

NATIONAL FARMERS UNION



Union Farmer Quarterly

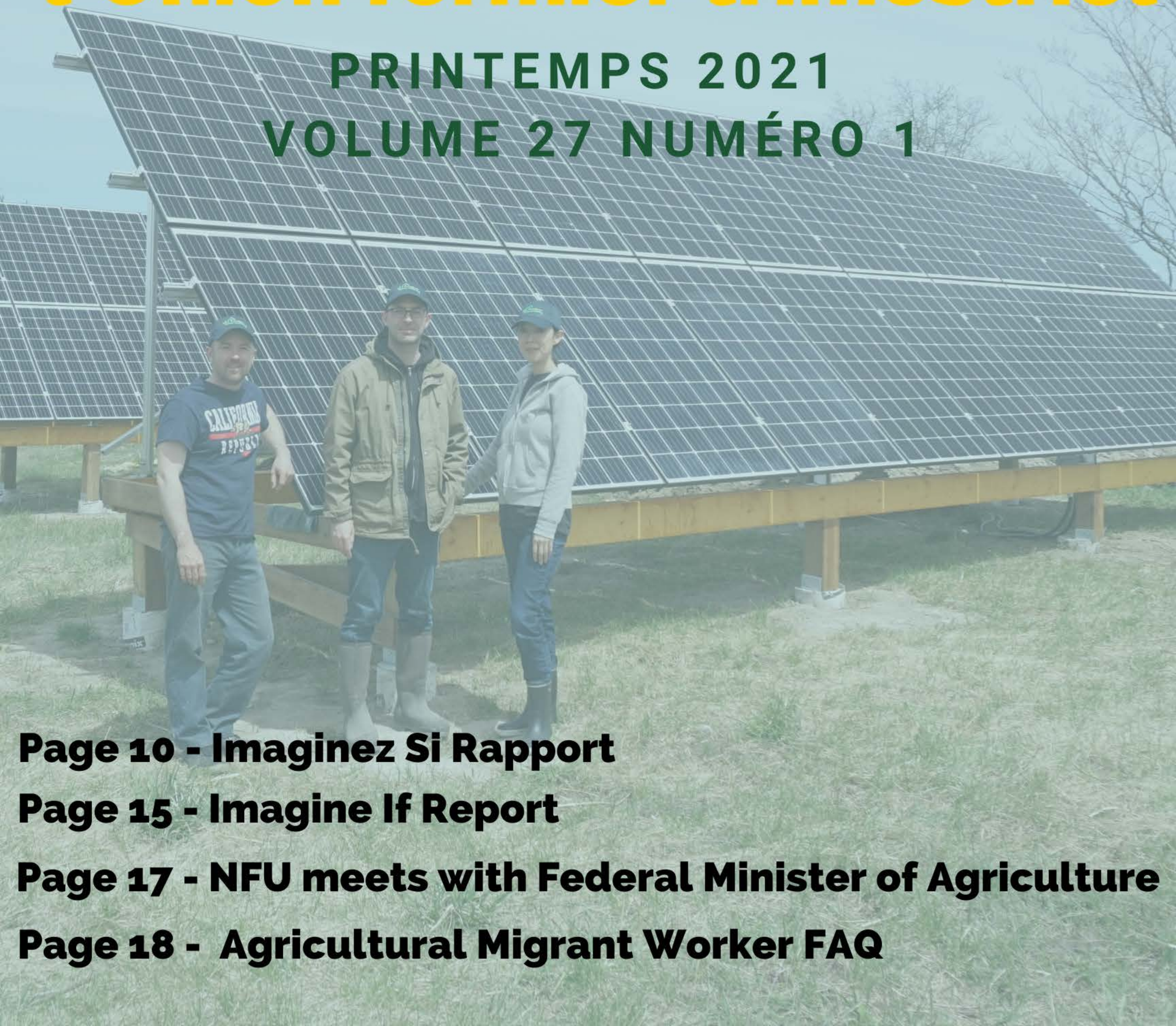
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A Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee, – by *Ann Slater*



During a discussion on seeds and seed regulations at my southwestern Ontario Local in late March, former NFU VP (Policy) Cam Goff said that multinationals always play the long game – they have time and money on their side. Certainly, their lobby efforts are currently leading to numerous proposed changes to regulations, guidance documents and institutions created in the interest of farmers and the public. The past few months the NFU has been kept busy submitting briefs and pulling together background information to inform members on various consultations and surveys – consultations and surveys on proposed changes generally pushed forward by multinational seed and grain corporations wanting to strengthen their power and control.

By the time you read this you may still have time to submit comments to Canadian Grain Act review. There is more information on the NFU's concerns and details on how to submit comments in this UFQ. Even if the April 30

deadline is past, you can still write to your MP and other elected officials to let them know the important role of the Canadian Grain Commission in protecting the interests of farmers and maintaining quality standards for Canadian grain. You do have time to submit comments on Health Canada's proposed new guidance for Novel Food Regulations which could exempt some genetically engineered foods from regulation. Read on for more details.

It is not just multinational agribusiness companies and their lobby groups that are able to play the long game. The NFU does not have the financial resources of those organizations, but we have passion, commitment, intelligence and a profound understanding of how farmers' interests can be protected when governments put the interests of farmers and the public first – a deep knowledge readily shared from member to member.

This winter/early spring has seen the release of a new NFU report, *Imagine If ... A Vision of A Near-*

Zero-Emission Farm and Food System for Canada; members meeting with Minister Bibeau and other MPs to discuss our key short-term recommendations to reduce emissions from agriculture; and ongoing work with Farmers for Climate Solutions (FCS). But within the NFU, this work is not new. I recall the 2003 appearance of NFU members Cory Ollikka and Janet Duncan before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry's study on the impact of climate change on Canada's agriculture, forests and rural communities because it took place as I was just beginning my time as a women's advisory committee member. By then, the NFU had already been working on climate change for a number of years. With solutions in hand, created out of our strong analysis and commitment to putting the interests of farmers and the public first, it may be that the stars are aligning for the NFU and FCS to have a major impact on government policies and programs aimed at reducing agricultural GHG emissions.

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A Message from **Katie Ward**, *NFU National President*

There's a great sense of excitement and positive momentum within the NFU right now. We are coming out of the darker days of winter having worked together on our annual NFU Days membership drive with great success and a slew of regional webinars and NFUniversity courses under our belts. Members of the Climate Committee have been hard at work meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and her staff, as well as many Members of Parliament across the political spectrum to

advance the cause of climate-friendly agriculture.

Members at large and committee members have participated in government consultations on seeds and regulations concerning migrant workers. The NFU has released a new report, *Imagine If*, which takes a look at the positive future we could enact if we take strong action against the climate crisis. This year's series of Regional Conventions have begun, and it's very encouraging to see how engaged members are driving the policy work of the NFU from the ground up.

As we move into Spring at a time which traditionally signifies new life and energy – and I can relate since we're about to start lambing here on the farm – it is

encouraging to see the release of a positive decision from the Supreme Court of Canada on the constitutionality of the Greenhouse Gas Pricing Act. In finding the GGPA constitutional, the Court has cleared the way for Canada to move forward once again. The time for spinning our wheels is done, now Canada needs to move forward together to tackle the climate crisis. The NFU is leading the way, and your democratic voices calling for government action that supports farmers' efforts to lead through climate friendly agriculture are being heard!

In solidarity,
Katie Ward

Un message de **Katie Ward**, présidente nationale de l'UNF

Il y a un grand sentiment d'excitation et d'élan positif au sein de l'UNF en ce moment. Nous sortons des jours sombres de l'hiver après avoir travaillé ensemble sur notre campagne annuelle d'adhésion aux Journées de l'UNF avec un grand succès et une série de webinaires régionaux et de cours UniversitéNF qui ont été achevés avec un grand nombre de participants. Les membres du comité sur le climat ont travaillé fort pour rencontrer le ministre de l'Agriculture et son personnel, ainsi que de nombreux députés de tous les horizons politiques, afin de faire avancer la cause d'une agriculture respectueuse du climat.

Les membres en général et les membres des comités ont participé à des consultations

gouvernementales sur les semences et les règlements concernant les travailleurs migrants. L'UNF a publié un nouveau rapport, *Imaginez si*, qui jette un regard sur l'avenir positif que nous pourrions mettre en place si nous prenions des mesures énergiques contre la crise climatique. La série de conventions régionales de cette année a commencé, et il est très encourageant de voir comment les membres engagés dirigent le travail politique de l'UNF depuis la base.

Alors que nous entrons dans le printemps, une période qui signifie traditionnellement une nouvelle vie et de l'énergie – et je peux en témoigner puisque nous sommes sur le point de commencer l'agnelage ici à la

ferme – il est encourageant de voir la publication d'une décision positive de la Cour suprême du Canada sur la constitutionnalité de la Loi sur la tarification des gaz à effet de serre. En jugeant la LPGES constitutionnelle, la Cour a permis au Canada d'aller de l'avant une fois de plus. Le temps de perdre son temps est terminé, le Canada doit maintenant avancer ensemble pour s'attaquer à la crise climatique. L'UNF est à la tête du mouvement, et vos voix démocratiques appelant à une action gouvernementale qui soutienne les efforts des fermiers pour mener une agriculture respectueuse du climat sont entendues !

