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*Food and farm activists and researchers sharing some thoughts at the NFU 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention.*  
(left to right: Nettie Wiebe, Alex Atamanenko, Cathleen Kneen, and Sue Machum)

- Photo by Kalissa Regier

## Message from the Editor...



The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual NFU Convention took place from November 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> in London, Ontario. The theme for the convention was *For the Love of the Land*. The three panels focussed on land grabbing and food safety issues. The three presentations were made by native leader Ellen Gabriel who spoke on Indigenous perspectives on land issues, CWB chair Allen Oberg who spoke on the fight to save the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), and Dr. David Montgomery who presented on the role that land has played in the demise of civilizations. But, convention was not only about issues and policy. The NFU delegates also had a good time dancing to the Three Kool Kats after the banquet!

As successful and interesting as the convention was, a dark cloud hung over the proceedings. At that time the Harper government was busy shoving Bill C-18 through Parliament as fast as it could. The NFU, its allies, and the CWB directors fought tooth and nail all summer and fall to stop the Harper government. The NFU delegates showed their appreciation for the efforts of CWB chair Allen Oberg by giving him four standing ovations during his presentation.

At the time of this writing, the Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz had been found to have acted illegally when he introduced Bill C-18 into Parliament without holding a farmer plebiscite or consulting with the CWB's board of directors. The Harper government has declared that it is determined to pass the bill before Christmas despite the ruling, and told farmers to plan as if the CWB's single desk will not exist past August 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. It will be interesting to see how this plays out. No matter what happens, the NFU will need to continue the fight, as it is bound to move on to other fronts, such as supply management, in the New Year.

—nfu—

## NATIONAL FARMERS UNION 42<sup>ND</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION

November 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011 – London, Ontario

### AUDIO RECORDING ORDER FORM

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Session	Circle the session number you wish to order	# of CDs
1	Welcomes, Greetings, Opening Address	
2	Panel: Food Safety – Ruth Pryzner, Fred De Martines, Freeman Boyd	
3	Reports - Board of Directors; Women's Pres.; Youth Pres.; National Farmers Foundation	
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7	Address: Indigenous Perspectives on Land Issues – Ellen Gabriel	
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12	Panel: Land Grabbing in Developing Countries – Devlin Kuyek, Anuradha Mittal, Lauren Ravon	
13	Closing	



# A message from the...



## National President

—by Terry Boehm

Greetings. I would like to start this Report by thanking all of those who worked hard to make our 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention a success. In particular, I would like to point out the huge amount of work that Joan Lange and Kevin Wipf put into organizing and making sure everything ran smoothly.

Immediately after convention a number of us drove through the night from London to Ottawa to mount a protest and hold a press conference. This was to counterpoint Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz's own press conference with western provincial agriculture ministers, trumpeting the end of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) with the passage of Bill C-18. The move by the federal government to end the CWB has been marked by unprecedented haste and the use of every Parliamentary tool possible to advance the Bill. Time allocation or closure was used at every stage possible to limit debate. Second Reading was not done through the normal process of sending the Bill to the Standing Committee on Agriculture where witnesses could be called and amendments could be introduced. Instead a special Legislative Committee was created which could not amend the Bill, and only had five minutes per clause allotted to it to discuss the technical nature of the clauses.

This Bill when it comes into effect will immediately dismiss the farmer elected Board of Directors and replace them with 5 appointed directors. In addition, the government is confiscating \$200 million of farmers' money as well as other assets of the CWB. The \$200 million alone will mean \$10,000 to \$20,000 of lost income per farm in Western Canada. This money will theoretically be used to finance a new entity that does not have a single desk to market grain. Ritz and the Harper government have refused to consult the directors and give farmers a vote on these major changes as required in Section 47.1 of the CWB Act. A group called the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board launched a court challenge last June on the issue of a

farmer vote. They were assisted in the challenge by the CWB and an intervener group made up of the Council of Canadians, ETC group, Public Service Alliance of Canada, and Food Secure Canada, and another group of interveners known as the Producer Car Shippers of Canada.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Federal Court Justice Campbell ruled that by not giving farmers their vote the minister had violated the law, to quote Justice Campbell "the second and most important effect is that the Minister will be held accountable for his disregard for the rule of law."

The response of the minister and the government both before and after the ruling has been to the effect that they are the government and they can do what they want. Due process seems apparently optional. This should be very chilling for Canadians.

Justice Campbell cites a recent Supreme Court ruling that is very pertinent to government and a constitutional democracy. I will quote a bit of it:

*The starting point is this. The greatest achievement through the centuries in the evolution of democratic governance has been constitutionalism and the rule of law. The rule of law is not the rule by laws where citizens are bound to comply with the laws but government is not. Or where one level of government chooses not to enforce laws binding another. Under the rule of law, citizens have the right to come to the courts to enforce the law as against the executive branch. And courts have the right to review actions by the executive branch to determine whether they are in compliance with the law, and where warranted, to declare the government action unlawful. This right, in the hands of the people, is not a threat to democratic governance, but its very assertion.*

(continued on page 23...)





# A message from the...



## Women's President

— by Joan Brady

### In my Expert Opinion...

I have just spent an enjoyable week wandering the back roads of Ontario and speaking to many farmers and business folk. Although commissioned by another organization, from a personal perspective, these conversations really encouraged me, and expanded my knowledge and appreciation for the farming and food industry, and the many good people that impact it on a day to day level.

It is amazing the depth of knowledge and expertise that exists, much of it developed over years of facing challenges and unknowns. Also, there is an openness to not only share the hard-won knowledge, but also a reflection that there is so much more to learn. Farming can build on both the past traditions and future opportunities, and it is quite unique in that each operation is tailored to specific conditions including: climate, land type, market availability, and more.

Again and again, in last week's conversations, some similar themes appeared. Crucial to increasing skill sets was the importance of mentorship and peer led education, as well as selecting a balanced roster of academia and those with first-hand knowledge. Many solutions to various challenges have or will be discovered, but the lack of risk capacity and objective extension will limit the successful adaption of these ideas. The government's innovation agenda seems to be limited to established interests with their own ability to initially invest and then cash in on these developments. And, finally, that those experts in networking, collaboration, time management, innovation, adaption and determination exist in rural communities throughout this country and yes, they live and work on farms.

I consider the farm families in the NFU as expert in the areas of food production, as well as in rural life and livelihoods. When I consider the attack on the Canadian Wheat Board, my greatest disappointment is the lack of acknowledgement that the Western farmers are the experts here and they can be relied on to make the decision that will be best for their collective future.

They made those decisions when they created the CWB and have continued to make those decisions as they lead its long productive history. The Harper government is short-sighted and arrogant to think that they and their bureaucracy have more knowledge and expertise, leading into this economically volatile time.

Recently, I received an invitation to a Canadian Food Summit, sponsored by the Conference board of Canada and their new Centre for Food in Canada. The summit is the kick off for a process which will culminate in a "Canadian Food Strategy that will offer a blueprint for a renewed food system in Canada." Interestingly enough, in the long list of global and national 'experts' that will address the conference, there is only one farm voice, that of CFA President Ron Bonnet. He will address the conference on the drive for deregulation. Again, a great deal of emphasis on research and lack of input from a farm level, combined with a staggering registration fee will limit the participation of farm experts. The resulting Canadian Food Strategy will again reflect and prioritize the corporate agenda.

As I work within my community and at various levels for the NFU, my message is always the same: farmers are the experts in farming and all that it entails, and they need to be able to impact every level of the food system. They have the skills and vision to ensure our future. As on many fronts, we fight to participate and be heard. As the value of our work and stake in the agricultural industry is constantly diminished, it will take considerable confidence and encouragement to move forward. So, to all NFU members and those that care about our future and support us, thank you for your continued expertise, passion and convictions. You are the experts and it will take our collective vision and strength to move the Canadian Food System to the place it needs to be for a sustainable and equitable future.

