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# union farmer

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**Cover Photo:** Region 7 grazier, Blake Hall, sets up a daily paddock for his grass-finished beef cattle. (photo by Andrea Wiseman)

# Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

—by Ann Slater

Over the last year and a half or so, the NFU National Board has put more emphasis on establishing working groups and committees with clearly defined mandates and board liaisons. These groups have become a valuable way to share the workload amongst our membership. In addition, they have brought in new energy and excitement for the importance of the NFU as a voice for farmers, social justice and our environment across Canada.

One of the most noticeable and active of the working groups is the Brand Development Working Group (BDWG) which has met almost weekly for much of the past year. As you will see in this issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly, their efforts have led to both a new NFU logo and tagline. As farmers we know there is rarely rest for the weary and with the logo decision finalized, the BDWG still has lots of work to do to bring it to life. The efforts of other committees and working groups show up in other articles, including Dan Kretschmar's report on behalf of the International Program Committee in the *Quarterly* and in the election messages and candidate questions from the Seed and Trade Committee in the Newsletter.

Which brings me to the Editorial Advisory Committee. The Editorial Advisory Committee met for the first time in

January 2015. Our mandate is to provide direction and ideas to staff regarding NFU publications. We did not expect to take on the responsibility of actually editing *the Union Farmer Quarterly*, since that job is one Carla Roppel has handled very capably during her time as the NFU's Executive Director. As you will see in Coral Sproule's Women's President's message, we needed to take the responsibility for the *Quarterly* off of Carla's shoulders for this issue. A big thank you to the members of the Editorial Advisory Committee – Matt Gehl, Kate Storey, Ella Haley and Karen Eatwell – for your many contributions. Sometimes jumping in with both feet is the best way to learn how things are done! We could not have pulled this issue together without guidance and support from Joan Lange at the national office.

Finally, sometimes the work of NFU committees and working groups overlap. This is the case with the NFU Blog ([www.nfu.ca/blog](http://www.nfu.ca/blog)). The Blog was started by the NFU Youth and the Alternative Media Group, which is also a brain child of the Youth. Now that the Editorial Advisory Committee is in place we would also like to see more postings on the Blog. NFU members are welcome to submit original pieces or adapt previously published work for consideration as a Blog posting. Content could include regional reports, updates on key NFU campaigns, discussions of policy issues or farmer profiles. To make a submission or for more information, contact the NFU youth at [nfuyouth@nfu.ca](mailto:nfuyouth@nfu.ca) or the Editorial Advisory Committee at [aslater@quadro.net](mailto:aslater@quadro.net). —nfu—

## union farmer quarterly

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*We believe a strong rural community in Canada is an essential part of our national culture. In the National Farmers Union, we work collectively to strengthen the farm community by: building ties between farmers in all parts of Canada, with farmers in other countries and with non-farm people; ensuring all people have access to an adequate, nutritious and safely-produced food supply; promoting equity for women and young people in the farming community; promoting social support systems that permit people in farming communities a good quality of life; promoting the development and maintenance of a Canadian infrastructure to serve Canadian goals in food production and trade; and helping governments to form fair and constructive policies related to food production and food trade.*





—by Jan Slomp

# A Message from the President

## A Lesson in Finance from rich NFU History

Engaging in the circles of the NFU has been an educational experience for me. Of particular note was a one-day series of sixteen lectures held at the University of Regina on the eve of the NFU convention in November, 2001. It was about the history of the prairie social movement, in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Territorial Grain Growers in Indian Head, Saskatchewan - that wave of grassroots empowerment forged progressive policy to the benefit of all Canadians. Within the NFU there has always been a sound understanding for the need for public policy and the effects it can have towards building a just society, with decent welfare standards for people and the environment - a society that is brimming with social and economic opportunity for all. Our rich NFU history is illustrated in the annual updates to our policy manual. One clear example is:

*Debt, Deficit, Banking and Interest Rates #1 [Dec. '96]  
(page Z-12, Nov. 2013 NFU Policy Statement)*

*Government borrowing from private financial institutions is costing taxpayers dearly because of high interest charges. Further, these institutions extract excessive profits and do not pay their fair share of taxes. Therefore, both federal and provincial governments should increase their borrowing from the Bank of Canada, our own bank.*

The policy of Statutory Reserve was established in 1935 as one of the tools available to the Bank of Canada to build opportunity. From 1935 until 1975 a private chartered bank in Canada could issue loans (on paper) but it had to deposit twenty percent (the statutory reserve) of this otherwise virtual money, in hard dollars in the Bank of Canada. The rate of money creation was very much limited by the savings of clients within that same bank. As loans were paid back over time, through principal payments made by the lender, an equal proportion of the deposits in the Bank of Canada went back to the bank that had issued the loan. The constant lending and the growth in the economy created an

enormous amount of cash in the accounts of the Bank of Canada without interest obligations attached to it.

The interest benefits of the statutory reserve allowed Canada's massive World War II debt to be repaid by the 1960s. Public investment in infrastructure, like modernizing the St. Lawrence Seaway and building the Trans-Canada Highway, were financed through the benefits of the Statutory Reserve, without Canadians paying taxes for them. In the mid-1970s, however, Prime Minister Trudeau was advised by global international bankers to phase out the Statutory Reserve. It was not phased out but the percentage was reduced to zero percent. Economists calculate that the benefits of the twenty percent statutory reserve would have eliminated the \$50 Billion annual deficit that the Chrétien government inherited from the Mulroney/Campbell government in 1993. Instead of re-instituting the Statutory Reserve to twenty percent, Prime Minister Chrétien asked then Minister of Finance Paul Martin to eliminate the deficit by taking austerity measures. Since then Canada has been gradually sinking, in terms of the level of social standards measured internationally.

The Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform (COMER) was established in 1986 and has asked the NFU to endorse the follow statement:

*Therefore, we Canadian civil society organizations, who work for public welfare, call on our federal government to revive the powers of the Bank of Canada to provide funding to all levels of government in Canada, largely with interest-free loans, as was done between 1935 and 1975 with very low inflation, enabling our nation to break out of the Great Depression, to fulfill extraordinary responsibilities during World War II, and to prosper while building our infrastructure and highly valued social programs during some thirty post-war years. We Canadians now urgently need a renaissance of these powers of our Bank of Canada.*

The NFU has endorsed the statement.

*In Solidarity, Jan Slomp*







—by Coral Sproule

# A message from the Women's President

**I**t is with a heavy heart that I begin this message with the news that Naomi Friesen, a beautiful soul and loving partner of our Executive Director Carla Roppel, passed away all too soon in February. It is not often that one sees a relationship that is as equally balanced as theirs. We offer our deepest condolences to Carla as she takes on this very devastating loss and transition in her life.

We all grieve in our own ways. At these times, I often think of the close relationships in my own life upon which I so heavily rely. The personal relationships and trust that we often build with our neighbours, co-workers or even the server at a local diner are second to none. It is these relationships that weave the fabric of our rural and agricultural communities.

As a somewhat migrant and relatively new farmer, I have often relied on social supports within my local community and the broader agricultural community. It is these types of relationships that we seem to cultivate amongst our fellow farmers of all ages and walks of life within the National Farmers Union. At our in-person meetings and even as we connect by telephone from our various spots across the countryside, we often feel to some extent that this is our extended family.

Just as she was supported by her loving partner, Carla has been integral to the work of the NFU as we continue to move forward. We have often felt that our Executive Director has an extremely challenging job that is at times thankless, long and hard – with much less than a deserved wage. At times I have been up to my eyeballs in NFU-related emails and phone calls as part of our efforts and campaigns to better the lives of farmers. Without a doubt during these challenging times, Carla would give me a call with words that bring my focus back to what is truly important.