En solidarité,
Katie Ward



A Message from **Bess Legault**, *NFU Women's president*

I was told to work hard and dream big and found our society provided open doors for me as a female student, intern, employee, farm business owner, and now political leader with a voice. Until recently, I have had a hard time understanding why women's rights still needed to be struggled for, with full respect for the countless voices who fought for women's rights before me. We're equal now right? I now see that was a narrow and privileged perspective. Thanks to the strength of NFU women leaders who have sat in diverse roles within our board, committees and staff, I now see it isn't simply

about equality – it is about honouring our differences, the true value of sharing our opinion and considering all angles when making decisions. This union is truly accomplished when we find middle ground.. As a mother and life partner, daughter, sister and friend I see how the “women's” perspective puts the family farm and people of all backgrounds and realities first. It is not being afraid to call out the economic “winners” in agriculture for their role in driving our high input centralized food system, and it is about remembering to take the time to invest in relationships as a core to taking care of our communities, families and selves.

This world is fast paced but we are each other's resource. I encourage you to continue to share ecological successes discovered on your farm with your neighbour

or to reach out to a local agricultural association or university to see if they have funding for farmer led extension. Let's all do our part to build relationships beyond our own farms and shed light on the agroecological future we need to support Canada's family farms to regenerate our soil and food systems.

I encourage everyone to take a NFU university class and stick around at the end to connect with NFU members across the country. If you are a woman who is part of a farm in Canada, we want to hear from you. Please email nfu@nfu.ca to be added to our Women's Caucus mailing list and please join our next caucus meeting.

In Cooperation,
Bess Legault
Women's President

Un message de **Bess Legault**, présidente des femmes de l'UNF

On m'a dit de travailler fort et de rêver en grand ; j'ai découvert que notre société offrait des portes ouvertes pour moi, une femme, en tant qu'étudiante, stagiaire, employée, propriétaire d'une entreprise agricole et maintenant en tant que dirigeante politique avec une voix. Jusqu'à récemment, j'avais de la difficulté à comprendre pourquoi il fallait encore se battre pour les droits des femmes, tout respect donné aux innombrables voix qui se sont battues pour les droits des femmes avant moi. Nous sommes égales maintenant ? Je vois maintenant qu'il s'agissait d'une perspective limitée et privilégiée. Grâce à la force des femmes dirigeantes de l'UNF qui ont remplis une variété de rôles sur le CA, les comités et le personnel, je peux maintenant voir que l'égalité n'est pas simple – c'est une question d'honorer nos différences, la valeur réelle de partager notre opinion et de considérer tous les angles dans la prise de décisions. Cette union

est vraiment atteinte lorsque nous trouvons un terrain d'entente. En tant que mère et partenaire de vie, fille, sœur et amie, je vois comment la perspective des « femmes » fait passer en premier la ferme familiale, les gens de tous les horizons et toutes les réalités. Il ne faut pas avoir peur de montrer du doigt les « gagnants » économiques en agriculture à cause de leur rôle de force motrice axée sur notre système alimentaire centralisé et avide d'intrants ; il s'agit de se rappeler de prendre le temps d'investir dans les relations comme valeur de base pour prendre soin de nos communautés, de nos familles et de nous-mêmes.

Ce monde est dynamique, mais nous sommes la ressource pour les uns les autres. Je vous encourage de continuer à partager les succès écologiques découverts sur votre ferme avec votre voisin ou bien de contacter un organisme agricole local ou collège agricole local pour voir s'ils ont des fonds pour des

services de vulgarisation menés par les fermiers. Faisons tous notre part pour bâtir des relations au-delà de nos propres fermes et jeter de la lumière sur l'avenir agricole dont nous avons besoin pour soutenir les fermes familiales du Canada afin de régénérer nos sols et nos systèmes alimentaires.

J'encourage tout le monde de suivre un cours de l'Université NF et rester à la fin pour connecter avec des membres de l'UNF à travers le pays. Si vous êtes une femme qui fait partie d'une ferme au Canada, nous aimerions recevoir de vos nouvelles. Veuillez envoyer un courriel à nfu@nfu.ca pour être ajoutée à notre liste d'envois du Caucus des femmes et veuillez vous joindre à notre prochaine rencontre du caucus.

En coopération,
Bess Legault
Présidente des femmes



A Message from **Jessie MacInnis**, *NFU Youth Vice-President*

The NFU Youth have been busy this winter. In February, we held an online gathering - eighteen folks participated. We had a good time catching up and decided that more frequent meetups would be welcome as a way to share our unique experiences and stay in touch.

A youth-led podcast project is coming along quickly, as a dedicated group have been meeting weekly to put together the 8-episode series. The team has sought input from an advisory committee made up of a diverse range of young farmers from across the country. They are playing a key role in determining the themes and vision for each episode. The recording process is just about to begin. We cannot wait to share it with all of you!

Four NFU youth members – myself, Ayla Fenton, Stuart Oke, and Terran Giacomini (who helped facilitate) – had the opportunity to participate in the first Advanced Course in Agroecology, co-hosted by the People's Agroecology Project (<https://whyhunger.org/our-work/resources/agroecology/>) and the University of Vermont. It was a dynamic 30-hour course where the nearly 40 participants were encouraged to deeply explore agroecology as it relates to their farms, communities, and organizations. Despite geographic barriers, the ability to share with others in Puerto Rico, the American South, New York, and different Indigenous Nations led to rich and powerful conversations.

Happy Spring everyone! After what felt like an unprecedentedly long winter, the first blooms, shoots, and sounds are more welcome than ever. I hope you are finding solace in the changing of seasons and increasing warmth. Coincidentally, both Stuart Oke (Youth President) and I recently had the privilege and opportunity to move onto our own respective farms and are gearing up for our first seasons growing vegetables on freshly turned pastures. It has been fun sharing our experiences and excitement from afar.

Un message de **Jessie MacInnis**, vice-président des jeunes de l'UNF

Bon printemps à tous et toutes ! Après ce qui a semblé être un long hiver sans précédent, les premières floraisons, les premières pousses et les premiers semis printaniers sont plus bienvenus que jamais. J'espère que vous êtes réconfortés par le changement des saisons et la chaleur qui augmente. Par coïncidence, Stuart Oke (président des jeunes) et moi avons eu le privilège et l'opportunité de déménager sur nos propres fermes et nous préparons nos premières saisons à cultiver des légumes sur des pâturages fraîchement labourés. Ce fut un plaisir de partager nos expériences et notre enchantement à distance. Les jeunes de l'UNF ont été occupés cet hiver. En février, nous avons organisé une rencontre –

dix-huit personnes y ont participé. Nous avons eu du plaisir à revoir des amis et nous avons décidé que ce serait bien d'avoir des rencontres plus fréquentes comme moyen de partager nos expériences uniques et garder contact.

Un projet de podcast mené par les jeunes s'en vient d'ici peu puisqu'un groupe dévoué se rencontre à chaque semaine pour organiser une série de 8 épisodes. L'équipe a demandé l'aide d'un comité avisé composé d'une variété de jeunes fermiers à travers le pays. Ils jouent un rôle clé pour déterminer les thèmes et la vision pour chaque épisode. Le processus d'enregistrement va bientôt commencer. Nous sommes impatients de partager ça avec vous tous !

Quatre jeunes membres de l'UNF—moi-même, Ayla Fenton, Stuart Oke et Terran Giacomini (qui a aidé à animer)—ont eu l'opportunité de participer à la première Formation avancée en agroécologie, coanimée par le « People's Agroecology Project » (<https://whyhunger.org/our-work/resources/agroecology/>) et l'Université du Vermont. Ce fut un cours dynamique de 30 heures où les quelques 40 participants furent encouragés à explorer en profondeur l'agroécologie en ce qui a trait à leurs fermes, aux communautés et aux organisations. Malgré les obstacles géographiques, la capacité de partager avec d'autres à Puerto Rico, en Amérique du Sud, à New York et avec différentes nations autochtones a mené à de riches et fructueuses conversations. Je souhaite à tous et toutes un bon début de vos saisons agricoles !

Welcome!

Many new members joined the NFU this winter. If that is *you*, we offer you a warm welcome! We hope you will find, as we have, that the NFU is a wonderful community of farmers and eaters who are working together for farmers, their goals, and a farm and food system that works for Canadians. The Union Farmer Quarterly hopefully gives you a taste of things happening at the NFU, from the detailed, evidence-based policy work to social connections to solidarity.

We invite you to find something that excites you and jump in. Perhaps you are interested in encouraging young farmers? International solidarity with farmers

around the world? BIPOC farmers or Indigenous solidarity? Migrant worker rights? Securing farmers' right to save and plant their own seeds; rotational grazing or climate change and agriculture? Perhaps your skill set is photography or building relationships?

Our work is driven by the energy of our members and there is a role for everyone of all ages. As you are willing and able, please join in! If you are actively farming, you may not have time until winter, but keep it in mind -- we'll be here with a warm NFU welcome!

Do you want to get more involved?

The NFU has several policy action committees where members discuss relevant policy matters, and in the process, develop expertise they can contribute to the NFU as a whole. Committees may provide recommendations to the NFU Board and develop resolutions for discussion at annual conventions. They can set up working groups or subcommittees to support research on specific aspects of the Committee's work. Committee members may have opportunities to be media contacts or spokespeople in government processes to advance the NFU's work in the area. The Committees can also organize actions to promote NFU positions to other organizations, governments and the general public. Participating in a committee is a great way to get to know other NFU members who share your interests, to deepen your own knowledge and to bring forward your personal experience and perspectives to inform our policy work.