*In Union,*

*Joan Brady, Women's President*



# A message from the...



Cammie Harbottle

## Youth President and Youth Vice President



Paul Slomp

At the NFU convention in London, the NFU Youth had great representation from across the country, with the exception of Region 7 (Alberta) – who did manage to submit a youth report – and Region 5 (Manitoba). Every year, the NFU youth makes bursaries available to help youth from across the country make it to convention. Only two out of the four bursaries were claimed this year, which means that we missed the opportunity to bring two youth to convention. For next year's convention (and conventions that follow), please help us bring youth to convention. Please reach out to youth in your region who might want to come to convention and make sure they are aware of the available bursaries to help cover the cost.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved with the annual NFU Youth fundraiser at convention, the silent auction. Thank you to all the people who hauled goods, books, food, and hand-made crafts across this great land to donate to the silent auction. Also a great thank you to everyone who dug deep into their pockets and entered into friendly bidding rivalries to generously feed the NFU Youth coffers. Thank you! We managed to raise \$1,303 for this year's youth activities!

During the convention's youth caucus meeting, we reviewed the activities of the NFU Youth in 2011, received youth reports from the different regions, and outlined a basic goals and direction of the NFU Youth for 2012. Doug Scott, an NFU board member from Region 7, shared his experiences becoming an NFU member and gave us a brief overview of the current Canadian Wheat Board fight and the implications of Bill C-18. We finished the meeting off by writing letters to the Canadian Senate, encouraging them to call for a thorough

investigation into the consequences of Bill C-18 if it were to become law. In total, the NFU Youth wrote and faxed seven individual letters and one collective statement to the Senate as part of the save the CWB campaign.

This time of year, following convention, is an exciting one for the NFU youth. We turn the page and begin to plan for the year to come, including our annual youth meeting. Last year, the goal of our annual youth meeting was to strengthen and develop the internal organization of the youth. That is how we will continue to work together and engage with other young farmers across the country. We also reached out to other local and young farmers and food based organizations on the west coast of BC with the aim of building alliances and increasing the NFU presence in that corner of the country.

This year, our annual youth meeting will be held near Edmonton, Alberta in early March, and will focus on farmer organizing: past, present, and future. We recognize the wealth of experiences and knowledge within the NFU and will be looking to many of you to bring us insight into the past. We also hope to visit the Battle River Railroad, a remarkable example of farmer organizing in our present. We will then spend some time considering our role as the NFU youth, and how we can apply the collective experiences of NFU farmers over the years to our work today and in the years to come.

If you, or any youth in your region, are interested in getting involved with the youth this year, please contact us: [cammie@waldegrave.org](mailto:cammie@waldegrave.org) or [paulslomp@gmail.com](mailto:paulslomp@gmail.com). We will be sending out a call for participation in the annual youth meeting early in the New Year and hope to hear from many of you!

—nfu—



# Convention 2011 Highlights

## FOOD SAFETY PANEL

The three speakers on the Food Safety panel were Ruth Pryzner, an ecologically and economically self sustainably mixed farmer from Manitoba; Dr. Freeman Boyd, the Local Food Coordinator for Foodlink Grey Bruce; and Fred de Martines, who started Perth Pork products in 1992 with a small herd of wild boars.

Pryzner's presentation compared small and large abattoirs. Large federally inspected abattoirs are highly mechanized and designed to minimize costs and maximize production. Traceability is very minimal in federal plants. Provincially inspected plants are much smaller, and the animals are treated better, and the workers are happier. In small plants the traceability is nearly 100 percent.

Dr. Freeman Boyd's presentation focused on small abattoir survival. He stressed the importance of focusing on the history of regulation of abattoirs. He pointed out that systematic oversight is actually a very recent thing, and that at one point every hamlet had

an abattoir. Boyd also explained that the ability to ship meat is actually a very recent phenomenon, and that lengthened food chains lead to diet related disease. Boyd proposed two tiers of regulations in order to ensure small abattoir survival. Small abattoirs require exemptions and/or exceptions from regulations intended for large abattoirs.

Fred de Martines shared his experience with working with traceability every day as a heritage breed pork and wild boar farmer. Fred argued that farmers must strive to comply with government regulations and consumer demands. It is not about what the farmer thinks is best or how he/she sees the issue, it is about what the customer wants and the confidence they have in your product. To ensure traceability farmers must ensure that every package of meat in every box is labeled. Farmers must also make sure they deliver their meat in refrigerated trucks and have their meat tested. —nfu—

## LAND GRABBING IN CANADA

The three presenters on the Land Grabbing in Canada panel were Carl Cossack of the North Dufferin County Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT); Stephen Ogden from Simcoe county and chairman of the Community Monitoring Committee; and, Dr. Susan Machum, who is a Canada Research Chair in Social Justice at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Cossack explained how the Highlands Companies came into Melancthon township, told everyone that they intended to start a huge potatoe operation, and made offers for land. However, the Highlands Companies made a proposal for an open pit, below water table quarry, that would span some 2000 football fields. Cossack warned that the aquifer will become recycled open pit mine floor water, and the quarry presents a very serious threat to the fresh water river systems in the area. The real problem with these developments is that "no one has any skin in the game, except the locals."

Ogden described how everything began with a proposal to construct a landfill, an integrated state

management system, and a gravel pit. The preparation for the Environmental Assessment (EA) took four years. After they had won the EA, the Liberal Cabinet of the day said that the dump should go ahead, if the proponents fixed up a few things. After carrying out an extensive investigation into the plan, Ogden's group found it to be flawed. But, no one would believe them. Eventually the political pressure from the people was so great that the dump was stopped. But, it took 25 years.

Dr. Machum outlined the history and themes involved in land grabbing. Interests with money buy up the land of those who are struggling to make ends meet. According to Machum land grabbing is not new, as it has been going on since the colonial period. The root underlying causes of land grabbing is our system of private property and the way that governments have facilitated the growth of corporate power. Machum echoed Ogden's point that fighting land grabbing requires a huge amount of effort in order to get your politicians to listen to you. —nfu—



## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE ON LAND ISSUES

Ellen Gabriel gave the Indigenous Perspective On Land Issues presentation. Gabriel was the spokesperson for the peoples of Kanehsatake during the Oka crisis in 1990. She was worked diligently over the past 21 years toward the protection of the history, culture, and identity of indigenous peoples.

Gabriel began her presentation by describing the deep respect that mother earth is granted in indigenous cultures. She stressed that it is time that we stop exploiting and abusing our mother. Gabriel described how Canada's two sets of laws – one for Aboriginal peoples and one for the rest of Canadians – have been fundamental to the mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples. Canada enacted laws that prevented Aboriginal peoples from selling food to non-Aboriginal farmers. Also, until this year Aboriginal communities had no access human rights mechanisms; they are governed entirely by the Indian Act. Finally, Canada, along with all colonizer countries, has

refused to recognize the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Gabriel sees many parallels between the plight of farmers and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Although farmers feed everyone else, many live in poverty and go hungry. She also expressed disgust at the way that government is treating farmers with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board and land grabbing.

Gabriel stated that money is at the heart of much of this mistreatment. Companies like Monsanto have introduced GMOs in a big experiment, for the pursuit of profit. She said that “Monsanto has taken a beautiful plant, corn, and turned it into a monster.” She also said that our export-oriented food system has caused us to under-appreciate food. There is no such thing as seasonal food anymore.

Gabriel concluded that Aboriginal peoples and farmers must work together, in to fight oppression and to protect the environment.

—nfu—

## CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Allen Oberg farms with his brother near Forestberg Alberta. He is also a farmer elected chair of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB).

