 or email: karenpedersen@sasktel.net*



# Dear Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board

*Thank you to all of you who have registered to join our class action and constitutional challenge to restore the wheat board. We are immensely grateful to those who have donated money towards financing our legal challenges. As well as a big “thank you”, this report is an update about our activities and our expectations for the coming months.*

**“Parliament can make laws, Parliament can change laws,  
and Parliament can repeal laws, but Parliament cannot break the law.”**

*- Allen Oberg, farmer-elected Chairperson of the  
Canadian Wheat Board, October 2011*

## A BRIEF HISTORY

2007: The Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board (FCWB) was formed in order to take the federal government to court over the illegal use of a secret Cabinet order to remove barley from the jurisdiction of the CWB. We were successful with this legal action in the Federal Court, and we successfully defended our victory in the Federal Court of Appeal in Winnipeg in February of 2008.

According to a peer-reviewed study by two professors based in the United States who had access to the CWB's internal sales data, the single desk marketing of barley brought an extra \$107 million into farmers' pockets each year. So the FCWB victories (your victories) on barley amounted to \$535 million over the last 5 years. Your actions made over 1/2 a billion dollars extra for farmers!

December 2010: 4 out of 5 Directors elected to the CWB Board supported single desk selling, giving a majority of 8 out of 10 farmer-elected Directors who supported the single desk, yet within a year the Federal Government introduced legislation to end our single desk Wheat Board.

June 2011: The FCWB filed legal documents with the Federal Court focused on Section 47.1 of the 1998 CWB Act. This law stipulated that before the Minister could introduce legislation into Parliament affecting the CWB, the Minister was required to allow farmers to vote if a grain was to be removed from or added to the CWB's mandate. The CWB itself (under the direction of its farmer-elected Board) filed a similar action and the Federal Court combined the two.

December 6 and 7, 2011: Justice Campbell listened to verbal arguments put forward by the FCWB, the CWB, and other interveners (the Producer Car Shippers of Canada, the Council of Canadians, and the ETC Group, PSAC, and Food Secure Canada) and counter arguments from the Federal Government. On December 7, Justice Campbell ruled in our favour, and wrote that the actions of the Minister of Agriculture (Gerry Ritz) were “an affront to the rule of law.”

December 15 and 16: Just days after introducing Bill C-18 into Parliament, the Harper government used extra-ordinary procedural moves to bypass full democratic Parliamentary debate. The Bill was signed into law on the night of December 15, 2011. The farmer-elected Directors were immediately dismissed and the assets of the Wheat Board were seized.

The following morning, December 16, the former Directors appeared before Justice Perlmutter in the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench asking for a stay of implementation of the Bill pending a resolution of all outstanding court proceedings, as the government had already announced that it would appeal the December 7 ruling. Justice Perlmutter refused to grant the stay of implementation but set January 17 and 18 for a further hearing on the matter.

January 2012: The FCWB incorporated to formalize its direction by the main supporting organizations and individuals — including the former single desk supporting elected Directors, the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, the National Farmers Union, the earlier version of the FCWB, and the Producer Car Shippers Association of Canada.

*continued on page 21...*



January 17 and 18, 2012: The FCWB supported the former elected Directors in front of Justice Perlmutter making our case for a stay of implementation until a ruling about the actual validity of the Bill was determined. The newly appointed Judge took 5 weeks to rule against us.

February 15, 2012: The FCWB launched a comprehensive constitutional challenge based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a class action suit against the federal government. This class action calls for the restoration of the single desk, OR for more than \$17 Billion in damages and compensation paid to the farmers of western Canada.

May 23, 2012: The Federal Court of Appeal convened in Ottawa and heard the appeal of the December 7 ruling. Only 3 ½ hours were allotted to hear from 4 sets of lawyers, and about two weeks later this court overturned the December 7 ruling of Justice Campbell and sided with the federal government.