We currently have committees working on:

- Seed
- Livestock
- Grain marketing and transportation
- Climate Change
- Trade
- Supply Management
- Farmland ownership

To get involved, email Cathy at holtslander@nfu.ca and let her know which committee you are interested in, and she will add you to their contact list.

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**Region 1: District 1 (PEI)
National Board
Representative
Byron Petrie**

Byron Petrie farms flowers, herbs, and mixed vegetables with his wife Carina Phillips and his little son Remy on the Byrne's road in Prince Edward Island. Growing up Byron moved all over eastern Canada. Back in the early 2000's, he got a taste for working outside as a bike messenger in Montreal. Shortly thereafter he met his wife, Carina Phillips. From cycling he took an interest in fabrication and originally wanted to build bikes, so he took a course in welding at Rosemount Technical College in Montreal. Only two days after

An Introduction to Some NFU Leaders

In this issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly, we once again introduce you to some of the NFU members who have stepped forward to take on leadership roles. Enjoy learning about the journeys these members have taken to their current farms and their decisions to become more involved in the NFU.

graduation things took a change again when Byron and Carina moved to Prince Edward Island to be closer to friends and family. While Byron was looking for welding work, Carina reached out to local farmers in search of part-time work as a farm labourer. In March, 2011 there was a fortuitous meeting between Carina, Byron, and Reg Phelan. As things would happen, Carina ended up working at a greenhouse in Charlottetown while Byron ended up working for Reg that summer. During that summer Byron succumbed to the farming bug. Reg introduced them to not only organic agriculture but also to the culture and history of the island. Originally the young couple planned to find some land and homestead, but it became clear

that they were called to do more – to continue where Reg left off – taking care of the land, using regenerative practices to grow fresh and healthy food for their surrounding communities. But more than that it became clear to Byron there was more to do than just farm. As he learned more about the history of agriculture, as in many facets of life, there has been a concerted effort by a greedy few to exploit the many for power, money, and control. This education was thanks, in part, to his introduction to the National Farmer Union by Reg Phelan. As Byron has been eager to connect, learn, question, and understand the farming world, he has worked with the NFU ever since.



**Region 1 Youth Advisory
Committee
Rebecca MacInnis**

I am a first generation farmer and run Spring Tide Farm with my sister, Jessie. I grew up, began my farming journey, and now own a farm in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia). Farming piqued my interest because it simultaneously allowed me to become more self-sufficient and more community minded.

When not growing food, I can often be found preserving, transforming, sharing, or consuming it. The deep connection to place and seasons that farming provides is what has kept me coming back. Turning the farm and the business into a home and a lifestyle (while maintaining healthy boundaries to protect my mental health) is an exciting opportunity that I am privileged to have.

This will be the first season for Spring Tide Farm in its new location - 140 acres of field and forest in Lapland, Nova Scotia. Together Jessie and I grow mixed vegetables and flowers on our small-scale, agroecologically driven, market garden that we hope to transition to organic. We are starting small while we

develop infrastructure and will be cultivating just over half an acre to feed our 45 person community supported agriculture program. Harvesting will take place from July until December. I aspire for the farm to work in harmony with our natural environment as much as possible. In our context, that will look like working around granite boulders while developing permanent beds on a macro level and feeding our soil biology with local amendments and green manure on a micro level. While I cannot wait to taste the first radish from our new fields, the flower garden holds a special place in my heart and I am most looking forward to seeing the colourful blooms pop! I love the way that food brings people together and am excited to grow my business with community in mind!



**Roger Rivest,
Region 3 (Ontario)
NFU Board
Representative**

Roger Rivest grew up on a mixed farm in Staples ON. He graduated with a Food Technology degree from St.Clair College. There after

Roger worked for Delmonte Foods Research Facility in Burlington ON for 4 years until he came back to the family farm in 1973 to farm with his father. He worked 700 acres conventionally and 150 sow farrow to finish by the year of 1980. Roger started transitioning one farm to organic in 1987. He then transitioned and certified an additional 100 acres for the next six years, also starting a CSA in 1991 through 1993 for restaurants, resorts, and Whole Foods in Ann Arbor.

In 1999, his son Jeff joined the farm and expanded to 900 acres of certified organic cash crops. He also started marketing organic grains for farmers he mentored, and marketed for Keystone Grains

Ltd, a division of Legumix Walker Canada Ltd. Roger has been a long time member of Canadian Organic Growers and a board member of Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario.

In 2012, Roger Rivest Marketing was started based out of Tilbury. Nature Lane Farms Organic Fertilizer opened in June 2014 out of Stoney Point. Both businesses closed in December, 2018 when Roger retired. After a year Roger got bored, and built a greenhouse and expanded his garden to two acres to supply health food stores and restaurants in Chatham and Wheatley. He also raises pasture raised meat chickens and layers.



**Karen Klassen, Region 5
(Manitoba) Women's
Adisory Committee**

Karen Klassen grew up on the family farm near Manitou in southern Manitoba. She spent most of her adult life living and working abroad primarily in London, UK and Melbourne, Australia. She moved back to Canada in 2018 to apprentice with her dad on the family farm. She comes to farming with a background in nutrition science and dietetics, specializing in clinical work with people with HIV

for over a decade. She brings her passion for social justice and love of data analysis to the farm. She is working on evaluating the impacts of the changes to regenerative and organic production systems that she and her dad are making.

Being on the farm and in nature has renewed her connection with the origin of food and how we can meaningfully play a role in improving the food supply by

rejuvenating the soil, which in turn will improve the environment and the food growing in it. She is also on a journey to quasi-self-sufficiency with a large garden and a growing orchard, both cultivated and wild. She is a farmer ambassador for the Farmers for Climate Solutions coalition, works as the Program Manager for the Manitoba Organic Alliance and is now excited to be a part of the NFU.



**LEAVE A
LEGACY!**

A legacy donation to the
NFU or National
Farmers Foundation
empowers the next
generation.

Contact Mara Shaw at
shaw@nfu.ca to discuss
estate donations.



Betty Ternier Daniels,
Region 6 (Saskatchewan)
Advisory Committee

I live with my husband on a farm in northwest Saskatchewan which has been in my family for four generations. In the early 1930's, both sets of my immigrant grandparents left their drought-stricken prairie farms in southern Saskatchewan for greener parkland on the north shore of Murray Lake. My dad became the farmer in his family, and soon acquired ownership of the Ternier farm.

Thirty-some years later, at the time my dad retired, my husband, Doug, and I were both attending university. I was in Arts and Science, but vague about career plans. Doug

was in Engineering, but wanted to farm. It was the early 1970's, when the back-to-the-land movement was influencing romantic youngsters like me. Dad wanted to keep the land in the family. When he offered to help us start farming, we jumped at the chance. During the following years, Doug raised grain crops on our seven quarters. Initially I concentrated on gardening, homemaking and cooking with local food. Then, when our two children were both in school, I returned to university, and received a PhD in English around the same time as our youngest left home.

I spent most of my teaching "career" as a sessional instructor at the regional college in North Battleford. Working part-time allowed me to spend summers gardening and preserving food. It also allowed me to become actively involved as a director, and sometimes playwright, in our local community theatre.

Now, forty-six years after we started farming, we are both in our late sixties. Our kids do not want to

farm. We are fortunate to have my sister Judy and her family as one neighbour, and my niece Rachelle as another, but they do not need more land. I will not sell to a conventional land-holding corporation. What are we to do?

Like Trevor Herriot in *River in a Dry Land*, I dream of re-inhabiting rural Saskatchewan. And like him, I wonder if we have enough of our immigrant ancestors' willingness to "turn away from the old and take a chance on the new". Can we find alternatives to private ownership that would enable cash-poor young people to farm, while allowing older farmers to retire with an adequate income?

My retirement project is to become involved in a revitalized NFU Farmland Access and Control Action Committee. Maybe we can start our own land-holding company? Or a community land trust? Or some form of farmland co-operative? Maybe together we can do something really exciting.



Josh Bateman, NFU Board
Region 7 (Alberta)
Representative

Josh is farming this year in the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda, as well as Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. Josh will be within the city limits, just beside Stoney Trail in southeast

Calgary as part of the Land of Dreams team. The land is 30 acres which is transforming from a city-managed right-of-way to a community space with personal plots, bees, kids' camps, re-wilding areas, and market gardens through collaborations with local Indigenous Nations, newcomer organizations and other local partnerships.

One of the goals this season is to begin farming on a 5-acre area using regenerative market garden techniques. They hope to provide a model for peri-urban agriculture and create a training program for newcomers and locals who hope to learn the art and science of growing food in Calgary's challenging climate. Additionally, the gardens seek to provide accessible and affordable food for communities nearby.

Josh was led to farming through his university studies in Nutrition and Food Sciences, seeking a more holistic understanding of how healthy food can be grown and shared equitably. Josh has farmed in Central Alberta as part of the inaugural Young Agrarians Internship Program and in Australia on a large-scale organic, biodynamic livestock farm. Additionally, he has dug into urban food resiliency as a Kitchen Coordinator and Garden Coordinator at inner-city organizations in Edmonton and Calgary respectively. Josh is passionate about bridging urban and rural food justice, creating equitable and sustainable food systems, and building community through connection to the land.