Oberg explained how it was a bittersweet pleasure to be with the NFU at that time, because of its close relationship with the CWB's farmer elected board of directors. The loss of the CWB's single desk would be a tragedy for all Canadian farmers, because it would represent the further erosion of farmer control and influence in agriculture. The Harper government had clearly placed the interests of Canadian farmers last, behind ideology, industry, US interests, and European interests. Its approach to farmers is to make sure its message sounds good and hope no one notices the disaster in the details.

Oberg stressed that the interest of farmers and corporations are not the same. The grain industry is dominated by just a handful of powerful multinational corporations which have but one objective: to increase their own profits. They

cannot do so without increasing their margin by taking more from farmers. He described how he has found it frustrating to no end, that some farmers cannot see that. Oberg said that these corporations cannot believe their good fortune; they are on the verge of finally gaining full control over the Western Canadian grains industry.

Oberg told the NFU audience that his presentation would be one of his final as a representative of a farmer elected organization. Once Bill C-18 received Royal Assent in a few short weeks, there would be absolutely no role for farmers in leading a marketing organization which they continue to pay for entirely. The CWB would no longer be able to put farmers first. He also warned that the Harper government is aiming to eliminate supply management next.

Oberg concluded that the clock has been turned back 100 years. It will be up to farmers to start over again and begin re-building the great cooperative movement. Farmers must to refuse to have their voices silenced.

—nfu—



## DIRT: THE EROSION OF CIVILIZATIONS

The public event presentation was given by Dr. David Montgomery, a Professor at the University of Washington. His presentation was based on his book entitled “Dirt: the Erosion of Civilizations.”

Montgomery asserted soil erosion has led to the collapse of ancient societies. The longevity of civilizations has been influenced by such things as climate change, natural disasters, and war. But, these factors do not explain why each civilization has existed for about 1000 years.

Montgomery described how a soil system is produced by the weathering of rock mixed with biological matter, and lost from erosion downhill. Soil thickness reflects local climate, vegetation, topography, and geology. A change in soil thickness is the net difference between soil production and loss.

The invention of the plough fundamentally altered the balance between soil production and soil

erosion. The Greeks, Romans, and Mayan civilizations were all undermined by soil erosion.

Understanding soil erosion requires an examination of the economic and social conditions of a society. Short term solutions - increase production, to increase income - cause long term erosion. Short term pressures do not allow farmers to prioritize the long term interests of the land.

Montgomery found that global net soil erosion is occurring at the rate of one millimetre per year. At that rate it takes about 1000 years for soil thickness to collapse. The time period of soil erosion closely matches the historical time span of civilizations.

The solution is that soils need to be viewed differently. We need to look at rebuilding of soils, not just preventing erosion.

He concluded with a quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt: “a nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself.”

—nfu—

## LAND GRABBING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The speakers on the Land Grabbing in Developing Countries panel were Devlin Kuyek, a researcher with GRAIN; Anuradha Mittal, the Executive Director of the Oakland Institute; and, Lauren Ravon, a Policy Advisor at Oxfam Canada.

Kuyek explained that land grabbing in developing countries consists of the acquisition, either through purchase or long term lease (typically 99 years), of large tracts of land (usually over 10,000 hectares) by corporations or governments overseas. The economic crisis of recent years has seen countries and investors look for farmland abroad for food production and asset diversification. Over 60 countries and 200 million hectares have been targeted by land grabs. About \$15-20 billion has been invested. Private equity funds and pension funds are heavily involved.

Mittal explained how the Oakland Institute examined land grabbing in Africa. They soon learned that the scale of land grabbing is incredibly scary, and that there is considerable lack of transparency. The investors are hedge fund people, who are looking for the next commodity market to invest in. The largest land deal in Tanzania is 800,000 acres, where some 60,000 peoples live. A US investor can just come in and move them off. US universities are involved. Millions of hectares of

land in Africa is being given away. Many development and aid organizations are viewing land grabbing as the way forward for economic development in Africa. Land deals in places such as Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Mozambique offer incredible tax holidays for the investors.

Ravon presented on a land grab example in Uganda. In 2005 a British firm, the New Forrest Company, obtained licence from Ugandan government for 20,000 hectares of land to produce timber plantations. The company planned to invest \$50 million. The New Forrest Company describes itself as an ethical company, and is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Thanks to its ethical image, it has gotten huge investments from big banks. The government of Uganda claimed that the people living on the land were doing so illegally, even though had been there for decades. The police and army evicted 20,000 people in 2006-10. Many community leaders were arrested, plantations burned down, livestock killed, and there were allegations of rape. The High Court of Uganda asked for a halt to the process, but the evictions continued. People’s income and access to food is seriously undermined. There is a need to investigate the standards that allow these companies to claim they are ethical and certified.

—nfu—





# Points of Order

- by Cory Ollikka



It is a sincere privilege to co-chair an Annual (National) Convention of the National Farmers Union.

I have heard much anecdotal evidence from many quarters that ours are the best chaired conventions in Canada's farm policy community. In fact, it is among the best chaired conventions of any kind in all of Canada. This is something in which I have always taken great pride in my 25 years of involvement in the NFU, and long before I had the privilege of co-chairing.

However, in the heat of it, it is not always so glorious. Our issues are plentiful. Our membership is diverse, wise, precise, and talented. Our opinions are all strong and all valid. That can make for heated debate, which is good. It makes the job of chair difficult, which is not a complaint.

Sometimes our convention chairs have been accused of being hard or rigid. Perhaps we are at times. If so, it is not for the sake of being hard-nosed or rigid, or to put anyone "in their place." One of many unsung successes of the NFU lies in long-term citizenship and leadership impacts stemming from the governance of our annual National Convention.

NFU convention chairs set about a pedagogical path by enforcing the rules of order (ie. the Steering Committee Report along with Robert's Rules of Order as recorded in O. Garfield Jones), as adopted democratically by the convention. This "educational role" is not formalized by way of any "job description." It is just what we do. But we do it consciously.

It is certain under democratic rules of order, such as Robert's Rules of Order, that the voices of all be heard with equal weighting; and that the voice of the minority be respected as valid, while the majority guides the organization.

But, no one is born knowing democratic rules of order. There is precious little exposure to it through the formal education system, or even through the few well-intentioned volunteer mechanisms that remain in rural Canada. And, what exposure there is, I would argue, is not of the caliber needed to adequately equip our citizens with the fundamental skills to maneuver in the context of the complex

democratic mechanisms of our local, provincial, and federal governments. Democratic structures and processes govern our daily existence on many levels. Our electorate remains underskilled in the exercising of democratic discourse and process. It is a form of literacy and a skill that citizens should take as seriously as their belief in democracy itself.

To be firm, but courteous, in the exercising of the rules of order governing an NFU National Convention is to "kill two birds with one stone." Not only is the business of convention conducted fairly and efficiently, but each participant, whether she/he attend the microphones or not, goes away with a solid sense of process. This sense of process, in turn, serves our activist members as they conduct business in the Municipal Council Chambers, Provincial Legislatures, at the Parliament, or in any number of community, co-op or local organization meetings. It is my experience that NFU members shine in these contexts; they stand head and shoulders above the crowd in ALL of these contexts, whether they be formal leaders there or not.

I believe that NFU members stand out in all of the noted contexts largely because of the "unspoken" and "informal" training that they receive while participating in the NFU annual National Convention.

This training is something we take for granted, not selfishly, but unconsciously. It is something we quietly appreciate but rarely acknowledge, even to ourselves. And I do not mean "acknowledge" in the sense of "thanking" our convention chairs. I am talking about acknowledging our role in our own individual and collective learning.

It is only through learning to do things better that we can excel. And excel we must. It is only by excelling in these skills, and practically applying our collective wisdom and analysis that the NFU, with its limited numbers and resources, can overcome the immense odds that are stacked against us by using every single democratic mechanism at our disposal to its utmost.