July 26, 2012: Both the former elected Directors and the FCWB announced they had instructed their respective legal counsels to seek leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada regarding a Federal Court of Appeal ruling overturning a December 6, 2011 ruling by Federal Justice Campbell. In that ruling Justice Campbell found that the Federal Agriculture Minister had broken the law by introducing legislation ending the single desk selling responsibilities of the CWB.

### STAND WITH US TO PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC FARMER CONTROL & THE RULE OF LAW

Farmers and non-farmers alike have donated literally thousands of hours of volunteer time in order to stand up to the reckless and irresponsible actions of the federal government. Ottawa has ripped up the 1998 partnership agreement that created the farmer-controlled Wheat Board, and walked away with the farmers' assets. In destroying the world's largest marketer of wheat and barley, the government has taken wealth and market power away from western Canadian farmers.

Working with coalitions is always demanding work, but throwing in three different court proceedings and four different legal firms has naturally added to the time required.

One thing that has never changed is the FCWB's focus on farmers and basic Canadian democratic principles including that no one - not even the Prime Minister or Parliament - is above the rule of law.

All of this conflict could have been avoided if the government had simply obeyed the law and respected Section 47.1 of the 1998 CWB Act by holding a fair and democratic farmer vote.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO AT THIS POINT? HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

1. Contact us with good ideas: [contact@cwbafacts.ca](mailto:contact@cwbafacts.ca) or mail to: Box 41, Brookdale, MB R0K 0G0.
2. Sign up in support of the \$17 Billion class action. It creates no legal obligation on you. Simply go to the website at [www.cwbclassaction.ca](http://www.cwbclassaction.ca) or download the form from [www.friendsofcwb.ca](http://www.friendsofcwb.ca) or ask us to mail a form to you.
3. Inform your friends and neighbours (regardless of whether or not they are farmers) and let them know that we are still taking the fight to the government.
4. Donate towards our work - if you know people who haven't yet supported us financially, please ask them to do so, or send us their contact information and we will contact them directly. Send your donation to the NFU, but mark "CWB legal fund" on the cheque.

*And once again, thank you for your ongoing support of basic Canadian democratic principles and the FCWB.*

"The greatest achievement through the centuries in the evolution of democratic governance has been constitutionalism and the rule of law. The rule of law is not the rule by laws where citizens are bound to comply with the laws but government is not." - Alberta Chief Justice Fraser

*Thanks again, Stewart Wells*



## We Remember ...

# JOHN WILCOX

November 9, 1941 – June 15, 2012



We are sad to announce that John Wilcox passed away very suddenly late this spring. John was a long-time member and supporter of the NFU and The Farmers' Institute of BC. John and his partner, Sue Earle, often hosted NFU members, including NFU Vice-President Colleen Ross on a recent organizing trip to BC and the 2011 NFU youth summer Food Sovereignty Youth Retreat. John and Sue were gracious and giving hosts.

Known as a "farmbudsman", John was always an engaged citizen. He was born in Windsor, Ontario, and raised by his grandparents on their six-generation family farm. He studied agriculture at Ridgetown College, and after graduating in 1961, he volunteered in a Ghandian Village Development in rural India. Being the first agricultural volunteer, he became a founding member of Canadian Overseas Volunteers (now CUSO-VSO). Back in Ontario, he wrote farm news for the Department of Agriculture. He 'emigrated' to BC in 1964 and worked for four years in Land Use Planning with the BC government in Victoria.

John moved to Salt Spring Island in 1973 to fulfill a lifelong dream to bring 25 acres of farmland into production, and worked on coastal tugs to help make ends meet. In 1990 he bought Duck Creek Farm, and today it is a productive, beautiful, peaceful place where good wholesome food is produced while young and old alike come to learn and relax. John Wilcox, is also very well known as "Johnny Canuck" for his anti-Free Trade mission in 1988 when he drove his 1941 Chevy truck with a maple leaf painted on it across Canada and back.

John's contribution to agriculture, farming and community on Salt Spring Island and beyond is a testament to his dedication to humanity and selfless giving to others.