A few months previous to Naomi's passing, Carla told us that she would be stepping down from her role as Executive Director of the National Farmers Union. On behalf of the members of the NFU, I would like to honour the work that Carla has done for us over the past several years. She held this ship together as we all worked towards a more fair and just agricultural and food system in Canada and globally. We have made great strides in the engagement of youth members at all levels of the NFU. We continue to attack the issues that are of importance to small and medium scale family farmers – women, men, and children alike. We have safe forums where political and social debate can thrive through our strong policies and sound processes.

It will be difficult to fill Carla's shoes. The search process began in January. It is daunting to find someone with the passion, drive, and commitment that we have become accustomed to in working with Carla over the years. Our discussions have led us to hire a General Manager, rather than an Executive Director, as we feel this better reflects the current needs of our organization.

One thing is for sure, Carla will be sorely missed in our offices, on the phone, and in our work towards *Strong Communities, Sound Policies and Sustainable Farms*. I hope she will stop in from time to time in her retirement, and maintain her connection to the National Farmers Union however she sees fit. I would like to offer our best wishes to Carla, as well as whatever support we can, to a woman who has supported us so well. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.

*Wholeheartedly, Coral Sproule*





# A message from the Youth

— Ayla Fenton, Youth Vice President

## National New Farmer Coalition

Since its humble working group beginnings following the 2014 NFU Youth Retreat, the National New Farmer Coalition has grown to include representatives from several organizations, including Food Secure Canada, Young Agrarians as well as the NFU. Our aim is to promote government policies to reverse the decline in the number of young farmers in Canada. The coalition has adopted a project statement and action plan and has initiated a national research and policy project.

In recent years, there have been many farmer surveys conducted within provinces or regions, but we have yet to come across any nationwide non-governmental analyses of the new farmer situation. The Coalition has partnered with Julia Laforge, a University of Manitoba PhD candidate, to develop a national New Farmer Survey. The survey will seek to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by beginning farmers across Canada and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and policies. Please share the following link with new, aspiring, or recently exited farmers, and with any experienced farmers who provide formal or informal educational opportunities for young people:

<http://ruminationsongermutations.com/2015/02/10/new-farmer-survey/>

After launching the survey in February, we received 750 responses within three weeks. We expect we will far exceed our original goal of 1,000 respondents. We are very excited about this and gratified by the positive reactions we have received regarding our work.

The next step will be to use the results from the survey, existing research, and case studies to construct a National New Farmer Policy Platform. This report will make specific recommendations to multiple levels of government on how to improve access to land, funding, training and profit for new farmers. We are approaching a federal election, and given that new farmers are playing a critical role in building more just and sustainable food systems, we believe that this is a crucial moment for new farmer voices to be heard on the national stage.

I'd like to take this chance to extend a huge thank you to Virginie Lavalée-Picard, National New Farmer Coalition Coordinator. She has put countless volunteer hours into this project and we are so very grateful for her hard work!

For more information, or if you have any questions about the coalition, contact [newfarmercoalition@gmail.com](mailto:newfarmercoalition@gmail.com).

## Youth Retreat

The annual NFU Youth Retreat was held in Wakefield, QC from March 26 to 28, 2015. Representatives from the Union Paysanne (Quebec) and the National Young Farmers Coalition (USA) were invited to join the retreat. This is an exciting opportunity to learn from one another and strengthen the relationships between our organizations.

### Our goals for this year's retreat were:

- Continue to build and strengthen the NFU Youth and the capacity of youth members.
- Advance the work of the National New Farmer Coalition.
- Strengthen our strategic collaboration with Young Agrarians and other appropriate organizations, and plan for more farmer engagement events.
- Advance the work of various NFU committees/working groups.
- Participate in a NFU Youth/Young Agrarians social to connect with young farmers in the region.

We are grateful to the National Farmers Foundation as well as the NFU regions, locals and individuals who have contributed funding for this essential youth event.

As always, thank you so much for your unwavering support of the NFU Youth. Our work would not be possible without you!

*In Solidarity, Ayla Fenton*



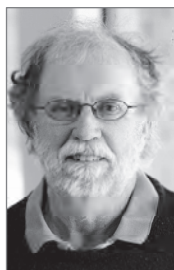
*Photo: Coalition members (Katie Ward-Chiasson, Ayla Fenton, Dana Penrice, Virginie Lavalée-Picard and Alex Fletcher) hold a meeting during the National Convention in November, 2014.*



# Regional Reports



## Region One:



*Provinces of PEI, New Brunswick  
and Nova Scotia*

*- by Reg Phelan*

### New Brunswick

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick has been working with blueberry growers in Northern N.B. on a large land-grab issue. The previous provincial government turned over more than 15,000 acres of wild blueberry land to a large processor, Oxford Frozen Foods. They got the land for a promise of more processing jobs and a swap of Bragg Lumber Land. The Bragg Lumber Land is estimated to be about 10 per cent value of exchanged land.

Blueberry grower, Jean-Maurice Landry talked about the issue at an NFU meeting. He said, "We find it most unfortunate that an outside processor, in this case, Oxford Frozen Foods, would come into the picture and go through the backdoor using money, influence, political connections, and so forth to get land that we have been waiting for, for generations here." Vernon Lasier, another blueberry grower, says, "We have no room to expand now."

New Brunswick is big in blueberries, producing more than one-quarter of Canada's crop. The land-grabbing is in the French-speaking area of N.B., and the NFU in N.B. has put a lot of work and money into servicing producers in both official languages. Some of this work is supported with money the NFU received from winning PVTN court case. For this initiative to continue, it will take a lot more membership support from across the NFU.

The new government in N.B. promised to take a look at this land-grabbing deal. The government has placed a moratorium on land fracking within the province.

### Prince Edward Island

In Prince Edward Island about the same time there was a similar push by large processors, in this case, Wyman's of US and Irvings Cavendish Farms. Wyman's did a large expansion to their processing plant in PEI. The PEI government gave the processors a commitment to do a review of the Lands Protection Act. The Act, brought in more than 30 years ago with NFU support, puts an upper limit on the number of acres any individual or corporation can own. In this attempt to gut the Act, the processors had the support of the PEI Federation of Agriculture. The processors, as well as many other corporate entities, are members of the Federation.

It took a lot of mobilization work on the part of NFU and our allies to defend the importance of the Lands Protection Act. The outcome of this endeavour was successful as the Act remains basically intact and keeps the brakes on land-grabbing efforts. The processors were not very pleased with this outcome and wanted the government to grant them a concession by lifting the moratorium on deep wells for irrigation. Robert Irving of Cavendish Farms told a committee of MLAs that he would be forced to look elsewhere for potatoes if PEI does not lift the moratorium.

The NFU in PEI is active with a coalition on the deep water well issue and with a coalition opposed to the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Scott Sinclair of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives spoke on CETA at the NFU District Convention in Charlottetown on March 24, 2015. There are workshops happening on seed saving, local food security issues and plans are in place for a spring membership canvass.

### Nova Scotia

There are plans in place to do a membership drive in Nova Scotia. An email was sent out to 150 Nova Scotia farmers asking about their interests in the NFU and within twenty hours there were more than thirty responses. An attractive leaflet has been developed for the canvass and a commitment from some National NFU officers to help out - Coral Sproule, NFU Women's President, in March and Joan Brady in April.

—nfu—



## NFU-O/Region Three:



*Province of Ontario*

- by Karen Eatwell

The Region 3 2015 Convention was held on March 6, 7 & 8<sup>th</sup> in Waterloo, Ontario. The Convention started with a Friday evening screening of the documentary film, *The Family Farm*, directed by Ari Cohen. Ari joined a mixed crowd of NFU members and the public, to answer questions about the film at the screening and a social gathering.