Regional Reports

Region 1, District 2 – Province of New Brunswick – by Suzanne Fournier, Executive Director

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick, Region 1, District 2 has hosted two virtual kitchen table meetings in 2021. The first meeting took place on January 28th and had 11 participants; Claire May NFU-NB Women's President and Secretary, and Aaron Shantz, NFU-NB Board Member hosted the meeting. Claire prepared guiding questions for a conversation around farming and climate with the aim of the participants guiding the conversation. Topics that were discussed included, working with

and not against those farms that aren't climate friendly; investing in soil; irrigation and water table management; and the need for an agricultural forecast in Atlantic Canada. Informal translation was offered. It was agreed to bring the discussion of an Atlantic agricultural forecast on to the Board of Directors and has since been pursued by Agriculture NB the formal collaboration of agricultural organizations that includes the NFU-NB.

The second meeting was held on March 4th; the hosts invited Darrin Qualman, NFU Director of Climate Crisis Policy and Action, and the New Brunswick Minister of Agriculture, Margaret Johnson to join the discussion. Darrin briefly discussed what the National office

had been doing and what would be coming. In the hour and a half meeting, topics that were discussed included, woodlot management as it relates to emissions, adaptation and sequestration of emissions, increasing available agrology services, agriculture being discussed as a career option with students, the promotion of Department of Agriculture services, and climate education and adaption services for farmers. In response to a question by one of the members at the meeting the Minister mentioned that there was an initiative to try to increase agronomy services in the province and entice students into that side of the industry.

Visions de systèmes agricoles et alimentaires à émissions nulles

Imaginez... Nous sommes en l'an 2030. Le Canada a excédé son engagement de 2015 à Paris de réduire de 30 % ses gaz à effets de serre (GES) comparé aux niveaux de 2005. Et notre pays est en voie d'atteindre des émissions nulles bien avant 2050. Toutes les provinces sont sur la même longueur d'onde et travaillent ensemble ; les gouvernements autour du monde accélèrent leurs actions et augmentent leurs ambitions de réductions des émissions. Quoiqu'un gros montant de travail se trouve encore devant nous, maintenir les augmentations des températures mondiales en-dessous de 2 degrés est maintenant une forte probabilité. Nous sommes sur la voie pour éviter les pires impacts des changements climatiques.

To read the full report visit

<https://www.nfu.ca/fr/publications/imagine-if-a-vision-of-a-near-zero-emission-farm/>



Imaginez si....

Vision d'un système agricole et alimentaire à émissions nulles pour le Canada

Un rapport de l'Union nationale des fermiers

Mars 2021



Region 3: Province of Ontario

– by Don Ciparis, Coordinator

The end of another winter season in Canada and the start of spring with all of its promise is an annual part of farm culture. Since the Fall Issue of the UFQ, producers in Ontario witnessed a generally wide-open grain harvest with practically ideal conditions for seasonal tillage and incorporation of livestock manure. Though the winter for much of northern and eastern Ontario was more of a traditional one, resulting in adequate spring soil moisture conditions, central and southern Ontario saw a winter that was somewhat warmer and wetter, interrupted by periods of considerable cold and snowy conditions. The result is that spring soil moisture reserves in the south are a concern in the middle of March.

Ontario's watershed-based Conservation Authorities (CAs) have been under the province's scrutiny for a while now, even though the CAs work in mitigating soil erosion, preventing nutrient run-off, improving soil health, increasing biodiversity and enhancing natural areas on our farms is well recognized across Canada. CAs compile precipitation, water level and temperature data, incorporate it into modelling and release the results to the public for us to better understand how the climate is changing and where new

municipal developments may be at risk. Schedule 6 of the Ontario's Budget Measures Act (Bill 229) attempted to limit the ability of CA's to provide input into municipal planning applications and to permit decisions and appeals. The NFU-Ontario Council drafted a response to the Premier and five Ministers objecting to this particular schedule of the Bill and requested its removal. The bill was passed, with considerable objections from across the province. We continue to work with allies to repeal the Schedule.

The NFU-O Council has objected to the province's attempt to bypass the democratic traditions of municipal planning and decision-making by the use of Minister's Zoning Orders (MZO's) under Section 47 of the Planning Act. With our allies, we continue to monitor developments and remain vigilant. As well, the Ontario Water Quantity Management Framework which regulates groundwater bottling operations was recently updated. Our Council submitted a detailed formal response which stressed the importance of water to all Ontarians, especially with the onset of future climate challenges, the threats to indigenous communities and the start of a new Canada Water Agency.

The NFU's abattoir committee's hard work helped convince the province to offer assistance to that industry with \$4 million announced on November 27, 2020. Funds were all committed within 8 days. Our letter of Feb. 8 requested that funding be increased to allow all plants to participate.

The NFU-O AGM/Region 3 Convention was held February 25 and 26, 2021 with the theme of Land, Labour, Laws: From Policy to Practice. Session chairs ensured that the agenda was kept within timelines, questions were answered promptly and even the one election worked without a glitch. Thanks staff and Joan from National.

The following presentations are available to view at the links below:

Land-Linking 2021 facilitated by Aric McBay;

Sustainable Food Systems: Risks from Aggregate Extraction with Anne Ehrlich, A. Chiang, Pat De Luca, Stephanie De Grandis Steph Goertz, Linda Lukasick and Sarah Bakker and;

Working together – Insights on Labour with Dave Thompson, NFU-O's Labour Co-ordinator.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftUvTtbpEZU&t=5s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5njQDOgoow&t=2603s>

<https://youtu.be/UMxigjB-E0s>





Region 5: Province of Manitoba

– by **Ian Robson, Coordinator**

As I write this in mid-March, the spring is already an odd one in Manitoba with most of our snow gone already. It is a dry start, and unwelcome unless we can get a good rain. Is this another sign that climate change is making its strange impacts known in an ugly way?

On the political front, the Manitoba government claims to be cutting red tape but is generally replacing the red tape for farmers and everyone with laissez-faire privatization where possible and where it will gain the least scrutiny. This should somehow make our lives better.

1700 Agricultural Crown Land Lease ranchers now have a lease rate which is two or three times higher with lease terms cut back from 50 years to 15 years. The province gathers the lease fee increase and the bid price for the lease but is providing less advice to help ranchers keep these public asset lands natural so there are wildlife lands along side ranch land. The public good for both the public and ranchers is missing.

The Manitoba Public Utility Board which oversees hydro rates is a red tape cutout and the cabinet now gets to politically red tape our power rates. Excessive Manitoba Hydro rates may occur, as an example see the privatized BC hydro errors. The fear that Manitoba will drop the hat to

privatize and follow suit is real. It has already started selling off the profitable parts of itself.

Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC), valued by farmers for great advice and services, will red tape excess rural offices and consolidate into fewer centers, while claiming to keep farm service advisors and specialists. The Minister has suggested that farmers hire costly agronomists to give non-third party agronomic advice. There was no public consultation on the matter, no flexibility. If reducing red tape is about reducing unnecessary barriers, then how is it that new barriers get put up to do so?

It appears that standard tests given to each student and made public would be the measure of education and knowledge of our students K-12. Yet teacher input and parent input is now to be replaced by a centralized penny pinching and confusing new idea of education delivery and funding. The localized school boards would be gone. The excuse is that Manitoba has the highest cost per student in Canada and low education outcome, but by what standard is not defined. We are concerned for rural schools and rural jobs in local communities if this dismantling of school boards goes through.



Every farmer I meet is concerned with the life in our soil. It keeps us alive. This year I notice much more tree pushing. We need our Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) to come back, or better yet the NFU proposed Canadian Farm Resiliency Agency, to provide farmers with agronomic advice to help our soils and farms with methods to reduce the farm emissions of GHGs. Hopefully the Federal Government will implement this.

The NFU met again with Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation (MASC) and again asked MASC to offer crop and disaster insurance for smaller scale farmers, and to develop crop insurance for poly cropping like peas and canola. Currently insurance only begins on monocrops above 3 acres. We recognize the abilities of smaller size farms and believe we are making headway since MASC has expressed some ideas about how it thinks it could make insurance work for small acreage mixed vegetable growers. By collaborating with like minded groups on these issues, like Direct Farm Manitoba and Prairie Fruit Growers Association, we are putting positive pressure for the benefit of those farmers.

NFU Manitoba welcomes Karen Klassen, farming near Manitou, who is NFU-Manitoba's Womens Advisory Representative. Manitoba and NFU youth representatives have a great farmer webinar series in the works. NFU-Manitoba is planning our AGM for mid-July. Stay tuned.



Region 6: Province of Saskatchewan – by Dixie Green, Coordinator

was our event during NFU Days and was of interest to farmers beyond our Region.

Al Birchard has been working to educate us about the \$6 B proposed South Saskatchewan Irrigation Project. It is advertised to divert water from Lake Diefenbaker to service a large irrigation area near Outlook. He arranged for Robert Halliday, a Saskatoon consulting engineer and former director of Canada's National Hydrology Research Centre, to speak to our Regional Convention on March 31st. Mr. Halliday chairs the Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin. He shared his knowledge about the scope and consequences of completing this mega irrigation project which is to be funded by the federal and provincial governments. His concerns will be available for review on the NFU website under Region 6 affairs.