Aristotle said: "Excellence is an art won by training and habituation".

This is who we are.

—nfu—



# NFU President Terry Boehm's presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011

The National Farmers Union (NFU) thanks the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry for his opportunity to present the NFU's views on Bill C-18, An Act to Reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board.

The NFU is the only voluntary, direct membership national farm organization in Canada. NFU members debate and develop economic and social policies which seek to maintain the family farm as the basic food producing unit in Canada.

The NFU represents farmers across Canada, the majority of whom are grain and oilseed producers. Farmers have become very efficient at growing grain. However, farmers realize that their livelihoods, and their futures depend as much on the institutions and structures that seek to balance huge powers exerted on them by large railways, international grain companies, and consolidated input suppliers like fuel, fertilizer, seed, chemical, and machinery suppliers. The CWB is one such institution that by virtue of its single desk marketing power, brings some balance into the equation as it acts in farmers interests only. It also brings premiums in the marketplace for farmers' wheat and barley, by being a global trader that is able to exercise both market discipline and the ability to price discriminate in international and domestic markets.

Market discipline is possible because as the sole marketer of western Canadian wheat and barley, the CWB does not depress the price of grains by marketing quality grains all at once when there is a surplus. For example, in those years when the prairies harvest high quality, high protein wheat, it would be very easy to erode the premium it if was quickly placed on the market or in a select market.

When one makes fundamental institutional and regulatory changes, if one does not take into account the reason they are there in the first place and the power relationships they addressed, you will end up with disastrous consequences. With Bill C-18 this

will be the case for farmers, citizens, and the economy of the country. The winners will clearly be the transnational grain companies and the two very powerful Canadian railways. Farmers will lose.

The CWB and the single desk marketing structure did not develop out of a vacuum. It was the result of a long genesis of farmer agitation and farmers experience at the hands of big grain companies and big railways. The agitation for a wheat board was built on the favourable experience farmers had during World War I with the first Board of Grain Supervisors and then the first Canadian Wheat Board of 1919, which was unfortunately disbanded in one year, whereupon farmers saw grain prices collapse in 1921, by 400 percent. They then formed co-operative elevator companies in the mid 1920s, and created a Central Selling Agency to market their grain. This worked well until the grain exchanges refused to deal with them and allow them to hedge their grain in 1928. Grain exchanges were to benefit the big grain companies, and not farmers and their cooperatives. The economic collapse of 1929 further added to the already difficult position of farmers.

In 1935 the CWB was created as a voluntary pooling agency, much like what Bill C-18 is proposing. It was a huge money loser for the government until the single desk was initiated in 1943. Farmers only utilized the voluntary pool and board when prices were falling and looked to its initial price as a floor price only.

In Canada countless Royal Commissions and studies have concluded that it is not in the public interest to leave powerful economic players unbridled. The Manitoba Grain Act of 1900 and the Canada Grain Act of 1912, Crows Nest Pass Freight Agreement, and the later Western Canadian Transportation Act, all had been established to balance the interests of powerful economic players and the public interest and ultimately farmers.

*(continued on page 11...)*



*(Presentation to the Senate Standing Committee, from page 10)*

In the 1960s Justice MacPherson in his Report on Rail Transportation recommended initiatives (regulations) to mimic competition where none existed. He understood that the two railways had farmers as captive shippers and acted in concert to the detriment of farmers. He understood that pure exercise of economic power was not in the public interest and needed to be tempered and directed for the common good. This does not mean ending private enterprise, but rather forcing it to be a team player in the economy rather than only acting in their interests. To this day the railways are very punitive to anyone who dares challenge them. Only regulation allows their punitive measures to be moderated

In Canada we developed a collaborative system in agriculture with the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) and the CWB working with formerly co-operative Grain Companies, but now largely trans-nationals and the railways to efficiently transport, sell, and grade our grain. This system earns us premiums and allows a very constrained transportation system to move our crop to port or sale in an orderly manner. Clearly without the CWB and price pooling, grain would not flow into elevators smoothly through the year, but rather it would flood in after harvest or at other times when prices were high and trickle in at other times. The CWB's co-ordination benefits not just board grains, but all grains because transportation and elevator space would be rationed by high or higher prices at times of demand costing farmers more and lowering their returns.

The CWB, single desk selling and price pooling allows all farmers equal access to markets and does not force them to compete with themselves for elevator space, transportation, etc.

Grain companies are trading on margins and to maximize profits they pay as little as possible to farmers and sell as high as they can, capturing short term opportunities. They have consolidated to maximize their power. They are giants. As Ed Partridge said in 1905, "Giants may compete with giants, pygmies with pygmies. But, pygmies with giants? Never!"

This is what is missing in all of the government's initiatives in regard to the CWB. They do not recognize that powerful players will capture revenues that are justly farmers at the end of the day. Every initiative in recent years that

attempted to deregulate and let market forces prevail has had predictable outcomes. Unfortunately the promises of prosperity to farmers has not materialized because in every instance consolidation has taken place, costs have been externalized to farmers and in general farmers income has dropped and farms have disappeared. This was predictable because the promises were made on the false assumptions, that a free market does not need to be regulated or that institutions like the CWB do not need a legislated single desk to be able to benefit farmers and the economy as a whole.

I urge the Senate to reject this Bill in its entirety for the good of farmers and the country as a whole. It is bad public policy handled in a particularly odious manner by the Minister who has only yesterday been admonished by the courts as acting with a disregard for the rule of law. The majority of farmers support the single desk and always have.

So called marketing freedom has long ago been addressed by the CWB's producer direct sales program. There is no need nor reason to pass this bill. Farmers pay for the CWB and direct it through a democratic board of directors. The CWB benefits farmers and what is wrong with that? —nft—

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY**

*You're Invited:*

*Come see how to PARE your energy*

**Evacuated Solar Tube Heating  
Small Wind Turbines  
Structurally Insulated Panel Building**

**February 25, 2012 (10 AM - 5 PM) to  
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**PEDERSEN APIARIES  
CUT KNIFE, SASKATCHEWAN**

***Directions:* 13 km north of Inc. of Hwy 40 & Hwy 21 S  
(Wilbert), 5 km west, 2 km north**



# Therefore Be It Resolved ....

## RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE NFU'S 42<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION

NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> TO 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2011 – LONDON, ONTARIO

### **Statistics Canada Farm Financial Survey**

Whereas the Statistics Canada Farm Financial Survey must be completed by way of telephone interview after the necessary paperwork is completed, and

Whereas a lot of time would be saved by producers by mailing the survey in or completing it on line,

Therefore be it resolved that the National Farmers Union request Statistics Canada to make the necessary changes so producers can mail in the completed Farm Financial Survey or submit it online.

### **National Traceability Program for Beef**

Whereas the provincial governments, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association are involved in developing a national traceability program for beef, and

Whereas two components of this program are Premises Identification and Animal Movement Recording, and

Whereas heavy fines will be levied on farmers for violation of the rules, and

Whereas these two components are not an essential part of a traceability program,

Therefore be it resolved that the National Farmers Union strongly oppose the inclusion of Farm Premise Identification and Animal Movement Recording.

### **GE Alfalfa**

Whereas the NFU has policy to oppose genetic engineering of crops, and

Whereas GE alfalfa is a major threat to farmers in Canada,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU develop a strategy to fight GE alfalfa as soon as possible.

### **Affordable Power**

Whereas high energy costs adversely affect the farming community to maintain its viability, and

Whereas poorly conceived, implemented and misdirected government policy and hydro monopoly decisions for generation and distribution affect us all, for example buying power from foreign coal plants at higher costs than our more efficient Lambton Generation Plant, and

Whereas unearned golden parachute payouts have been awarded to hydro officials,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU stand up for our right to reasonable and affordable power to our members and communities.