On Saturday, Dr. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, from Trent University and Dr. Gavin Fridell, from St. Marys University gave an engaging presentation on alternatives to the power of the grocery store, noting that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) pays more in income to the government than many well-known retailers do in taxes. Our afternoon session focused on energy with a presentation by NFU members Katie Ward and Rick Munroe. We were also pleased to have NFU President Jan Slomp in attendance for the three-day event.

Karen Eatwell was acclaimed as Region 3 Coordinator and NFU-O President. Tony Straathof and Dan Kretschmar will take on National Board positions at the National Convention this fall. In November, Martin Boettcher will become the Youth Advisor, and Katie Ward will remain the Women's Advisor. The NFU-O Regional Councilors-at-Large beginning their terms now are Emery Huszka and

Ella Haley, with one vacancy. Dan Kretschmar was elected to the position of International Program Committee Representative from Region 3.

The weekend closed with a breakfast gathering and viewing of the film *'Till the Cows Come Home* with Dianne and Peter Dowling providing additional context on the film. Several locals are planning to organize screenings of *'Till the Cows Come Home* as it is a great springboard for discussion in this election year.

### Current Work

In January, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change released a discussion paper, *Ontario's Climate Change 2015*. The NFU-O provided comments on the paper.

This spring, there are four different provincial plans up for review under a coordinated land-use planning review. The document, *Our Region, Our Community, Our Home*, will help inform and guide discussions. It describes the plans and their objectives, highlights important policy issues, and sets out questions we hope to address during the review.

The plans up for review are: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan. The deadline for submissions is May 28.

### Membership

All farm businesses in Ontario that gross \$7,000 or more annually are required by law to register their farm business with Agricorp. This enables farmers to qualify for Farm Property Class Tax Rates, to be eligible for government programs such as Growing Forward 2, and to obtain membership in one of the three Accredited Farm Organizations. The membership in Ontario continues to grow, and we are optimistic the trend will continue.

—nfu—

### Photo:

NFU National President Jan Slomp joins NFU-O Regional Council members at the March meeting in Waterloo.

(left to right): Emery Huszka, Katie Ward, Tony Straathof, Jan Slomp, Karen Eatwell, Dan Kretschmar. (missing: Joe Dama, Charlie Nixon, Ella Haley & Martin Boettcher)





## Region Five:



*Province of Manitoba*

*- by Ian Robson*

**M**anitoba farmers have become the unwilling recipient of other people's water. While climate change extremes have added to the water burden, talk about prairie river systems has sidestepped the issue. NFU Region 5 called the Manitoba Government about the flooded crops in 2014 and requested that the flood disaster compensation programs which worked in 2011 be used again. We were given an announcement for feed freight assistance and a tax deferral on sold cows, which helps the ranchers, but grain farmers were left without assistance. We needed a crop acre payment because the existing AgriRecovery program does not work where heavy rain occurs several years in a row. AgriRecovery demands that farmers insure for loss of flooded acres, but insurance does not do much to help farmers struggling in Manitoba's ongoing flood situations. Instead of helping, there are now reports that serious cuts to Federal Disaster Financial Assistance programs will be made. As governments shift away from disaster payments and toward costly insurance systems, farmers are asking the MPs why they are so blind to the farmers needs?

Too many farmers stay silent. Farmers are tempted by tax cuts but we lose far more from program cuts. Many ignore the fact that we are losing a minimum of \$20 per acre because of the killing of our Canadian Wheat Board, meanwhile they complain about the one percent PST increase needed to fix damaged roads, which would cost them \$200 on \$20,000 of taxable purchases. On a 1000-acre farm, which is worse, \$2,400 PST paid or \$20,000 lost?

Some agricultural attitudes are starting to shift in Manitoba, but slowly. The consumer demand for locally raised food creates opportunities to recapture the local food supply chain. Why is there so much food being trucked to Manitoba? Four days of diesel fuel shortage would leave many supermarkets without inventory. Local food could put many more

## ***JOIN US...***

### **NFU REGION 5 ANNUAL CONVENTION SAT., JULY 11, 2015 — ONANOLE, MAN.**

Bring your policy ideas and bring a farming neighbour.  
We are working **together** to build the NFU in Manitoba.

*Watch your mailbox for more details.*

farmers and land resources to work, develop local food processing and marketing businesses and keep a useful local food supply cushion.

NFU members are leading the way. There are examples, like the farmers producing food for the consumer food co-op in Boissevain and the newly-opened federally-certified True North Foods abattoir at Carman. However, more local service is needed for the processing of poultry. The Manitoba Government recently released a report called 'Advancing the Small Scale Local Food Sector in Manitoba'. This is a discussion starter on how to get families back into farming and food processing. The shift toward more local food chains opens opportunities for Manitoba farm families and is in line with NFU goals and policies.

NFU members Dean Harder and Ian Robson were recently invited to speak to University of Manitoba Diploma Agriculture students about NFU analysis and the benefits of NFU policy recommendations. We pointed out the need to support and maintain public crop breeding and to keep a reasonable cost for seeds. Canola was developed through public dollars and is a pay-back to everyone. Innovation is successful with public money, so why let this be gifted to a few shareholders through granted intellectual property rights? C-18 with its UPOV '91 privilege is "1984" double speak. Control of our seeds by PBR or patent protection is not innovative and not so good for the future.

NFU members in R5 understand the benefits of the NFU voice in protecting farmers' rights to use and sell seeds, speaking out against cuts to public crop breeding research, opposing outside investment in farm land, rebuilding CWB services, and demanding that the Canadian Grain Commission work "in the interest of the farmer" as intended.

Farmers are innovative and should talk with each other about what policies are good for farmers, versus good only for industry.

—nfu—





## Region Six:



### *Province of Saskatchewan*

- by Matt Gehl

There has not been much snow; that is about the only good news for farmers in Saskatchewan this winter. As always, farmers have been keeping an eye on the amount of snow fall and trying to get an idea of just how wet the 2015 season might be. At a meeting in Raymore in December, farmers gathered to express their concerns about the dire situations many of them faced last year due to excess moisture. With all levels and parties of government in attendance, ideas were exchanged about measures ranging from accessing emergency flood relief funding to changes to the crop insurance program, all with the aim of trying to ensure that farms can survive long enough to adapt to what seems to be the new normal in terms of weather.

The rest of the winter has been rather chilly for family farms in the province. The closure of an Agriculture Canada research station in Quebec that was conducting some of the leading research on fusarium resistance was alarming. Hopefully this much needed research can be continued, as wheat varieties that can stand up to the disease will be crucial given the rate at which it is expanding.

The post single desk farm economy is still seeing grain companies squeezing extra profits out of farmers through wider and wider basis levels. As pointed out in a news release from the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, the grain companies took \$13 million in excess basis in just one week in February. Not to worry - the federal government has gifted the Alberta Wheat Commission \$750,000 to set up a website to help farmers find the best price for their grain. Perhaps they can use some of that money to run a public awareness campaign to explain to farmers just why the grain companies would be willing to share this information. All sarcasm aside, this is a perfect example of how prairie farmers have become price takers since the destruction of the single desk.

Thankfully there was one positive note from the early months of 2015 and it came out of Manitoba. Once again farmers have shown that when given the opportunity to vote and candidates who express their stance clearly, they will elect directors who support public plant breeding and policies that will help ensure the survival and success of the Canadian family farm. So congratulations from NFU Region 6 to the farmers of Manitoba for electing strong directors to the newly formed Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association.