Lyle Orchard, our representative on the International Program Committee, brought his energy to help the region mobilize for NFU Days and the convention. Rachelle Ternier keeps making contributions when she can find time. Spring is her busiest time of the year with her seed business. Julia Maxwell is just getting connected to the Youth Advisory to learn what her responsibilities include.

Region 6 looks forward to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the ability to gather to renew social connections with members. Maybe a picnic in a park! We will have to prioritize our concerns and concentrate on being heard where we can make a significant contribution. We welcome members to contact any of our team if they would like to help us in letter writing or developing proposals for action.

Region 6 has now filled our leadership positions with Betty Ternier Daniels in the Women's Advisory and Julia Maxwell in the Youth Advisory positions. Our group was active for NFU days. We phoned a lot of members, renewed quite a few, inquired how people and their farms are doing and asked what their concerns are for this coming year.

Betty Ternier Daniels contacted all the women members in the region and held virtual meetings to bring women together to get to know each other and learn of their concerns. She also planned a virtual discussion of alternate ways of owning farm land. This



Region 7: Province of Alberta – by Doug Scott, Coordinator

both brought insight, thoughtfulness, and spunk to board discussions and they will be missed. Also thanks to Sarah Bakker, NFU-O General Manager, who has been with us through thick and thin and is moving on to another position in the global food network.

It is nice to see a sense of optimism returning across the country. With many people in line to receive COVID-19 vaccinations one can just about hear a collective sigh of relief. But much has been learned this year. As a society we will never feel as comfortable as we once did.

One thing that has stood out for me is how fragile and precious our democracy is. I, for one, will never take it for granted again. I recently read a very good book entitled *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi. It is a history of racist ideas in America and should be required reading for all North Americans.

Politically, in what Region 6 NFU member, Glen Tait calls the empire to the west, things are a bit of a train wreck. Jason Kenny's poll numbers are in the mid-thirties and even the people who are supposed to like him, do not.

Spring came early to the prairies. Unseasonably warm and in some cases record breaking temperatures, have farmers planning for an earlier than normal seeding, always a plus in the Aspen Parkland. On behalf of our region I want to thank Ayla Fenton and Hilary Moore for their years of service on the national board. They

There are rumblings of a leadership review next year. He has stumbled badly, from flattop mining in the Grassy Mountains in southern Alberta, to holiday vacations to sunny destinations for his staff, cuts to public service employees, fights with doctors, nurses and teachers, and a six billion dollar pipeline purchase with taxpayer dollars which is going nowhere. And yes, Alberta farmers agree with everything that comes out of the mouths of the Alberta Wheat and Barley Commission. Right wing ideology reigns there.

Just a quick fact about oil by rail exports. One hundred car oil trains carry about 7,000 barrels of oil. Currently approximately 400,000 barrels of oil leave the province of Alberta by rail everyday, all heading south. That is the equivalent of a good sized pipeline. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would have moved about 800,000 barrels a day.

One can never under estimate the value of boots on the ground. A few weeks ago I went on a short road trip with a farmer friend to look at a couple of tractors. A six hour drive straight south took us to Picture Butte, right in the heart of Alberta's irrigation district and home of longtime NFU member, Everett Tanis. There are around 350 irrigation pivots in this neck of the Palliser Triangle. The young generational farmer we met, lives

on one of the pivot farms. The family has built a successful business exporting timothy to Japan. They have been able to do this by renting land from the Blood Reservation which is about 20 kilometres away. He said that expansion where they live is impossible, as the farms are worth millions and rarely change hands. In the summer they employ over 20 people. It was +18 the day we were there in early March and we did see one farmer cultivating.

The next stage of our journey took us straight east. We over nighted in Swift Current, the pretty little hometown of Dixie Greene and Stewart Wells. In the morning we continued east and then south to Gray, Saskatchewan, right in the middle of the Regina Plain, where it is so flat, that as my old social studies teacher would say, if you stood on a sardine can you could see a hundred miles. It is a very unique and fragile region of the Saskatchewan Prairie. There the farm family we visited dealt with their own unique farming challenges - from water that drains nowhere when it rains to a clay soil called Regina gumbo that sticks to everything when it is wet and makes everyone walk around like they are wearing high heeled boots, to the fact that they have no ground water and rely on dugouts for their water supply. A drive to town is 40 minutes away and once again land only changes hands among families. We were

also able to have a brief discussion about APAS, the Saskatchewan farm organization, they support. From there it was an eight hour drive through Saskatoon and home. It was a short trip that covered a lot of the prairie and allowed us to chat with farmers.

I have followed our NFU climate discussion with much interest. No doubt the task to educate many prairie farmers on the urgent need for them to engage in more environmentally friendly and sustainable agricultural practices will be monumental. Mostly of what I am hearing is that the recent surge in commodity practices is a time to slop on the fertilizer and get as much out of this unexpected windfall as possible. A farmer I spoke to recently from central Alberta believed that the recent price surge was directly related to Harper and Ritz destroying the CWB. He was a little less sure about G3. He was not quite sure who they were.

The lessons learned in farming can be harsh. One of our local larger family farms has gone into receivership. They have lost everything including their homes.

After the receivership auction they will likely end up about 9 million short. BMO and the Royal were ruthless.

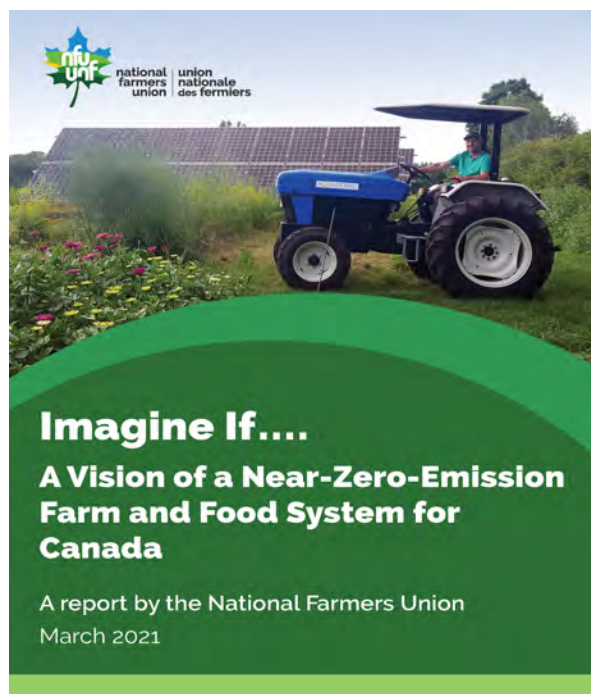
Good luck with planting and remember to stay safe.

VISIT NFU.CA/EVENTS

To catch up on upcoming events & webinars



Imagine If A New NFU report on climate change and emissions reduction



On March 18th, 2021 the NFU released its new report *Imagine If... A Vision of a Near-Zero-Emission Farm and Food System for Canada*. This very positive report takes a 2030 viewpoint and invites readers to imagine a wide range of government policies and on-farm measures implemented throughout the 2020s to reduce food-system emissions and increase resilience and sustainability. The report is on the NFU website at <http://www.nfu.ca/imagine-if-report-2021>.

The report is both sweeping in its vision and detailed in its policy recommendations and data analysis. It is provocative in its approach and seeks to broaden thinking regarding what solutions might look like and what other benefits we can achieve as we take steps to reduce emissions. Here are some excerpts:

From our vantage point in 2030, we can see the outlines of transformative change and solutions.... On some farms and in some communities in 2030, the outlines of a near-zero-emission food system are coming into focus. This report paints a picture of that food system—one with more farmers; improved net incomes; richer and better protected soils; more biodiversity; protection for water and trees; a focus on equity and inclusion; local and community control; a more nutritious, diverse, and delicious food supply; and near-zero emissions. Imagine....

We'll visit several farms in this exploration of what a near-zero-emission food system could look like. The first stop on our imagined tour is a farm near ... Red Deer, Alberta—a large, multi-generation grain farm, where farmers are using 4R nitrogen fertilizer efficiency techniques to reduce emissions while maintaining yields. "4R" stands for right product formulation, right rate, right placement, and right time of the year. Those Red-Deer-area farmers are putting down coated fertilizer with their seeds in the spring—fertilizer that releases more slowly, provides nutrients when plants need them, and avoids the large nitrous oxide emissions that might otherwise occur in the spring. Two hours north, in Redwater, Alberta, the nitrogen fertilizer factory there is using carbon capture and storage to minimize CO₂ emissions from fertilizer production.... The combination of 4R, coated granules, variable-rate application, regular soil testing using independent government labs, better rotations, better understanding of soil biology, and carbon capture over at the fertilizer factory means that ... nitrogen-related emissions are half of what they were in 2020.

Lots of things are different in 2030, including many tractors. [One] farm is part of a test program that financed and subsidized two new battery-electric tractors. Manufactured in Winnipeg, and using batteries from a huge new plant in Fort McMurray, Alberta, those tractors—one 75 horsepower and the other 200—can operate for six hours on a charge and recharge in 90 minutes, making twelve-hour workdays possible during busy seasons. The tractors—quiet, easy to maintain, cheaper to run—have become favourites. "There's no exhaust, little noise, and the power is amazing as you push the lever forward. It really feels like the future and makes our other tractors seem antique," commented a farm family member in her late 20s. In addition to electric tractors, the farm has two battery-electric pickup trucks. A neighbour is testing a hydrogen-fuelled combine as part of a similar program. Though low-emission machinery is still uncommon, a trend is emerging.