### **Food Labelling**

Whereas in order to exercise free choice, Canadians have the right to know the origin of their food and its content in terms of safety, nutrition and possible genetic engineering, and

Whereas food industry refusal to include information about genetic engineering on food labels denies Canadians the right to make informed choices about the food they eat,

Therefore be it resolved that National Farmers Union develop a strategic policy initiative to actively lobby government to revise food labelling regulations to include information about any genetically engineered components of food.

### **Community Control of Green Energy**

Whereas the NFU supports in principle the Green Energy Act and Feed in Tariff program in place in Ontario, and

Whereas the Feed in Tariff program has the potential to generate \$100 billion worth of energy revenue over the next 50 years, and

Whereas Ontario's electricity system has developed for the benefit of the people of Ontario, through public ownership of the production and distribution of electrical power, and

*(continued on page 13...)*





Whereas the NFU believes renewable energy projects must be owned and controlled by local communities and that the profits and benefits of such projects must go to the community and the public at large, and

Whereas the NFU believes the approvals process of the Green Energy Act facilitates the loss of farmer and rural community control over what happens in our communities, especially in relation to industrial wind developments, and

Whereas through the Green Energy Act, as it now stands, industrial wind developers have the potential to take the control and majority of the benefits of a rural resource, wind, away from farmers and rural communities. Although there are a few community-based cooperative renewable energy projects, the majority of the renewable energy production projects already operating or being erected in the province are owned and operated by private, energy corporations whose decisions are driven primarily by profit, and

Whereas renewable energy co-operatives offer an important vehicle for community ownership of renewable power projects,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU in relation to green energy, support and advocate for:

1. A right of first refusal by local communities, in the form of local non-profit organizations, co-operative corporations, Municipalities or other representations of local residents or government in developing a renewable energy resources for electricity generation in the municipal area.
2. A recognized right of communities to set targets, minimum or maximum , for developing renewable energy from local resources, and a right to refuse further development beyond those limits.
3. A right of municipalities to have full access to all resource and environmental studies, as well as land lease agreements.
4. A right of municipalities to demand a negotiated royalty on energy produced from local resources.
5. The establishment of preferential access rights to the distribution grid for renewable energy co-operatives, municipalities, and local owners, over other developers of renewable energy projects.

### **Sow Stalls**

Whereas the majority of female breeding pigs (sows) kept on farms in Manitoba are housed in sow stalls (gestation crates) for most of their adult lives, and

Whereas sow stalls are one of the most restrictive forms of confinement, causing physical injuries and psychological harm to sows who are so confined they cannot even turn around, and

Whereas sows are social animals and should be housed in groups with others of their kind, and

Whereas sows have a strong urge to root and build a nest for their oncoming piglets and, therefore, should be provided with straw to meet their behavioural and maternal needs, and

Whereas the increasing number of sow stall barns across the globe may threaten export markets for Canadian producers not meeting the higher standards of import countries, and

Whereas Manitoba Pork has already suggested that producers phase-out sow stalls by 2025, giving credence to the proposition that sow stalls are an inappropriate form of housing for breeding pigs, and

Whereas sow stalls have been a primary mechanism to allow for the expansion and operation of industrial hog production which has forced most small hog producers out of hog production,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU petition all relevant levels of government to pass legislation banning the use of sow stalls.

### **Municipal Sewage**

Whereas the Canadian Council of Minister of the Environment (CCME) is developing a harmonized policy on the management of municipal (sewage sludge), also called biosolids, and

Whereas sewage sludge contains toxic metals, dangerous chemicals, endocrine disruptors, antibiotics and disease-causing pathogens, and Whereas applying sewage sludge as a fertilizer to farmland and home gardens can harm people's and ecosystem health, evening causing death, and

Whereas there are other methods to manage sewage sludge biosolids without putting it on farmland and home gardens,

*(continued on page 14...)*

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU recommends that municipal sewage sludge biosolids be managed with best alternative sewage sludge management techniques and technologies designed to prevent damage and harm to the environment and people's health, and

Be it further resolved that NFU national develop a position paper and course of action to oppose the use of municipal sewage sludge biosolids as a fertilizer for human and animal food production and to insist governments only approve and/or develop methods for managing biosolids that prevents harm to human, animal and environmental health.

### **Food Safety Standards**

Whereas the Manitoba Government passed the Food Safety and Related Amendments Act in June 2009 and is currently developing regulations, and

Whereas the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives has committed to public consultations on these regulations prior to their approval and implementation, and

Whereas the Minister, Stan Struthers revealed to Region 5 NFU members at the 2010 annual meeting that government intends to proceed with the imposition of a national meat hygiene standard, and

Whereas the imposition of such national standards on local, provincially inspected and regulated abattoirs has the potential to cause such facilities to close, and

Whereas provincial abattoirs are essential to farmers who have developed, or are or are planning to develop local or regional direct markets for the meat they produce, and

Whereas those markets enable farmers to capture more of the food dollar and achieve a return that exceeds the cost of production, educates people about the difference between agriculture and industrial food production and builds relationships with consumers that helps farmers be economically viable, and

Whereas provincial standards have ensured that food available for local consumers is safe, and

Whereas direct marketing is the most efficient and effective manner that farmers can meet the stated government goal of farm to plate food traceability, and

Whereas the primary economic beneficiary of national meat hygiene standards will be national and multinational food corporations, and

Whereas the adoption of national standards in other jurisdictions such as Ontario, has demonstrated that national standards are impeding the ability for farmers to provide food directly to consumers,

Be it further resolved that NFU National develop a comprehensive policy on food safety standards that promotes and enables farmers to increase their ability to engage in local, direct-marketing of their products.

### **Coccidiostats in Poultry Feed**

Whereas Canada has the best vaccine in the world available to prevent coccidiosis in chickens, and

Whereas non-organic feed companies add drugs to all starter poultry feeds and that these drugs only prevent coccidiosis, and

Whereas unnecessary drug use in animals is widely known to be a significant contributing factor in the development of "super bugs" and antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria. Antibiotics can save human and animal lives when they are used to treat a specific illness, and

Whereas farmers need to carefully guard against their misuse and unnecessary use so that they can continue to be a viable option in human and veterinary health care, and

*(continued on page 15...)*



**Photo:** Ruth Pryzner of Manitoba weighs in on a resolution debate.

Whereas the financial cost to taxpayers to regulate and provide surveillance of coccidiostats is unnecessary given the availability of the vaccine, and

Whereas organisms in nature, are at risk from exposure to antibiotics and mutating bacteria, and

Whereas the risk to human health also comes in the form of exposure to toxins such as inorganic arsenic such as that contained in Pfizer's product roxarsone,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU demand the federal and provincial governments ban the sale and use of all coccidiostats in poultry feed, approving the sale and use of vaccines directly to and by producers and initiating an educational campaign to encourage the routine vaccination of poultry for coccidiosis.

### **Animal Welfare Law**

Whereas it is in the best interests of farmers to ensure that animal welfare and care standards are superior to the minimum requirements contained in existing codes of practice and legislation, and

Whereas these codes and legislative requirements serve the interests of industrial methods of animal food production and processing rather than farmers and the needs of animals, and

Be it resolved that the NFU investigate the gaps in current animal welfare legislation and codes, and develop a report and recommendations for the consideration of members at the 2012 NFU national convention.