Hopefully that big election later this year will yield results that are similarly positive to Canadian farmers.

—nfu—



- by Ed Sagan

In the eastern part of Saskatchewan this winter the average temperature with the wind chill was -30 to -40 with snow. I should be in Cuba. The plan is for next year. Farming is always next year country.

I attended the CWB Alliance meeting in Regina but there was no great news to be heard from our excellent speakers. Oh, by the way, the CWB Office in Winnipeg sold to some investors from Calgary for \$9.7 million. Probably for half of what it is worth. Number 3 wheat with 12.5 percent protein is \$5.00 a bushel to be delivered in June to Melville, Saskatchewan. You cannot buy 4.5 liters of gas for one bushel of wheat. So much for farming in 2015 in Saskatchewan.

The farm auction catalogue is out and the newest and most expensive equipment is now for sale. Those same farmers who objected to the Canadian Wheat Board in its last years are now having the biggest farm auction sales. So much for the Tories' freedom to farm. The six biggest farmers in my area are getting out of farming, thanks to Tory farm policy.

Once again I invite you to do your best to invite two of your friends to join the NFU.

—nfu—



## Region Seven:



*Province of Alberta*

*- by Doug Scott*

To begin, on behalf of all members in Region 7, I would like to extend our most sincere sympathies to our Executive Director, Carla, on the loss of her partner, Naomi. So many of us take our own good health for granted as we plough forward with our busy lives. Carla's unexpected loss should give us all pause to reflect on the goodness of our lives.

My, how things have changed in Alberta. The brashness, smugness and entitlement of the Alberta Conservative Government has been kneecapped by a correction in oil prices. It should not have been unexpected, but if you believe them, they were blindsided by forces beyond their control. I wish our new Premier success but I know he will likely get it wrong as ideology will likely once again cloud the government's thinking. The obvious fixes will be ignored or denigrated and they will go after the low hanging fruit like teachers, public service employees and union members. So we should not expect changes to our tax structure or royalty rates, rather we should expect cuts to public services and more Conservative rhetoric about how smart they are. Why should we expect anything different? The Conservative Party has been in power in Alberta for 45 years!

On a more positive note, our beef producers are experiencing some of the best prices in the past decade. A recent case of BSE does not seem to have had much effect on the industry. A handful of countries have imposed bans on the importation of Canadian beef but the damage to producers should be minimal.

On the grain side, things are much different as grain farmers struggle to make ends meet with both canola and wheat prices below break-even levels. The fallout from the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board continues as transportation problems, price transparency and a host of other problems both expected and otherwise, continue to plague the industry. Conversations I have had recently with a number of grain farmers are disturbing, as so many of them do not seem to understand what has happened and are just now beginning to realize how fundamental and permanent the changes to the industry are. Interestingly, most of them profess to have been Canadian Wheat Board supporters but I never saw a single one of them at a "Save the Board" event.

I had the pleasure of directing a question to Hon. Verlyn Olsen, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, at a recent event. Actually, I had him cornered as he was taking questions from the floor at the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies Annual Convention and he could not turn on his heel and walk away from me as he did the last time we met. I asked him where he stood on the revenue cap of which he professed to know very little but he assured me the Conservative Government would continue to do what is right for the industry. He is a nice man but knows little about agriculture and his thinking is heavily influenced by Alberta Wheat Commission board members who remain for the most part unelected and are part of the same old ideologically driven gang who destroyed the Canadian Wheat Board.

With spring and the planting season just ahead and the calving season in full swing, I wish all members a safe, productive and profitable year.

—nfu—



## NFU-NB applauds Local Food Security Bill

After many years of calling for government to implement a local food policy to support New Brunswick agricultural production, the National Farmers Union in New Brunswick is thrilled that MLA David Coon presented the Local Food Security Bill to the Provincial Legislature on Wednesday, February 11. This bill provides a strong regulatory framework that would support New Brunswick's local food economy, including a baseline assessment to fully understand how much food is currently produced in our province and how much of that food is consumed by New Brunswickers.

Food is one thing that all New Brunswickers require on a daily basis and food security is an issue that affects and unites all people. The NFU-NB believes that the implementation of a provincial food system that encourages food production and procurement from within the province will help create a more stable economic outlook for our farmers, as well as further generate rural employment and sustain rural economies. This bill calls for a labelling system that will identify New Brunswick produced and processed foods with a minimum of 80% of ingredients produced or harvested in NB. This will recognize the work of our farmers and make it easily identifiable by consumers whether they buy their food in the grocery store or at the farmers market.

The National Farmers Union in NB is calling on all MLAs, and in particular Honourable Rick Doucet, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries to stand up and say yes to New Brunswick farmers and the future of food in our province.

—nfu—



## L'UNF-NB applaudit la Loi sur la sécurité alimentaire

Après avoir demandé au gouvernement pendant plusieurs années de mettre en oeuvre une politique sur l'approvisionnement alimentaire local afin d'appuyer la production agricole au Nouveau-Brunswick, l'Union nationale des fermiers au NB, est très heureuse que le député David Coon a soumis le Projet de loi sur la sécurité alimentaire locale à l'Assemblée législative, le mercredi 11 février. Ce projet de loi prévoit un cadre réglementaire solide qui soutiendrait l'économie de la production alimentaire

locale au Nouveau-Brunswick, y compris une évaluation de base visant à bien comprendre combien de nourriture est produite présentement dans notre province et quelle proportion de cette nourriture est consommée par les Néo-Brunswickois.

La nourriture est l'une des choses dont tous les Néo-Brunswickois ont besoin à chaque jour et la sécurité alimentaire est un enjeu qui affecte et unit tout le monde. L'UNF au NB croit que la mise en application d'un système agroalimentaire provincial qui encourage la production des aliments et leur achat à l'intérieur de la province va aider à créer un avenir économique plus stable pour nos fermiers, en plus de créer de l'emploi en milieu rural et soutenir les économies rurales. Ce projet de loi plaide pour un système d'étiquetage qui va identifier les aliments produits et transformés au Nouveau-Brunswick avec un minimum de 80 % des ingrédients produits ou récoltés dans notre province. Ceci va reconnaître le travail de nos fermiers et rendre ces produits plus faciles à identifier par les consommateurs, qu'ils achètent leur nourriture dans une épicerie ou au marché des fermiers.

L'Union nationale des fermiers au NB fait appel à tous les députés, en particulier à l'Honorable Rick Doucet, Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Aquaculture et des Pêches, de se lever et dire « oui » aux fermiers du Nouveau-Brunswick et à l'avenir de l'alimentation dans notre province.

—nfu—





# Losing Our Grip UPDATE:



## Executive Summary

### Introduction

In 2010 the National Farmers Union published a major report called *"Losing Our Grip: How Corporate Farmland Buy-up, Rising Farm Debt, and Agribusiness Financing of Inputs Threaten Family Farms and Food Sovereignty"*. With this update, we are revisiting that report to see how the situation has changed.

A recent *Agriculture and Agrifood Canada* survey confirmed that Canadians want and expect farmland to be owned and worked by the local farm families, individual farmers, producer co-ops and intentional communities who farm the land. But this system is under serious threat by corporations and investors –including some of our own pension funds – that are seeking greater control over Canada's agriculture so they can obtain a bigger share of the wealth that farmers produce.

As in 2010, the issue today is not only a matter of who owns the farmland, but of farmer autonomy and control. The men and women who produce our food need to have a stable, resilient economic base that will allow them to make good long-term decisions for their farms, our food system and our environment. When farmers are in a position to make long-term decisions they can put sustainability of ecosystems ahead of immediate revenues. Long-term thinking is also concerned with community-building, which enriches Canada's diverse land-based cultures. It provides both the ability and the motivation to retain the knowledge and skills of farming in the next generation. Long-term thinking also deals with protecting the land, water and atmosphere for future generations by acting now to slow down and reverse climate change.