With regard to emissions reduction in the food system, while farms are at the core, work is underway upstream and downstream as well. To cite one inspiring example, Edmonton, Alberta, has embarked on an ambitious plan to supply zero-emission foods for the city. A city councillor explained: "Watershed means the land around a river that contributes water to that river. Edmonton is creating a foodshed—surrounding land that will supply this city with more and more of the food

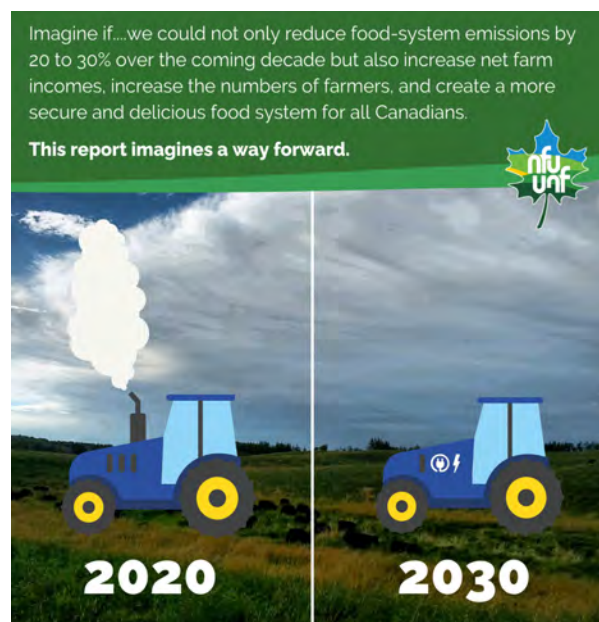
we need. For the past six years, the City of Edmonton has been buying up much of the land put up for sale within a 50-kilometre radius. So far, we've assembled about sixteen thousand acres. We've been leasing that out in small and medium-sized parcels on low-cost terms to anyone who wants to farm it in sustainable, low-emission ways. We're providing land to new Canadians, young farmers, co-operatives, First Nations, organic growers, permaculturists, agroecologists, small-flock poultry farmers, free-range hog producers, organic vegetable growers, mental health and addictions-treatment programs, youth clubs, religious groups, and others. In 2027 we launched a food pick-up system wherein electric transport trucks follow efficient routes and pick up food from producers at regular intervals then bring it to local-food markets and food hubs throughout city neighbourhoods. Some of the foodshed farmers have electric tractors that they recharge from solar panels, and many have reduced or eliminated the use of chemical fertilizers and other inputs. So, with the electric trucks bringing the food into the city and residents walking and biking to pick it up, that's as close to zero-emission food as you can get. This is the future. We're doing it now. Zero-emission food!"

The 2020s were a Canadian food-system reboot—the beginning of a renaissance. By the decade's end, net farm income from the markets was 60 percent higher than the average for the preceding 40 years. A portion of those additional billions in net income is now making its way through rural communities, spurring economic rebirth for many towns and small cities. Farm debt, having increased every single year since 1993, began falling in 2022 and in 2030 is down by a full third.... The area farmed using organic, holistic, regenerative, and agroecological methods doubled between 2020 and 2030. The rapid loss of young farmers ended, with the 2026 Census of Agriculture recording the first significant increase in young farmers since record-keeping began in 1991. And it's likely that the number of farms in Canada will be higher in the 2031 Census than in 2026, marking the first time since 1941 that the number of farms has increased! "Instead of increasing input use and emissions and reducing the

number of farmers, we've decided to try the reverse," quipped Ontario's Minister of Agriculture. "It's working rather well," she added.

The steps Canada took in the 2020s, similar steps taken by other nations, and the steps we're committed to take in the 2030s and beyond literally saved the world. ... We acted boldly! We turned away from business as usual, ignored special-interest pleadings, and acted in the public interest. And now we can begin to breathe easier; we can take heart that we've averted the massive planetary perma-catastrophe that inaction, or slow action, would have created. As the 2020s unfolded we acted to save the planet rather than destroy it; that made all the difference.

Just imagine....



The *Imagine If* report builds on decades of policy work by the NFU on energy systems, climate change, and emissions reduction, including the influential 2019 report *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farms and Food Systems*. The NFU's reports are tools to deepen thinking about climate and emissions solutions and to help build consensus. Thus, they are tools for action—designed to help create change. The NFU is a founding member of the Farmers for Climate Solutions (FCS) coalition and is working through FCS and on its own to engage with elected officials and advance a suite of government policies and on-farm measures that can dramatically reduce emissions, speed climate adaptation, increase food-system resilience, and create a more secure, nutritious, and delicious food supply for all Canadians.



Next NFUniversity Class is Post-Animal Agriculture & the Future of Farming on April 29th at Noon Pacific Time

Visit [NFU.ca/NFUniversity](https://www.nfu.ca/NFUniversity) to Sign up!

NFU meets with federal Minister of Agriculture to advance climate and emissions policies



Photo Credit: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

On February 1st, 2021 the NFU had two very successful sessions with the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Marie-Claude Bibeau. The first was a 30-minute meeting between five NFU representatives (President Katie Ward, Cam Goff, Rick Munroe, Cathy Holtslander, and Darrin Qualman), the Minister and Agriculture Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) staff. The NFU made a short presentation followed by feedback from the Minister. The NFU's presentation focused on five recommended policies to reduce agricultural emissions:

1. Hire, train, and deploy 1,000+ independent, public-servant extension agrologists to support farmers in moving to lower-emission, lower-input production systems.
2. Offer free extension agrologist assistance and free soil testing as ways to speed farmers' adoption of 4R (Right source, Right rate, Right time, Right place) fertilizer efficiency and tonnage-reduction measures.
3. Financially support farmers to adopt best-possible grazing practices and provide funding assistance to create and expand local abattoirs.
4. Collect data to focus efforts, quantify progress, and showcase success.
5. Create a new agency, a Canadian Farm Resilience Administration (CFRA), to oversee many of the above initiatives. Modelled on the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), but expanded

to encompass all of Canada and to deal with the intensifying climate crisis, a CFRA could manage extension agrologists; offer independent soil testing for nitrogen, carbon, etc.; operate demonstration farms where low-emission practices could be refined and showcased; help preserve or restore wetlands; and lead efforts toward climate adaptation and resilience.

Following the meeting, the Minister held a 45-minute round table session with ten NFU farmer members and officials: Katie Ward, Stuart Oke, Julia Smith, Anastasia Fyk, Glenn Wright, Paul Slomp, Eva Rehak, Arwa De Groot, Bess Legault, and Cam Goff. The NFU delegation discussed climate impacts on their farms, underscored the need for independent agrologists, and made the case for low-input approaches.

The Minister seemed impressed by the NFU contingents and commented on the good representation of young farmers and women. The Minister responded favourably regarding the need for independent agrologists but suggested that perhaps the provinces would need to take a major role, making this an object for federal-provincial negotiations leading up to the 2023 Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP). She echoed the need for increased data collection. She was also receptive to the idea that we need to focus on low-input agriculture. She said that she was hearing from representatives across the country about the need for more abattoirs.

NFU officials and staff have subsequently met with AAFC officials. In March, twenty members of the NFU Climate Committee held more than two dozen Zoom meetings with federal MPs. And the NFU is preparing a brief to the federal government on the regulations for its Greenhouse Gas Offset Protocols.



Photo Credit: Mika Baumeister

Agricultural Migrant Worker FAQ: Part One

By the NFU Migrant Workers Solidarity Working Group

We live on rich, prosperous land with room for everyone. Much of our abundance derives from the earth. On our farms we have an incredible amount of farming knowledge and experience. Over the past 50+ years, migrant farm workers have contributed much of the expertise and labour required to grow the food we all eat.

Their efforts and skills too often go unseen.

Despite recent media attention, there is a lot of misinformation regarding migrant workers' labour, rights, and working conditions and the government programs that enable their participation in Canadian agriculture. To dispel myths, the NFU Migrant Workers Solidarity Working Group is putting together a series of FAQs. This is the first in our series:

Q. What is the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)? What is the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP)?

A. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is the program which issues all Canadian work permits. For agricultural migrant

workers, there are two streams within the broader TFWP umbrella: the Agriculture Low-Skilled Stream, and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).

The SAWP channels workers onto farms where their seasonal contracts are a maximum of 8-months long. SAWP participants must leave by December 15th each year regardless of when they arrived. The Low Skilled Stream allows for contracts of up to two years. Work permits are 'closed,' meaning workers are restricted to working ONLY for the employer named on their permit. Employers are responsible for providing housing and flights to the country, as well as transportation to access services and go shopping. Wages are set through the contracts. In the case of SAWP, wages are negotiated for the industry as a whole and for the Low-Skilled Stream, through comparable wages based on National Occupational Classification codes.

The SAWP was created in 1966 in response to farm operators lobbying the government to resolve labour shortages. The larger umbrella TFWP followed some years later and has evolved and changed due to political

pressure and global and domestic dislocations in labour markets.

Between SAWP and the Low-Skilled Stream, 72,000 migrant farm workers arrived in 2019.