John is missed and remembered by family, his farming community, and friends across Canada.



# VIOLET AUGUSTA ROSE RICKARDS

*Life Member of NFU Local 316 (Frontenac, Lennox-Addington and Kingston in Ontario)*

Violet Rickards passed away on May 25, 2012, in her ninetieth year. Violet was a Local Director and President in the 1960s and 70s. Her contribution to the Union and farm community was recognized by the National Board in 1989 with one of the organization's Twentieth Anniversary awards.

Violet (Vi, Viney, Buttercup) was a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mom, a grandma, a great-grandma and a friend. She was a farmer, a teacher, a politician and an amazing cook and homemaker. Violet loved her family and understood that the land fed them. Indeed, her love and respect for the land attracted others to her family farm.

She understood economics from a very intelligent perspective, and she practiced what she preached, with compassion for everyday people and a passion for social justice in the world. She talked with and listened to other farmers. She read widely about very serious issues, and understood and could clearly articulate these issues.

She remained a strong supporter of the NFU, getting frequent updates and reports from her granddaughter, Andrea Cumpson, and others. She read *The Union Farmer* cover to cover and wrote letters to the editor of her local newspaper on farm and food issues. In 2010, she single-handedly organized fellow residents at Rideaucrest Home in opposition to the federal government's decision to close Canada's prison farms. She collected signatures and presented them in person to her MP, Peter Milliken. She also attended the Margaret Atwood prison farm rally in Kingston and marched to Correctional Service of Canada's Ontario headquarters in the protest against the closings.

Violet wrote her own obituary, and in it asked family and friends to make donations to NFU Local 316 to support the ongoing work of building a more sustainable local food system where people matter -- Violet's life-long work. As a result, her community contributed over \$2,000.

Andrea Cumpson, former president of Local 316, said, "Grandma had a spunky fun side that drew people to her. Directly and indirectly, her strong essence and spirit will inspire us as we continue with our journey through this life."



*Photo: Violet Rickards with granddaughters, Andrea Cumpson (left) and Lisa Cumpson, during the Margaret Atwood Prison Farm Rally in Kingston, Ontario, June, 2010.*



# The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

*The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Paul was born on April 26, 1954, and returned to the family farm after obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few years. Described as the “godfather of modern shortline railways” by former NFU President Stewart Wells, Paul was instrumental in the founding of Saskatchewan’s first shortline railway, Southern Rails Co-operative, and served as general manager from 1991 to 1997. When he left Southern Rails, he stayed on as a board member, and worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting other efforts of farmers to start shortline railways. Since 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, and was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.*

*Working with the family of Paul Beingessner, the National Farmers Union has established an annual literary prize in honour of Paul and his contribution to rural and agricultural journalism. Paul Beingessner was a farmer, an activist, and a writer who defended Canada’s family farms until his tragic death in a farm accident in the spring of 2009. His widely-read and respected weekly columns brought a fresh and progressive perspective to rural and farm issues.*

*Young writers are encouraged to submit their work to the Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing.*

## **Award Criteria and Details:**

- There will be two age categories – 15 years and under, and 16 years to 21 years. An award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded to one essay in each age category for a non-fiction letter or essay 500-1000 words in length.
- The theme for 2012 is *Co-operatives: An Exercise in Democracy*.
- Deadline for entries is October 15, 2012.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2012.

All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

### **Send entries to the National Farmers Union:**

By email: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca)

OR

By mail to: National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4B6

We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465.



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## NFU 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention



*Co-ops: An Exercise in Democracy*

**November 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Hilton Garden Inn Downtown**

**90- 22<sup>nd</sup> Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**

**Reserve your hotel room today.**

**A block of rooms is being held, but only until October 19, 2012.**

*(Be sure to say it is for the NFU Convention when booking.)*

**Room rates are \$164 (king or 2 queens, includes parking)**

**To make your reservations:**

**CALL 1-306-244-2311**