### **Parity Pricing**

Whereas, if farmers don't set a parity price on their commodities for sale, they have only themselves to blame for their financial hardships. To add insult to injury, they will be known to have shirked their patriotic responsibility to earn their fair share of new debt-free money into circulation, and

Whereas, once the parity price formula is a federally legislated law, the price will automatically go up with any imposed increase in cost of production. This parity price will act as an on-going deterrent to any unreasonable costs being imposed on farmers in the future – such as rail line abandonment, loss of the Crow Rate, 20¢/gallon fuel – now more than \$5.00/gallon, and so on, and

Whereas parity prices will draw farmers back to the land, leaving jobs in town to the town people, and

Whereas parity prices will enable our young people to enjoy a lifetime of farming – if they so wish, and

Whereas our rural areas are in dire need of a population increase by our young people, and

Whereas parity prices for farm commodities will enable more farmers to make a decent living on smaller farms – freeing up more land for young farmers, and

Whereas if anyone feels uneasy that a parity price might give some farmers too much money – not to worry! Our income tax system will put any surplus money back in the federal pot, and

Whereas if anyone thinks food prices will be too high when farmers receive a parity price – not to worry! The Federal Government can buy our farm produce at a parity price with debt and interest-free, Constitutional money at no cost to our nation. Then they can sell it to the consumers at the regular price. In time, with the use of this debt and interest-free money, the cost of everything will come down, and

Whereas as Canada's Constitutional Supreme Law orders our Federal Government to create this country's entire money supply and spend it into circulation – debt and interest-free. So we can all feel proud, providing an opportunity for our Federal Government to obey the Supreme Law, and at the same time, to provide for the very first time ever, a parity price for Canada's farm commodities, and

Whereas, in a Democracy, it is the duty of the voting public to only vote for potential servants that promise to obey the law and serve the well-being of the majority,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU demand of our Federal Government that they legislate a parity price be paid to Canada's farmers for all farm commodities produced and sold by them – forever and ever.

### **Canadian Wheat Board**

Whereas the CWB is a 5 billion dollar corporation owned and controlled by farmers through a majority of a duly elected Board of Directors, and

Whereas the CWB returns competitive earnings annually to its farmer-owners as well as contributes, coordinates and advocates in various ways on behalf of farmers' interests, and

*(continued on page 16...)*



Whereas the CWB derives its market power and general influence on behalf of farmers through preservation of the single desk for sales of wheat and export and malting barley, and

Whereas the laws of Canada mandate a farmer plebiscite in order to affect any changes to the CWB Act,

Therefore be it resolved that the National Farmers Union take all means available to support the CWB in its current form and strongly urge the Federal Government to respect the Laws of Canada and hold a farmer plebiscite as mandated in 47.1 of the CWB Act.

#### **Land Availability for Low Income Housing**

Whereas urban planning for low income housing presently is not including space for family and community gardens, and

Whereas food sovereignty requires more local control over food production marketing and less reliance on agri-business and food retail corporations,

Be it resolved that the NFU locals/districts urge the appropriate urban planning bodies to include land for the production of quality food from family and community gardens and farmers' markets.

#### **Hydraulic Fracturing**

Whereas hydraulic fracturing - fracking is a process, and

Whereas millions of gallons of water and /or and hundreds of chemicals, many of which are toxic and /or carcinogenic, extract coal bed methane, shale oil, shale gas from many thousands of feet below the surface, and

Whereas the exploitation of mineral rights to use this process throughout Canada is increasing at an alarming rate, and

Whereas fracking is known to contaminate ground and drinking water, as well as loss of 70% of the water used which is never recovered, and

Whereas, the contamination and quantities of chemicals used are considered proprietary trade secrets, and are not made public, can spill, air emissions affect local air quality, and federal and provincial governments have yet to establish regulations and safety standards to protect people and drinking water sources,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU lobby the federal and provincial governments to stop fracking projects immediately.

#### **Testing Food Re: Radioactive Contamination**

Whereas the scale and danger of nuclear accidents has been made very clear by the recent events in Fukushima, Japan, and

Whereas the CFIA and Health Canada are not disclosing information on nuclear fallout levels and contamination in Canada,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU lobby provincial governments and federal agencies like the CFIA and Environmental Canada, and Health Canada to regularly and weekly test food and the environment for radioactive fallout and contamination. They should also publish these results extensively and widely.

#### **Canadian Wheat Board**

Whereas supply management sectors, in every province in Canada, depend on single desk selling authority, and

Whereas after the axe has fallen for the single desk authority of the CWB, supply management sectors will be the next sacrifice on the neo-liberal offering block of the Harper government,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU urges the five supply management sectors in each province to express "public" solidarity with the CWB in its quest for maintaining the single desk authority.

#### **Land Seizure under Weed Control Acts**

Whereas the Weed Control act and the Associated Weed Control Act 19/2010 in Alberta allow for the government seizure of land title in case of non-compliance, and

Whereas similar draconian steps are popping up in the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, Bill 36 and in the intellectual property rights section of the proposed CETA agreement,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU researches the legality of seizure of land title by government, in case of weed control act infractions or negligence, and

*(continued on page 17...)*





Be it further resolved that the NFU opposes the seizure of land title as being a tool to enforce the weed control act.

### **Environmental Protection**

Be it resolved that the NFU demands that the land, air and groundwater around Fort McMurray be examined for damages.

### **Stopping Landgrab**

Whereas there is a huge farmland grab across the country, and

Whereas this is leading to the destruction of local farming communities, and

Whereas this threatens food security and food sovereignty for Canada,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU work with other organizations to continue to push for federal and provincial government legislation and other actions to ensure that farmers have access to farmland and to prevent speculative landbanking so that future generations can have a secure supply of local food.

### **Legal Actions re: CWB**

Whereas, the Ministry of Agriculture has recently issued directives to take the fiscally prudent \$60 million contingency fund, confiscate it and a further \$140 million of farmers wheat board income payments, for the purpose of destroying the CWB, and

Whereas the only group with the legal authority to direct CWB funds are the duly elected CWB directors,

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU investigate legal action, along with our allies, against the federal government to turn the farmers moneys, contained in the CWB contingency fund, back to farmers.

### **CWB Contingency Fund**

Whereas the Minister of Agriculture has recently issued extraordinary directives and regulations respecting the Canadian Wheat Board, and

Whereas these directives are regulations have the effect of lowering final payments/benefits to western Canadian farmers,



### **Photo:**

*Convention Chairs (left to right) Karen Pedersen, Coral Sproule, Jim Phelps and Cory Ollikka. They do an excellent job, as always. See Cory Ollikka's article on page 9.*

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU publicly condemn the Minister of Agriculture's recent directive and regulatory changes concerning the Canadian Wheat Board's contingency fund as said actions will lower final payments/benefits owed to western farmers for last year's grain sales.

### **NFU Position on Climate Change**

Whereas climate change is already undermining the livelihoods of farmers in Canada through extreme weather including unusual droughts, floods, wind storms and hail storms which are destroying crops, farmlands, livestock and homes and,

Whereas ecosystems everywhere are threatened by present and future impacts of climate change. Unpredictable weather threatens farming systems and farmers around the world who affected by the impacts of climate change and,

Whereas Canada has a disproportionate and historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions,

Therefore be it resolved that farmers and members of the National Farmers Union demand that our governments - municipal, provincial and federal, acknowledge the need to massively and urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions,

*(continued on page 18...)*

Be it further resolved that the NFU board combine the policies related to Climate Change into one chapter of the policy manual,

Be it further resolved that the NFU board identify gaps within the climate change policy and bring forward proposals to a future convention to fill those gaps.

#### **Funding for IPC**

Whereas, the Via Campesina advances economic, ecological and social knowledge that drives solutions to the struggles of farmers from all corners of the world, and

Whereas, the funding of Via Campesina North America no longer comes from internal Via Campesina sources,

Therefore be it resolved that this convention recommend to the board and executive of the NFU, that they allocate a minimum of 1.5% of gross membership revenues towards our own budget for participating in Via Campesina events.



**Photo:**

Former NFU President Stewart Wells shows his stuff at the NFU dance.

#### **Tax Services**

Whereas the NFU provides Income Tax Services in Manitoba and the East Coast, and

Whereas this appears to retain and possibly recruit members,

Therefore be it resolved that the national executive look into the feasibility of providing this service to all regions to maintain and increase membership levels.