Q. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected migrant worker programs? What can we expect in 2021?

A. In 2020, the pandemic was chaotic for farms who employ migrant workers. Paperwork was delayed. Flights were delayed. Everyone had to create brand new protocols to address new safety concerns. The number of migrant agricultural workers who arrived in 2020 was cut in half. In spite of safety protocols, over 12% of these farm workers tested positive for COVID-19 and three Mexican workers died of the disease.

This year, most farms have protocols in place. Quarantine requirements are much the same as last year. Migrant farm workers will quarantine for two weeks on-farm (or in B.C., in designated hotels). Testing requirements prior to boarding and on arrival are applicable. With flights grounded since earlier in the winter, many workers will again arrive late.

The good news: Because farm workers (including migrant workers) are recognized as essential they will be offered vaccinations within Phase 2 of the vaccine rollout.

Q. Bringing it home: Why should it matter to me?

A. The NFU, as a founding member of La Via Campesina, stands in solidarity with peasants, Indigenous peoples and agricultural workers around the world. We also support the rights and dignity of the women and men who come to this country under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. They are no less peasant farmers than small-holder farmers across the globe.

As farmers, the government programs that dictate how we interact with migrant workers reflect who we are. We need to ask ourselves if we think these programs reflect what we want our agricultural and food system to be.

We believe we must value all farm labour.

By growing our collective understanding of our agricultural labour needs, government policy, and the experience and conditions of migrant farm workers, we will be better equipped to show our solidarity and take actions for change. Look for more Migrant Farm Worker FAQs in upcoming UFQs!

Changes to Novel Foods Guidelines would remove regulation for some GMOs

Health Canada is currently asking for feedback on two new pieces of guidance for the *Novel Food Regulations*, focused on plant breeding. This is a consultation on how to interpret the Novel Food Regulations, not a consultation to change the regulation. Health Canada's stated intent is:

- to provide greater clarity, predictability and transparency regarding the regulation of novel foods derived from plants, including those developed using gene editing technologies and;
- to provide an efficient and predictable pathway to commercialization for new products.



As with many of the ongoing discussions related to changing and removing seed regulations, multinational seed and biotechnology corporations and their lobby groups, like CropLife Canada, have asked the government to make these changes so that they can bring their new genetically engineered products to market faster and with less government oversight. The NFU is working as a member of Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) to analyse the potential impact of these changes for farmers and to encourage farmers and the public to tell Health Canada what they think about the proposed changes.

These proposed updates, in particular, target the regulation of foods and plants created by the new genetic engineering techniques called gene editing or genome editing. Decisions on whether or not certain products can enter the market without government risk assessment will be made by the product developers, not Canada's regulatory bodies. In addition, the product developers

themselves will be asked to voluntarily notify the government about any unregulated GMOs they are bringing to market. So, if a product developer does not identify an obvious food safety issue with their new genetically engineered food and the plant does not have foreign DNA inserted, then the developer is not required to submit their GMO product to the government for risk assessment.

There are divergent approaches internationally when it comes to regulating gene edited plants. All national regulatory authorities around the world regulate transgenic gene edited plants (plants with foreign DNA) as GMOs. However, countries such as the U.S., Australia, Brazil, Argentina and Japan have decided that non-transgenic gene edited organisms (plants without foreign DNA) do not need to be regulated the same way as earlier products of genetic engineering. The changes proposed by Health Canada would move Canada into this group of countries. But the European Court of Justice ruled in 2018 that all gene edited organisms should be regulated as GMOs in the European Union.

Health Canada asks six key questions in their consultation document. Four of these questions are directed to product developers. The two questions you should consider in your response to Health Canada are:

- Does the guidance align with the goal of a regulatory approach that is based on the level of food safety risk posed by specific products of plant breeding?
- Does the voluntary transparency initiative serve its purpose to inform Canadians what non-Novel gene-edited products are on the market? Can we do more to achieve this objective?

Your thoughts on the above two questions should be sent to hc.bmh-bdm.sc@canada.ca by May 24, 2021. Your response should be short and direct, but polite. More information from Health Canada is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/programs/consultation-guidance-novel-foods-regulation-plant-breeding.html>.

Health Canada regulates genetically modified food and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regulates genetically modified seed. Input from farmers and the public will be needed again when the CFIA holds a separate public consultation regarding the environmental release of gene edited plant varieties. The CFIA consultation had not started by the end of March.

Op-Ed: Regenerate Canada's beef sector by addressing corporate concentration

By Iain Aitken

In a recent report from Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), its president Bob Lowe stated that there is a critical need for better Business Risk Management tools for the beef sector. In addition to improving coverage for cow/calf producers by seeking the removal of the reference margin limit, he calls for raising the current \$3 million dollar payment cap as apparently, this isn't enough to cover individual feedlot losses.

It is ironic that the CCA, a free market supporter, is asking for government funding to support cattle producers unable to secure a living from the market while at the same time, many tax-paying consumers are forking out record high prices for beef. Clearly, the free market is not functioning as advertised!

As the national cow herd continues to shrink at an alarming rate there is certainly a need for government action. The current model is clearly unsustainable when feedlots running thousands of animals can't pencil enough of a profit margin over the years to sustain them through a downturn, and when the cow/calf sector that sells animals to the feeders has become so unprofitable that ranchers



Photo Submitted by Iain Aitken

running several hundred cows resort to selling halves of beef to their neighbours to survive. Meanwhile, over recent months, the profits being realized in the cull cow market by the packers have exceeded the total sum realized by the rancher selling a well fattened cow!

Given the escalating climate crisis, we need to lower GHG emissions and sequester more CO₂ on agricultural land through regenerative grazing practices. Breaking up pastures and replacing cattle with fossil-fuel intensive, mono-culture row crops is an environmentally disastrous land use choice in the era we are living in. A national cattle herd of sufficient size is required to achieve those goals. To do this we need to change the economics of

the cattle business and make it financially rewarding.

Despite the CCA's apparent inability to see it, the solution is hiding in plain view, as it has been for more than two decades. There is clearly enough profit being generated in the beef production chain to support a viable livelihood for ranchers, feedlot owners, packers and retailers — if only it were distributed more equitably!

The CCA and its provincial counterparts should be urging the Government address corporate concentration beyond the farm-gate. This is what is preventing the equitable distribution of the wealth created by beef production. The Government has both the tools and the authority to tackle this problem, but lacks the political will. They need to hear this solution from the cattle producer organizations. For the Canadian beef cattle sector to have a viable future we need to stop treating the symptoms and deal with the root cause of the problem once and for all.

Iain Aitken runs a beef cattle herd at Belmont, Manitoba with his wife and daughter. They produce purebred Luining breeding stock, feeder cattle and grass-fed beef.

All Convention talks are available on the NFU YouTube Channel. English & French whenever possible.

Watch and learn today!



National Farmers Union Canada
tinyurl.com/y4opbgsv

Indigenous, Environmental, and Agricultural Organizations across Saskatchewan call on the Province to halt the liquidation of Crown land



Photo Credit: Nadine Shaabana

Indigenous, environmental, and agricultural organizations throughout Saskatchewan have come together to call on the provincial government to halt the sale of treaty land to private owners. Since 2007, the Province has auctioned off over 2 million acres of Crown land – totalling an area larger than Prince Albert National Park – with sweeping implications for treaty relations, wildlife habitat, and the ability of

people throughout Saskatchewan to access land for both livelihood and recreational activities.

The statement (attached) is signed by over 20 organizations in Saskatchewan, including Idle No More, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Nature Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society, the National Farmers Union, and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, together representing over 100,000 members.

The lands that have been privatized include formerly protected grassland, wetlands, and aspen parkland that are the territories of the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Dakota, Lakota, and Métis Peoples. “People forget that these are treaty lands that belong to Indigenous title holders,” says Sylvia McAdam, a law professor and founding member of Idle No More. “They should not be viewed as ceded lands.”

With less than 14% of grasslands remaining in Saskatchewan, Crown lands provide critically important wildlife habitat in an increasingly fragmented prairie ecosystem.

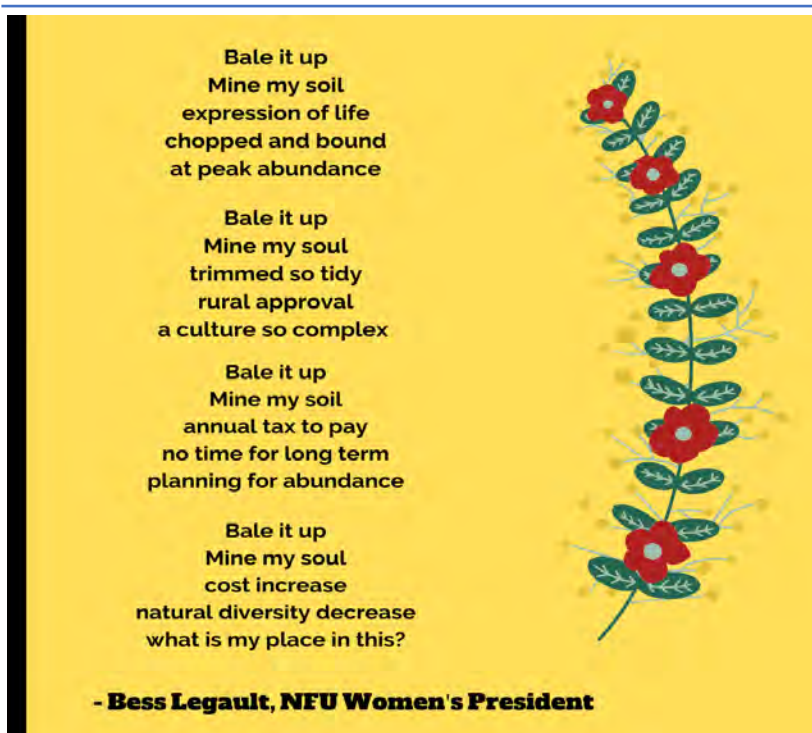
“The relatively large blocks of native prairie existing on Crown lands provide a refuge and source population for many at-risk plants and animals,” says Jordan Ignatiuk, Executive Director of Nature Saskatchewan. “Their protection is crucial to avoiding the extinction of iconic prairie species.”