### Land grabbing - the International Context

The food and financial crises of 2008 gave rise to international land-grabbing, with governments buying up farmland abroad to ensure future food supplies for their own populations and private investors buying farmland as a stable investment in the face of financial crises and food insecurity. Since 2010, pension funds have started to invest in farmland and now US pension fund manager, TIAA-CREF, is one of the world's largest institutional owners of farmland.

### Canadian farmland targeted by investors

Canadian farmland is an attractive to investors looking to protect their wealth in the context of low interest rates worldwide, reduced rates of economic growth, increasing political unrest and apparent instability of the global financial system. As the world population grows and climate instability increases these investors expect Canadian land and commodity prices to rise due to shortages of both.

Farmland values have risen dramatically since 2008. Average values of land and buildings range from \$881 per acre in Saskatchewan to \$8,417 per

acre in Ontario, up from \$453 per acre in Saskatchewan and \$4,593 per acre in Ontario. The weighted-average price of Canadian farmland and buildings was \$2,227 in 2013 compared to \$1,394 in 2008.

Between 2006 and 2011, Canada farmland has decreased by 7 million acres, or about 4%, to about 160 million acres. More than 300,000 acres of Class 1, 2 and 3 land disappeared from the prime growing areas bordered by Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario in the south and along the St. Lawrence River to Québec City. The loss of this farmland, which is capable of growing a wide variety of crops, undermines Canada's capacity for food sovereignty. Farmland destruction due to industrial and urban development heightens concerns regarding the shift in ownership of Canada's remaining farmland away from farm families and towards investment companies.

### Increasing consolidation of land holdings via farmland investment funds and corporate ownership

This report updates the profiles of several companies that have been involved in farmland investment since 2010, including Bonfield



Financial, Assiniboia Capital, Agcapita, Walton International and AGInvest Canada. All raise money for land acquisition by using Limited Partnership (LP) structures to sell higher risk, time-limited shares which can only be sold only to “accredited investors” – such as wealthy individuals and managers of financial institutions, pension funds, government agencies and mutual funds. Land assembled into large parcels by investment companies becomes unaffordable to all but the very wealthy and institutional investors such as pension funds. Farmland investment companies are shifting Canadian farmland ownership from actual farmers to a new class of absentee landlords.

This report also revisits a number of corporate investors such as Nilsson Bros. Inc, One Earth Farms and Broadacre, which in 2010 were acquiring large tracts of land for investment purposes and/or as part of their corporate growth strategy seeking economies of scale, market domination and vertical integration. Most have failed to meet their original expectations, apparently because they could not manage the risks and complexities involved in their business models.

### **Provincial farmland ownership laws**

In 2010, the NFU recommended Canada and its provinces enact farmland ownership restrictions to ensure that land is owned by residents of the province. Since then, we have seen some improvements in Quebec and PEI, and a major setback in BC, while laws remain the same in the other provinces. Saskatchewan is considering a review of its law in light of public concern about investment company purchases.

### **Farm Debt**

Farmers' control over the land they farm is also being eroded by the rapid increase in farm debt. Total farm debt rose from \$64 billion in 2010 to \$78 billion by mid-2013. Low interest rates, a short period of better crop prices and higher land values creates an environment conducive to increased borrowing by/lending to farmers, particularly when land can be used for security. Yet, as the market value of a farmer's land assets increase, each acre does not automatically produce more income. Lenders benefit both from rising land prices that allow them to write bigger loans and from the cost-price squeeze that induces farmers to borrow to increase production in hope that higher volume will compensate for narrower margins. The extended

farm income crisis means the demand for credit continues to grow at such a rate that, even with record low interest rates, the total dollars lent out to farmers and the average annual amount of interest farmers are paying continue to rise. If interest rates rise significantly, many farmers will be unable to meet their debt obligations.

The federal government supports farmer borrowing via Farm Credit Corporation (FCC) and via the Advance Payments Program. In 2001 FCC's mandate was changed, allowing it to lend to farm-related businesses that are not majority farmer-owned. Changes to the Advance Payments Program enacted via the Agriculture Growth Act omnibus bill will promote even more farm debt. While cash-strapped farmers may welcome easier access to operating loans, the new rules allow farmland investment companies to use the program. By making it a multi-year program, the door is opened to requiring other forms of collateral (to be defined in as-yet-unwritten regulations) instead of marketable inventory on hand. It is likely that security requirements will expand to include land, buildings and equipment not susceptible to unpredictable production risks. If, or when, interest rates increase and/or crop failure occurs, these productive assets could be vulnerable to repossession.

### **Input Financing**

Farm debt owed to private individuals and supply companies increased from approximately \$7.5 billion in 2010 to \$8.3 billion in 2013. Farmers lose autonomy when the size of loan payments and the conditions placed on loans constrain choices regarding how the farm is run. The integration of farm input suppliers with grain companies further diminishes farmers' independence. Debt pressure is also creating an environment for new types of lenders, such as largely unregulated “input streaming” that offers up-front money in return for several years of future crops at a fixed low price. This type of business is both an investment vehicle selling to investors what amounts to a financial derivative based on canola prices and a virtually unregulated type of private high-risk financing that is marketed to farmers as a source of money for inputs and other operational purchases.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Escalation of farm debt, the necessity for off-farm employment to supplement or replace

*(continued on page 14...)*



inadequate farm income for most farm families, and an erosion of the farm population as potential young farmers look elsewhere to earn their livelihood, are some of the outcomes of agriculture policy focused on increasing commodity exports. International trade agreements make it easier for corporations to source food ingredients globally from the cheapest sources, while forcing farmers into a downward spiral of ever lower prices. The destruction of orderly marketing institutions such as the single desk Canadian Wheat Board and the provincial hog marketing boards put farmers at a disadvantage when selling their products. The *Agricultural Growth Act's* amendments to Plant Breeders' Rights legislation will result in increased production costs as new exclusive rights granted to seed companies will enable them to charge higher prices for seed and increase their ability to collect royalties. The net result of these policy decisions is that an ever-increasing portion of the wealth created by farmers is captured by others, while farmers shoulder ever higher debt loads just to stay in business.

Canadian farmers risk losing the very land needed to produce our food. Younger farmers cannot afford to buy land and many are reluctant to take on the risks of high debt loads. Many older farmers cannot afford to retire unless they can pay off debts by selling their land. Globally, state-owned sovereign wealth funds seek productive farmland outside of their borders to produce food for their own populations, while private investors seek to buy farmland as a safe way to store their wealth and obtain rent income as they wait for food price increases they expect to result from the twin pressures of climate instability and population growth.

The current policy environment systematically pushes farmers out of business by promoting unaffordable land prices, ever-higher farm debt loads, and the concentration of land ownership in fewer hands. With an agricultural model that requires fewer farmers, there is less space for new farmers to occupy. Handing land, skills and knowledge from one generation to the next – an age-old cultural process – is being replaced with a system of financial transactions – a commercial process -- that shifts control over land to absentee landlords, investors and lenders and shifts the work of farming to tenants and/or transient, seasonal workers.

The NFU strongly recommends that Canada and its provinces and territories develop policies, programs, laws and regulations concerning land ownership, protection of farmland for agricultural use, farm financing and farm debt that will promote farmer autonomy and land ownership in the hands of producers. We see these measures as necessary steps to move this country towards food sovereignty.