#### **Extending Advance Payment Loans for Livestock**

Whereas many livestock farmers have taken out Advance Payment Loans a number of years ago, and

Whereas these cattle and hog loans are due March 2012 and March 2013 respectively, and

Whereas many of these producers are not in a position to repay these loans in the time frame, as many have no inventory,

Therefore be it resolved that the National Farmers Union request the federal government to extend the Advance Payment loans for livestock until such time as these farmers have received their cost of production out of the market place for ten consecutive years.

#### **Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement**

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU oppose the use of criminal penalties to enforce any form of intellectual property rights measures.

#### **Use of Chemicals for Pre-Harvest Dry Down**

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU initiate an examination of the practice of using chemicals for crop pre-harvest dry down purposes.

#### **Promoting Green Manures**

Therefore be it resolved that the NFU look at utilizing crop insurance programs to promote the practice of green manuring of land via premium reductions, increased yield guarantees or other incentives.

*~ end of resolutions ~*



# The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

**T**he National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Nikaela Lange (age 13) of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, and Rebecca Mills (age 19) of St. Marys, Ontario, who are the winners of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing. Nikaela lives with her family on an acreage near Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, and is a Grade 8 student at Dalmeny High School. Rebecca is a Second Year Bachelor of Arts Student at the University of Western Ontario and a future farmer.

The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the authors (age 21 years and under) of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. There are two age categories – 15 and under, and ages 16 to 21. The winner from each age category is awarded a prize of \$500. The theme of this year's essay was "The Future of Canada's Farmland".

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

## The Future of Canada's Farmland

—by Nikaela Lange (age 13), Dalmeny, Saskatchewan

The future of Canada's farmland is in jeopardy. It is often far more financially profitable in the long term for a farmer to sell his or her land knowing that it may be changed into some non-agricultural use, than to continue farming. Between urban sprawl, global warming, and younger generations of farmers being less likely to take over, farming seems to be getting lost in it all.

Urban sprawl is becoming a problem because our farmland is constantly being taken over so we will have more space for strip malls or new neighbourhoods, when not all of our current ones are being used to their full extent. I realize that we do occasionally need more stores or parking lots, but do we really need 10 in one area? You can see fields being taken out or cities being expanded to make room for new developments,

but not a lot of people think about what used to be in their place. This is a problem because if we do not have farmland then several people will have no source of income, and we will lose a lot of our food that is not imported. Good farms are being destroyed and being replaced with these so-called 'improvements'. This problem is caused by people constantly looking for new ideas, more efficiency, and more convenience. There is evidence of it everywhere. Any store you go into was once a field, perhaps even a farm. I think that what we need is more appreciation for our beautiful farmland that we have been given. Some authorities have said that urban sprawl is being criticized for leading to unnecessarily high costs for social services and private transportation, as well as lack of open public spaces.

(continued on page 20...)





In the Greater Toronto Area alone, more than 2,000 farms and 150,000 acres of farmland were lost to urban sprawl in the time between 1976 and 1996. This represented about 18% of Ontario's Class 1 farmland. Although farmland loss is not tracked as much today as it had been before, we do know that the amount of farmland in the GTA has dropped by at least 50,00 acres between 1996 and 2001, and that Ontario lost at least 600,00 acres of farmland between 1996 and 2006. It can take thousands of years to produce one centimetre of the topsoil needed for agricultural production. Because of this, Ontario's farmland should be seen as a limited natural resource, to be managed and protected.

Global Warming could potentially destroy our farmland. There is evidence in China of floods and droughts caused by the early effects of Global Warming destroying their farmland, which means there is a possibility of it happening in Canada as well. And at the rate we are going at now, it will probably not take very long.

Canada's farmland could be lost simply because there is no one left to manage it. This became a problem when birthrates started dropping, leaving us with not enough people to manage our farmland. Many people think that this is not an issue, or that it causes very little effect on the percent of our farmland, but they are wrong. It is and will cause a big dent in our percentages. The census reports that farmers are getting older overall, while fewer, younger individuals are continuing to work in the field. Lacking younger family members willing to take on the burden of managing the operation, many of the retiring farmers are hoping to cash out. Census' say that the average farmer's age has increased noticeably and few young people are continuing to participate in farming.

Another possibility is that Canada's farmland could be managed by computers or robots. If we have technology washing our dishes and doing our taxes, why not add managing our farmland to the ever-growing list? New technologies are being made that could quite possibly one day be able to manage our farmland for us, depriving us of plenty of jobs. And also, they are getting rid of some work



*Nikaela Lange being presented the Beingessner Award by NFU President Terry Boehm.*

ethic. If you work on a farm for part of your life, you probably have a good work ethic that will help you in other areas of your life. This whole problem started when some people started to try to make everything convenient and efficient. This could be compared loosely to the Industrial Revolution. Machines are changing the way we work, and the way we think. I am, again, biased here, because I am not really supporting all of our new technology that we are bringing in. I would much rather send a hand written letter or do my math with a pencil and paper, but that is another issue. So, anyways, I think doing hard work creates a stronger work ethic and, therefore, a better life. Although technology could make us have less work, I think

*(continued on page 21...)*





it is debateable whether less work is actually a good thing. Authorities say that this is happening, and although it is not always a bad thing, it is questionable whether it is really necessary.

And then, on a more positive note, there is a chance that Canada's farmland stays the same. As much a possibility of our farmland being changed or even destroyed, there is always the faint prospect of it remaining as it is. Many people, like organizations such as the NFU, are currently fighting for the well-being of our farmland. And there are plenty of reasons for this, too. For example, Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector is one of the most competitive in the world and is well-known as a reliable supplier of safe, high-quality products. Another is Canada is the world's fourth-largest agriculture and agri-food exporter, after the European Union (EU), the United States (US) and Brazil. The agriculture and agri-food sector directly provided one in eight jobs, accounting for 8% of total GDP in 2006. The agriculture and agri-food system employed 2.1 million Canadians in 2006. Agricultural land can play a complimentary role in sustaining

wildlife populations. Protecting our Canadian farmland helps to keep a productive land base for the agricultural economy. It helps guarantee a supply of locally grown goods. We need to protect our farmlands because if we don't, one day we might not have any. Part of the problem is that, for many farmers, agriculture is beginning to seem impossible. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of farms dropped about 7 percent according to the 2006 Statics Canada census. This is even more reason to try to keep our farmland as it is, or even how it used to be. Thriving and plentiful. Now, sure some people may not see this as 'visionary' or 'idealistic', but what really is visionary or idealistic now? Finding places to chop down trees and replace them with parking garages? Locating a field to put a new department store in? I believe that something visionary is imagining a Canada with less factories, and instead, family farms. Less fast food chains and more farmers' markets. Less talking about these ideas and more putting them into action. Maybe if we did this it would help ensure that Canada even has a future. —nfu—

### **Sources**

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 Global Warming Affecting Farmland, <http://www.chinadaily.com>  
 Saving Farmland, <http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/>  
 Our Cities and Our Farms, <http://www.northernblue.ca/>  
 Farmers Losing Fight Against Urban Sprawl, <http://www.canada.com/globaltv/ontario/>  
 Urban Sprawl and Speculation in Suburban Land, <http://www.jstor.org/>  
 Computer Technology takes over Farming Tasks, <http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/>

## **The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing**

### **Award Criteria and Details:**

- There will be two age categories – 15 years and under, and 16 years to 21 years. An award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded to one essay in each age category for a non-fiction letter or essay 500-1000 words in length.
- This year's theme: *Cooperatives – An Exercise in Democracy*.
- Deadline for entries is September 30, 2012.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2012.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

Send entries to the National Farmers Union: By email: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca), or by mail to: National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4B6. (We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465).