“We all share a responsibility to preserve the precious little native prairie that’s left and ensure that it remains accessible,” says Trevor Herriot of Public Pastures – Public Interest. “This is land we were entrusted to share and protect together under treaty, and it’s the closest thing we have to land held in common for the benefit of all treaty people. It belongs to future generations, and is crucial to honouring the treaty relationship.”

An online petition for individuals to sign on to the statement has been launched here.

[Attached here is the Statement on Crown Land Sales](#)

<https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Statement-on-Crown-Land-Sales.pdf>



Op Ed: PEI Government and Irving Work Hard To Keep Islanders in the Dark

By Edith Ling

Those who have nothing to hide do not fear the light. Ethical people welcome transparency in their dealings and actions. They don't hide behind the veil of privacy to cover the ways they manipulate laws for their own gain. They don't hide behind the pretence that their secrecy is necessary for reasons of fair competition as a way to cover their own disregard for the good of all citizens and society. They certainly do not expect the Government of a people to betray their citizenry to keep wrong-doing buried!

Is this not happening in Prince Edward Island as the involved parties work to keep the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission (IRAC) report of the Brendel (Red Fox Acres Limited) sale hidden? In an age of eroding privacy for the majority, Government is allowing "privacy" to be used as a tool to keep Islanders ignorant about how the Irving family (they are not alone) have circumvented the PEI Lands Protection Act to acquire land holdings well beyond the legal limits allowed by the Act – the very thing the Act was created to prevent — land coming under corporate and foreign control. This corporate "right to privacy" hides from Islanders the extent of corporate control, wealth, and entitlement.

Current and past governments have failed to interpret the "letter of the law" to ensure that the spirit and intent of the law was and is being upheld. Is not privacy being used to prevent awareness that Islanders have been failed — and yes, betrayed — by the public people they employed over the last several decades to protect their greatest asset, the land? Suspicious land deals have been identified by numerous players. As more of these deals become apparent, the harder it is to get honest information from Government about those deals. It is widely known that Geoff Connolly, a partner in the firm of Stewart McKelvey, used the Business Corporations Act to circumvent the Lands Protection Act, which resulted in Irvings being able to buy 2200 acres of land in Bedeque and surrounding areas (the Brendel Farms, Red Fox Acres sale). Is it not a conflict of interest when the same law firm is engaged by the Province? The current Chairman and CEO of IRAC is a former senior partner with Stewart McKelvey. Is he an appropriate person to oversee an investigation into this matter? These are questions to which the public deserves answers.

Calls by National Farmers Union officials to Hon. Bloyce Thompson for accountability on this issue go unanswered. Phone calls don't get returned. Important Government announcements, especially controversial ones, such as the decision not to release the IRAC report, are made on the Government website, often with Friday afternoon timing. More land studies are undertaken, while the

recommendations of previous ones are never implemented. Government seems to cower in fear of Irving lawyers and deep corporate pockets.

If Irving, once again, gets away with circumventing the Lands Protection Act, as they have attempted this time with tactics by their lawyers using the Business Corporations Act, they will grow even bolder. In January 2021 they attempted to purchase another parcel of land, which IRAC thankfully rejected. No doubt lawyers are burning the midnight oil to make that land deal happen although rejected by IRAC— as was done with the Brendel Farms deal. There are already whispers in the farming community that farmers have been warned not to try to buy that land.

It is becoming far more difficult for government to maintain their claim that the Lands Protection Act is a priority, and that our primary resource is being protected for the people. It is getting more difficult to keep people unaware of wrongdoing, and that justice is not being served.

Elected officials are accountable to the citizens of Prince Edward Island. Civil servants need to be as well. They must all work for the welfare of the people, not corporations and foreign interests who see our land only as another asset in their corporate portfolio.

The spring session of the Legislature opens on February 25th. In a CBC Compass interview with host Louise Martin, House Leader Sidney MacEwen, indicated land and water issues will be dealt with in the coming sitting. Will they be dealt with in a substantial manner that finally recognizes the authority of the Lands Protection Act? Will Government act like a Government in control, able and willing to implement the will of the people upon which it was elected when it comes to the land? Will it make the hard ethical and moral decisions? Will Peter Bevan-Baker stand as true opposition in defence of our land or will the Green Party remain silent? Will the Liberals remain silent so their past actions on the land remain under the radar? Political apathy and compliance with the wishes of corporations is not acceptable in our governing body.

The philosopher and British Member of Parliament, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) wrote, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men [and women] to do nothing." These words will never become outdated. We are expecting our Island politicians to dig up and expose the dirt on land deals so it can be made transparent, then cleansed and purified with the light. That's what they promised and this is what they owe Islanders.

Edith Ling lives on a farm in North Winsloe and is the NFU Women's District Director for Prince Edward Island

Canada Grain Act Review – Initial public consultation ends April 30

by Cathy Holtslander, NFU Director of Research and Policy

In early 2020 the federal government announced a major review of the Canada Grain Act (CGA) but COVID-19 delayed the start for a year. The review is now on, led by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) with support from the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC). An initial broad public consultation on any and all aspects of the Act began January 1 and goes until April 30 2021.

The CGA review is high stakes for farmers. This Act has regulated Canada's grain system for over a century. The Commission is responsible for putting the Act and its regulations into effect. The mandate of the CGC is to "in the interests of the grain producers, establish and maintain standards of quality for Canadian grain and regulate grain handling in Canada, to ensure a dependable commodity for domestic and export markets."

The NFU's central point is that the CGC's mandate must remain unchanged. It is critical to have the CGC regulate in the interests of grain producers. Farmers and grain companies' interests are often opposite, and grain companies are much more powerful than any individual farmer. The mandate directs the CGC to balance this power relationship. The mandate to safeguard the quality of Canada's grain is key to differentiating Canadian grain in domestic and export markets, which upholds our international reputation and ability to obtain high enough prices to support a viable grain sector.

The Act defines the governance structure and authority of the CGC. It governs grain grades, grading and inspection of grain; licensing of grain dealers and elevators in Western Canada – including requirements to ensure farmers get paid; transportation of grain by railways and the allocation of producer cars and; it enables the CGC to enforce the Act and its regulations, to charge fees and issue final quality certificates on exported grain.

The NFU submission to the review reiterates points we have been making in consultations for many years. It also highlights CGC functions that are important to farmers but are less well known, and suggests improvements to make the CGA work even better for farmers.

Mandatory outward inspection by the CGC is one of the key elements we need to keep. Outward inspection is where the CGC establishes the quality of shipments leaving Canada and issues a "certificate final." The grain companies would like to privatize outward inspection and make the certificate final optional. We insist that the CGC

continue to issue the certificate final, and that it be automatically provided to buyers so they are informed of the results and are aware the shipment has been inspected by our regulator.

The majority of CGC fees are levied for outward inspection, as this is the culmination of all prior quality control processes and reflects the value created by effective regulation throughout our system. These fees make it possible for the CGC to do all the work required to safeguard the quality of Canada's grain, including the CGC's research lab and its role in co-op variety trials.

In 2013 amendments to the Act ended mandatory inward inspection by the CGC. Inward inspection is done when rail cars arrive at a port terminal prior to unloading. We are calling for reinstatement of mandatory inward inspection by CGC inspectors. This would isolate carloads not in compliance and would prevent their contents from being co-mingled and contaminating shipments. Inward inspection by CGC personnel, as opposed to a private company contracted by the grain company, avoids conflict of interests that can skew results in favour of the company.

We also recommend that the CGC collect and publicly report grain sales price at port, to buyers and to processing locations in Canada to allow farmers accountability in grain pricing. And also for transparency, that the CGC require freight and elevation costs be printed on grain cash tickets.

Multinational grain companies constantly lobby to reduce the power of the CGC. They want the CGC to be considered a mere provider of inspection services, instead of a regulatory authority. Their recommendations to the review will no doubt aim to cut inspection fees drastically, both to reduce costs for grain companies and to weaken the CGC's power by taking away much of its capacity. They will seek to offload costs onto farmers and weaken the CGC's ability to enforce grades and weights.

It is time to vigorously defend and strengthen our regulator so it can defend our interests into the future.

The NFU submission to the CGA Review will be posted on the Policy Briefs section of our website at www.nfu.ca. If you would like to make your own submission to the review, email your comments to aafc.cgareview.aac@canada.ca or mail them to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1341 Baseline Road, Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5 by April 30, 2021.

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