The *Declaration of Nyéléni*, proclaimed by the world-wide organization of small farmers, La Via Campesina, defines food sovereignty as follows:

- *Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.*
- *Food sovereignty defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation.*
- *Food sovereignty offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers.*
- *Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.*
- *Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition.*
- *Food sovereignty ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food.*
- *Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.*<sup>i</sup>

—nfu—

<sup>i</sup> Declaration of Nyéléni, La Via Campesina, February 2007. <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/food-sovereignty-and-trade-mainmenu-38/262-declaration-of-nyele>





# A Report from the People's Summit

*Lima, Peru — December, 2014*

—by Dan Kretschmar, Region 3 (Ontario)



*People gather on either side of the Peruvian police in order to prepare for the march in defense of Mother Earth, December 10, 2015.*

"We don't have elders anymore, said Casey Camp-Horinek, an indigenous woman from Ponca Nation, in Oklahoma. "We watch people die instead of live." Casey was recounting the complete devastation of her people's historical lands and waters. Their livelihoods are under serious threat from high-volume horizontal fracking. Her story is hardly unique. Emotions run high. Oil companies inject "fracking fluid" into the ground in search of oil. This fluid is a toxic chemical cocktail that contaminates millions of gallons of groundwater. In addition, the oil companies remove freshwater from the water cycle.<sup>1</sup> Indigenous peoples all over the globe are feeling a sense of shock and loss. Multinational corporations are mining sub-soil minerals, extracting more and more from the earth, all the while polluting our air, water and soil and violating our sacred Mother Earth.

The capitalist system has no heart or soul, nor does it care for the people or the planet.

Camp-Horinek's presentation took place at the People's Summit, which took place at the same time as the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Lima, Peru. Corporate and government officials met at the COP 20 conference to create policies to supposedly address climate change. However, many leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), unions, indigenous groups, religious organizations and other social institutions<sup>1</sup> at the People's Summit are critical of the UN efforts. Leaders at the People's Summit countered that since the 1992 Rio Earth

<sup>1</sup> <http://ayniglobal.org/peoples-summit-2014-lima-peru-preparations-for-a-global-social-movement/>



Summit, the UN has promoted 'false solutions', which enable corporations in industrialized nations to profit from climate chaos. The COP 20 was a particularly important conference, because it precedes the COP 21 in Paris where the next global climate change agreement is to be decided.

The People's Summit serves as an alternative to the UNFCCC, with the people and organizations involved drafting an "alternative model to the current form of sustainable development as proposed by the United Nations".<sup>2</sup>

I attended the People's Summit as a representative of the National Farmers Union and La Via Campesina North America. The week-long event was eye-opening. It was set in a large park in downtown Lima, which is a sprawling city of more than nine million, in dozens of colorful shade tents. Vendors at the Summit offered a multitude of indigenous products and foods that showcased Peruvian culture. Nearby was a farmers' market and a biodiversity fair featuring multiple varieties of corn and other seeds that Peruvian peasants have been saving for generations. I found the People's Summit to be a simple, inviting, open and musical reflection of native and working people across the globe.

In contrast, Ministers of the Environment, politicians, lobby groups, lawyers and corporate representatives from 95 nations, guarded by the Peruvian military, met inside the big COP 20 complex. Their intent was to draft a climate change treaty for the COP 21 meeting which is set to take place in December, 2015 in Paris. At any one time, there were up to 15 separate meetings being held inside this fortress that the UN called the "Green Zone". The meetings of the COP 20 were highly secretive. Many long-time activists and reporters who had UN clearance as "observers" were denied access. Government and corporate officials inked out secret agreements behind locked doors.

The Peoples Summit drafted a paper critical of the many 'false solutions' to the climate crisis.<sup>2</sup> In addition, participants worked out a concrete plan of action. The most marginalized nations in the Global

South will suffer the most when 'carbon taxes' and other top-heavy rules and regulations become part of binding legislation.

Some of the proposed false solutions for climate change include geo-engineering, Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD/REDD+)<sup>3</sup> and high-tech "Climate-Smart Agriculture". Climate-Smart Agriculture includes proposals for an expansion of industrial agriculture, through a process that Northern governments and multinational corporations call "sustainable intensification".<sup>4</sup> Some of these false solutions were put into practice years ago. These techniques have undermined or destroyed the way of life and agricultural practices and lands of multitudes of peasants and indigenous peoples.

To summarize, while the COP agenda comes down to taxing behavior it does not like, it also enables corporations that can afford to pay carbon taxes or buy carbon credits to continue to pollute. The carbon market system aims to further commodify and privatize "Natural Capital", the environment and everything living in it. In this system, even people can be seen as expendable and disposable resources. The grotesque solutions of the COP will further destroy the way of life and the agricultural practices of peasants and indigenous peoples. From this COP and earlier COPs, it seems that most world leaders—especially those of highly industrialized countries—think that there is no alternative to the endless growth economy.

The People's Summit supports solutions based on agroecology and food sovereignty principles – principles which will ensure our survival and our right to live in a clean and healthy environment. The People's Summit called for a divestment from fossil fuel and a focus on reinvestment in clean and free energy technologies. Mother Earth and Father Sky are sick and we are too. The people of earth are very resilient. We can have a future to be proud to leave to future generations but we must act now. It is almost but not too late.

In the words of Eric Garner "I can't breathe": We are all being choked. Do you feel this way? Let us change the system, not the climate. Let us watch people live again. It is up to us to decide our future. —nfu—

<sup>2</sup> alternative model to the current form of sustainable development as proposed by the United Nations

1. <http://www.cleanwateraction.org/page/fracking-dangers>

2. <http://cumbrepuebloscop20.org/thelima-declaration-peoples-summit-climate-change/>

3. <http://www.redd-monitor.org/redd-an-introduction/>

4. <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/sustainable-peasants-agriculture-mainmenu-42/1670-unmasking-climate-smart-agriculture>



# UPDATE: NFU Branding Project

—by Alex Fletcher and the Brand Development Working Group



National Farmers Union  
Union Nationale des Fermiers



*There has been a lot of work and progress made on the NFU branding since the last Union Farmer Quarterly report. This is an update to let you know how the project is progressing.*

## LOGO:

A new approach to a familiar identity

As has been mentioned before, the brand development project has been strongly guided by the input of NFU members. The NFU convention in the Fall gave the Brand Development Workgroup (BDWG) a lot of feedback and guidance. It was clear to the working group members that we needed to take a step back and chart a new course for the logo design. We set off to find a better balance between maintaining the familiar, iconic NFU maple leaf and presenting a more dynamic and updated look.

The new logo consists of a stylized maple leaf with a palette of greens interwoven in a contemporary field layout with a traditional yellow gold that blends our history with a bright and diverse future. The multiple greens, yellow and blue help to signify our ecological attachment to the land, our dynamic membership and our diversity. The blue sky offers hopefulness, and the leaf initials combine old and new in a way that is unique and recognizable. The Board and the BDWG believe this logo will be a unifying force and offer an attractive feel for the NFU brand for the foreseeable future. To see the full colour version of the logo please go the NFU website at [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca).

An initial version of this logo was approved by the Board in January in time for Region 3 to meet funding and printing deadlines. We have received very positive feedback from Region 3 members.

Subsequently, there was discussion about the need for the NFU's brand to not only reflect that the NFU represents francophone members but also, to acknowledge that according to the NFU's Charter, French is an official language of the organization.

After much careful consideration, the Board approved a series of logos and wordmarks that range from being (1) fully bilingual, (2) semi-bilingual, or to being either (3a) French or (3b) English. The Board decided that the fully bilingual version should take priority for national publications but that the three different options would provide necessary flexibility.

## TAGLINE:

Articulating the core purpose of the NFU

Based on feedback from members at convention there was a clear preference for the new tagline option: *Sound Policies. Strong Communities. Sustainable Farms.* This tagline clearly articulates three core elements of the NFU. It emphasizes the importance of good policy for our food system and for farmers, it contextualizes farming and food as a key to community health and resiliency, and it indicates our focus on the long-term management and success of agriculture as it relates to social, economic and environmental sustainability. The Board of the NFU has officially adopted this as the NFU's new tagline. We are working on developing an equivalent or similar French version.

*(continued on page 18...)*





NEXT STEPS:

Moving forward, the BDWG will be working to implement the updated NFU brand and to develop templates for standardized applications. We will also be producing a Brand Standards Guide to help streamline and clarify how to use the NFU's brand.

A lot of time and energy has gone into this process and we are making good progress. Thank you to the many NFU staff and members who have contributed to and supported the brand development work. A special thanks to Interpares for the financial support that has made this work possible.

—nfu—

## 1. Fully Bilingual Logo and Wordmark



**National Farmers Union**  
**Union Nationale des Fermiers**



## 2. English Logo and Bilingual Wordmark



**Union Nationale des Fermiers**  
**National Farmers Union**

## 3a. French Logo and Wordmark



**Union** DEPUIS 1969  
**Nationale**  
**des Fermiers**

## 3b. English Logo and Wordmark



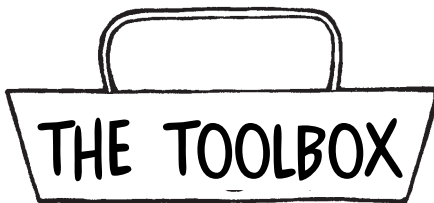
**National**  
**Farmers**  
**Union** EST. 1969

# Using Democratic Processes in the NFU and Beyond

*As NFU members and as citizens we are often called upon or feel compelled to take part in public processes, such as commodity group meetings, local government board meetings, agricultural stakeholder consultations or before Parliamentary Committees. With unfamiliar processes and a perspective that may be different than the majority of attendees, these meetings can feel intimidating. How can we confidently influence debate when we take our convictions and perspectives into the public arena?*

**A**t the 45<sup>th</sup> NFU Annual Convention in Saskatoon in November, 2014, Cory Ollikka and Karen Pedersen once again led convention attendees through a practical workshop on democratic processes. The workshop was titled "Process Democracy: How Tools Learned in the NFU Help Us to Participate in Public Processes". It was designed to connect the dots between the NFU Convention procedures and the opportunities we can create to influence decisions in other arenas.

Below are some of the tools we can all keep in our toolbox when we step out into political and public arenas. One of the challenges is knowing which tool we need to use in any given situation.



## Gauge the Room:

Do you want to be at the back of the room, near a microphone or next to the exit? If there are allies in the room, do you want to sit next to them or do you want to spread out?

## Know the Rules:

Each organization has its own rules and traditions. Try to find out what they are before the meeting. You may want to clarify the rules with the chair or organizer at the beginning of the meeting, either for your own purposes or to ensure others in the room are also familiar with the meeting procedures.

## Pick Your Battles:

You can win the debate or you can challenge the process, but it is difficult to accomplish both. Try to find and attract allies rather than alienate them. Keep in mind, sometimes we need to lose the small battles in order to win the war.

## Identify Yourself:

Stating your name and your affiliation anchors your ideas with a person or organization and helps make sure your comments are remembered. Identifying yourself also helps prevent people from running away with the meeting.

## Motions Anchor Will to Action:

In order to have an effective action from a discussion, you need a statement answering the who, what, when, where and how that action is going to happen – even in a consensus model process.

## Stating for the Record:

It is never too late to say important things. Even if the gathering does not go the direction you wanted it to, it is still worth getting your comments and ideas on the record.

## In Conclusion:

- *Know what you want to achieve.*
- *Use the basic tools in the toolbox.*
- *Find and attract allies rather than alienate.*
- *Maximize strengths/resources.*
- *Hopefully move a step forward.*
- *Be patient and remember that democracy is a slow process.*

Karen and Cory's full presentation is posted at <http://www.nfu.ca/about/45th-annual-convention>.

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# National Farmers Union and Union Paysanne issue Joint Statement on the passage of Bill C-18

On Tuesday, February 25, 2015, Bill C-18, the *Agricultural Growth Act*, became law in Canada when it received Royal Assent. This omnibus bill amends nine different agricultural acts and brings Canada's Plant Breeders' Rights Act under the UPOV '91 regime. In March, 2015 the National Farmers Union and Union Paysanne issued a joint statement addressing Canada's adoption of the UPOV '91 Plant Breeders' Rights regime. Both organizations invited their allies to sign the statement. To see of list of sign-ons or for a French copy of the joint statement please go the NFU website at [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca).

Union Paysanne and the NFU are the two Canadian members of La Via Campesina. According to their Policy Statement, *"the Union Paysanne promotes, on the one hand, food sovereignty-based agriculture aimed at providing healthy and diversified food to our population, while respecting nature, soil, animals, the environment and communities; on the other hand, our agriculture must be based on land occupancy, in order to maintain a viable countryside with numerous small farmers."*

## Groups denounce Canada's adoption of UPOV '91 Plant Breeders' Rights regime with passing of Bill C-18, the Agricultural Growth Act

On February 25, 2015 Bill C-18, the *Agricultural Growth Act*, received Royal Assent and became law. The undersigned organizations deplore the fact that the federal government, with the support of the Liberal Party, has passed this omnibus bill, which will bring Canada's Plant Breeders' Rights Act into the UPOV '91 Plant Breeders' Rights regime when the law comes into force.

UPOV '91 is not needed for innovation or trade. Canada can meet its international trade obligations under the WTO with a "sui generis" (unique, or "made in Canada") seed law instead. In other countries UPOV '91 has helped corporations more than farmers. The UPOV system gives priority to the interests of a small number of global corporations that dominate commercial plant breeding. The majority of the world's 196 countries do not use UPOV, and to date, only 52 of the 72 that do are under the UPOV '91 system. Chile recently abandoned its proposed UPOV '91 law and there is strong effective opposition in many other countries that are considering UPOV '91.

### **By passing the Agricultural Growth Act and adopting UPOV '91, the federal government does the following:**

- enables greater control over seed by corporations;
- increases the ability of seed corporations to collect royalties from farmers;
- allows for end-point royalty collection on the whole crop, vastly increasing the potential for companies to obtain higher revenues from farmers;
- reduces seed corporation costs by facilitating seed imports and thus the sale of varieties already developed for foreign markets and other countries' growing conditions instead of developing suitable varieties for the Canadian market;
- turns farmers' right to save seed into a privilege and enables it to be limited or taken away completely by regulation;

*(continued on page 21...)*





- exposes farmers who save seed for use on their own farms to court cases because the law does not define the term “stocking” (storing seed for future use), for example. Seed corporations will sue farmers to seek favourable court rulings on the interpretation of the new law. Court cases are very expensive and put farmers at a disadvantage in terms of mounting a defense, therefore, they can be used as a threat to induce farmers to purchase seed annually instead of saving and planting their own farm-saved seed;
- given the current government’s policy of de-funding public plant breeding of important cereal crops, the Agricultural Growth Act reduces farmers’ access to potential new varieties that would have been developed by Agriculture Canada researchers by supporting a system where only those new varieties that fit corporate goals (such as seed that depends on purchased inputs) will be commercialized;
- gives seed companies a strong incentive to de-register older varieties that are in the public domain or under UPOV ’78 to increase their market for new varieties subject to UPOV ’91. Farmers who continue using older de-registered varieties for agronomic reasons may also become ineligible for farm support programs that require the use of registered seed.
- increases the power imbalance between farmers and corporations by promoting transfer of wealth from farmers to corporations via royalties. This will increase the concentration of ownership in agricultural supply chain (seed companies also sell crop inputs and/or purchase grain); and
- it allows corporations to control and collect royalties on future varieties developed by others if they are deemed to be “essentially derived” from a PBR protected variety. In light of the government’s policy to sell publicly developed germplasm, this law facilitates the privatization of Canada’s heritage of plant genetic resources.



Many of the organizations that were speaking loudly in favour of the *Agricultural Growth Act* were closely associated with the corporate seed industry, dependent on federal government funding, and/or receiving financial support from seed corporations. (see *What is behind the Partners in Innovation PR campaign?* <http://www.nfu.ca/issue/what-behind-partners-innovation-pr-campaign> )

We, therefore, call upon the Government of Canada to not ratify the UPOV '91 Convention.

We further call on all federal political parties:

- to commit to repealing the amendments to the Plant Breeders’ Right Act;
- to maintain Canada under UPOV ’78;
- to bring in a Farmers Seed Act that will ensure Canadian farmers control our seed; and
- to recommit to support for plant breeding done in the public interest.

—nfu—

**The NFU's Fundamental Principles for a Farmers Seed Act are available at:**

**<http://www.nfu.ca/issue/stop-bill-c-18> .**



# NFU Response to the Ontario Government's Pollinator Health Proposal

On November 25, 2014 the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), jointly released a *Pollinator Health: A Proposal for Enhancing Pollinator Health and Reducing the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides in Ontario* discussion paper. The discussion paper outlined two key

strategies to enhance the health of pollinators, including both honey bees and native pollinators, in Ontario. The first strategy focuses on improving pollinator health through activities such as increasing pollinator habitat and increasing our collective understanding of the vital role that pollinators play. The second, more controversial, strategy is a proposal to regulate the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed with a target of reducing the use of treated seed by 80 percent by 2017.

The public was invited to submit comments on the discussion paper and the proposed action plan and regulation up until January 26, 2015 through the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Registry. In a statement released on March 10, 2015, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Hon. Jeff Leal says that over 50,000 written comments were received through the EBR registry and more than 400 people participated in consultation sessions<sup>1</sup>. Representatives from the National Farmers Union-Ontario attended all three in-person public consultation sessions plus two invitation-only stakeholder sessions. Additional public consultations will take place in the spring and summer of 2015, when more details of the neonicotinoid regulation become available.

In a press release published by the NFU on January 26, 2015, Region 3 Coordinator, Karen Eatwell said, "Our submission reiterates our support for targeting the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed to only those acres where the need can be demonstrated. We also outline some of the challenges likely to occur when implementing the proposed regulation. Our input provides the government with practical recommendations on how to overcome these challenges so that implementation can proceed smoothly."

Below is a summary of the National Farmers Union-Ontario (NFU-O) January 23, 2015 submission to the Ontario EBR Registry on the *Pollinator Health* discussion paper.



**A**s farmers in Ontario, the members of NFU-O are deeply committed to working with nature to produce healthy food and to protect and enhance biodiversity within and around our farms. By working with and building our own knowledge and skills of agro-ecology we strive to protect the many organisms, including bees and wild pollinators, which provide economic benefits to our farms. Based on our commitments above, the NFU-O supports the approach taken by the Government of Ontario to restrict the use of neonicotinoid-treated corn and soybean seed to those acres which can demonstrate the need for treated seed and the commitment to increase the practice of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Some of the specific comments/recommendations on the proposed regulation submitted by the NFU-O:

- The Government of Ontario should increase extension services to farmers on alternatives to neonicotinoid insecticides to control pests, on how to evaluate for the presence of early season pests and on how to increase on-farm biodiversity to provide habitat for pollinators.
- The Ontario Pesticide Safety Course should be updated to incorporate more information on IPM and the protection of pollinators.
- More publicly funded field trials are needed to assess yields from crops grown with and without neonicotinoid seed treatments, other chemical pest controls and non-chemical alternatives.
- Organizations, like the NFU, need to provide information to farmers and the public on how to increase biodiversity across the landscape and to provide habitat for bees and native pollinators.

(continued on page 23...)



- Ontario grain farmers may lose yield, quality and income and will have more paper work under this proposed regulation but with no option to re-coup the income losses or additional costs.
- A positive aspect of the proposed regulation is that it allows the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments when the need is identified and verified. It is not a moratorium.
- Seed companies will need to make untreated corn seed available to farmers, which may be a challenge since a significant percentage of corn seed is treated outside the province. Farmers need to know they will have the best varieties available as untreated seed.
- It is not always possible to predict pest outbreaks. Neonicotinoid treated seed is insurance against unexpected outbreaks. Farmers need information on what pest control alternatives are available, if monitoring indicates low to no risk of early season pests but an outbreak occurs after planting.
- All chemical pesticides have implications for the environment. There needs to be more public interest research and promotion of alternative and ecological farming practices which do not depend on the use of chemical pesticides. This could include research and extension information on more diverse and longer crop rotations and increasing the use of cover crops.
- Many urban farmers and non-farmers support the proposed regulation. The risk of lower yield and quality will be carried by grain farmers. OMAFRA has seen its budget cut year and after year. County OMAFRA extension people have disappeared. Without independent OMAFRA-funded extension people, farmers have had to rely more and more on company representatives for information on pest control and other extension support. The public needs to return funding to OMAFRA in order for this regulation to succeed – funding that can be used for extension, for developing and delivering an IPM course, for guiding farmers through the documentation required and for farmer-training on scouting for pests.
- The NFU supports the use of the precautionary principle when considering the impact of pesticides, including the regulation of neonicotinoid-treated seed.
- When this regulation comes into force, Ontario's grain should be branded as neonicotinoid-free, with the aim to make it the preferred product in domestic and export markets.

The NFU-O's full submission on the Pollinator Health proposal is available at:

<http://www.nfu.ca/story/enhancing-pollinator-health-and-reducing-use-neonicotinoid-pesticides-ontario> .

The NFU's submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on The Importance of Bees and Bee Health, May 1, 2014 is available at: <http://www.nfu.ca/policy/2014> .

—nfu—

1 Susan Mann, *Pollinator Health Blueprint launched*, March 9, 2015. [www.betterfarming.com](http://www.betterfarming.com)

*We Remember ...*

## NAOMI LYNN FRIESEN

**August 14, 1954 - February 19, 2015**



Taken too soon at just 60 years of age, Naomi Lynn Friesen died peacefully on February 19, 2015 after a series of strokes caused by pancreatic cancer. It was a shock to all, as Naomi took very good care of her health, walking an hour a day, doing Pilates at Saskatoon Pilates twice weekly and Tai Chi with the Saskatoon Toaist Tai Chi Club. An artist in heart and soul, Naomi earned her living in music – as a voice teacher, vocal performer, choral conductor and composer.

Naomi was predeceased by her father, Dick Friesen and her beloved aunt and music mentor, Kay Martens. Her life will be remembered and celebrated by her beloved partner and wife Carla Roppel, step-son Shane (Marthe) and grandchildren Anna and Maggie; mother Helen Friesen; siblings Rick (June), Don (Norma), Time (Marnie) and numerous nieces, nephews and great nephews, and many dear friends.



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## The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

*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 to 21 years old, and 21 to 30 years old. 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. **APPLICANTS CAN ONLY WIN ONCE PER AGE CATEGORY.**
- The theme of this year's essay is: Soil - Our Common Ground.**
- Deadline for entries is November 1, 2015.
- The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2015.
- 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: 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.*