## *The Future of Canada's Farmland*

—by Rebecca Mills (age 19), St. Marys, Ontario

### *A letter for all Canadians,*

We all need a place to live. We also need food to eat. Maybe our food supply is not as much of a concern because we import so much from other nations or maybe we just like to think that if we ignore the issue it will go away.

But it is not going away. Canada's land is sick, and it is our fault. As we expand our urban centres, without any plan it often seems, we destroy our local food supply. We destroy farms which have been passed down from generation to generation. Land which held great promise of prosperity; land which cried in desperation for rain; land which has been more than a commodity for the farmers that have tendered it. It has been a passion and a lifestyle.

As the demand for housing increases, among other factors, farming is not as feasible. In 2006 CanWest News Service reported that one acre of land, located near an urban centre, would rake in \$2000.00 under agricultural use. However that same acre would earn \$40 000.00 if sold to a developer. The average age of a farmer has been steadily increasing and there are fewer young people to carry on the tradition due to lower birth rates. As a result, some farmers are cashing out.

Canada now has six urban centres with populations over one million including, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau and Montréal. Canada's population is still rising, particularly in urban areas which account for 80% of Canada's population (as of 2006). This puts a great deal of pressure on cities to develop residential areas and expand industry for their rising population. The majority of this development occurs on formally rural land rather than in ailing urban cores. This has caused the growth of cities to go unchecked and puts the agriculture sector at risk.

Urban sprawl is not specific to one area in Canada however, the Greater Toronto Area and Southwestern Ontario have been hit especially hard. This is because



the area has the densest population in Canada and the best land for agricultural use. In fact, only 0.5% of Canada's farmland is top graded as Class One and over half of this land lies in Ontario, according to the Canada Land Inventory. It is also in Ontario where over 600 000 acres of farmland were lost to urban and rural non-farm development between 1996 and 2006. Prior, between 1976 and 1996 in the GTA alone, over 150 000 acres of agricultural land was developed for urban land use sacrificing 18% of Class One farmland. So, as these cities work to satisfy the needs of the population, they pave over some of the world's best agricultural land.

A house can be built on any surface, but the best crops with the highest yields are only produced in the best soil, in an ideal climate. Farmers with poorer growing conditions use high amounts of chemical pesticides, fertilizers and expensive irrigation systems just to try to meet these standards which are detrimental to our environment and health not to mention expensive. We are throwing away a gift which is impossible to return- it can take thousands of years to create just one centimetre of topsoil.

In the future, Canadian farmers will watch as their land goes through many transformations. Organic farming is already on the rise, farms are getting larger and a demand to provide to niche markets has become apparent. The trends that are beginning to develop now will continue to gain strength in the years to come, but urban sprawl will continue to have the largest impact. Urban sprawl affects every single Canadian, not just our farmers. Cities must look at other options, such as following a Smart Growth strategy, and redeveloping deteriorating urban areas. If we do not force our decision makers to see these options, the future of Canada's farmland is inside city limits.

*Sincerely,  
A Concerned Young Canadian Farmer*



*(President's Report, from page 3)*

In a constitutional democracy there are checks and balances to prevent the exercise of absolute power. This seems to be lost on Minister Ritz and the Harper government. Just as the CWB is a counter power to the absolute dominance of a handful of transnational grain companies in the international grain trade, the courts are a counter to the absolute dominance by the government. The fight to keep the CWB is far more than keeping the

single desk marketing agency for western wheat and barley farmers. It is about how democracy is conducted in this country and how we defend ourselves from the abuse of power. This is why we in the NFU fight for economic and social justice.

*In solidarity,  
Terry Boehm, National President*

## *We Remember ...*

### **EDWIN ALLEN SHADD**

Born February 27, 1922, Edwin passed away on November 27, 2011 at the age of 89. Edwin was beloved husband of Dolores Shadd of Merlin, Ontario; loving father of Duane and Ruth Shadd of Kitchener, Terence and Sandy Shadd of Merlin, and Darrell and Mary Shadd of Shrewsbury.

### **DOROTHY MARILYN GILLIS (COTTRILL)**

Former Region 6 (Saskatchewan) Women's Advisor Marilyn Gillis passed away on November 3, 2011. Marilyn was born in Melfort, Saskatchewan to "Bird" and Marshall Cottrill and grew up on their homestead south of Wynyard with older brother Kay and younger sister, Carol. This upbringing on the farm instilled a passion for animals and farm life that she generously shared with other. She and Ed married January 4, 1969, lived in Regina for a short time, and then began organic farming with Ed's brothers, Roy and Bert North of Wynyard, Saskatchewan. Marilyn never turned down an opportunity to try something new or have an adventure. She loved her family and enjoyed being one of the kids herself. She treasured many important friendships and valued her time with them. She was carefree, non-judgemental and had a gift for guiding others. Marilyn will be missed by her husband, Ed; son Koko (Jill); daughter Pala (John Ellis); and her grandchildren.

### **WILMER LEROY OBERG**

Wil Oberg passed away after a brief illness at the age of 88. Wil was the first child of Gerald and Annie Oberg, pioneers of the Pleasington district east of Forestburg, Alberta. He farmed all his life, even running the swather this harvest at the age of 88. His community was very important to him. He was a school trustee, a founding member of the Forestburg Golf Club and Forestburg Seed Cleaning Plant. He was an Alberta Wheat Pool delegate, a longtime member of the National Farmers Union, and a shareholder of Battle River Railway. A committed socialist, a self-described political junkie and history buff, he reveled in conversation and debate. He loved great food, good scotch and cheap cigars. He is survived by his partner of 32 years Lilas Lysne; his sisters Irene Stewart of Galahad; Alaire Detert of Miami; Jean and Terry Grainger of Penticton; his first wife and mother of his children Donna Bish Oberg of Galahad. Wil is remembered by his children Dianne Oberg/Marty Taylor, John Oberg/Colleen Brodyk, Gerry and Gloria Oberg, Allen Oberg, Marion and Ken Riise; and by Lilas' children Lillias Cowper, Geoffrey Cowper, Bruce Cowper, Almeda Miller and Glen Cowper; and by his many grandchildren.



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## NFU BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICES

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Financial Services: 120 Bishop Dr., Summerside, PEI C1N 5Z8 Ph: (902) 436-1872

Region 5: Newdale Shopping Centre, 2999B Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, MB R3T 2H5 Ph: (204) 261-0500

Region 6: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465

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## NATIONAL FARMERS UNION FINANCIAL SERVICES

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PHONE: (204) 261-0500 - FAX: (204) 275-5396

### NFU INCOME TAX SERVICE

## 2012 MANITOBA RURAL VISIT SCHEDULE

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>HOTEL</u>	<u>DATES</u>
SWAN RIVER	SUPER 8 MOTOR HOTEL	FEBRUARY 16 <sup>TH</sup> & 17 <sup>TH</sup>
ROBLIN	ROBLIN MOTOR INN	FEBRUARY 20 <sup>TH</sup> TO 24 <sup>TH</sup>
MELITA	---	FEBRUARY 28 <sup>TH</sup>
KILLARNEY	---	FEBRUARY 29 <sup>TH</sup> AND MARCH 1 <sup>ST</sup>
MORDEN	MORDEN MOTOR INN	MARCH 5 <sup>TH</sup> TO 9 <sup>TH</sup>
ARBORG	ZANS FAMILY INN	MARCH 12 <sup>TH</sup> TO 14 <sup>TH</sup>
FISHER BRANCH	FISHER BRANCH MOTOR HOTEL	MARCH 12 <sup>TH</sup> AND 13 <sup>TH</sup>
MINNEDOSA	GATEWAY MOTEL	MARCH 14 <sup>TH</sup> AND 15 <sup>TH</sup>
SHOAL LAKE	---	MARCH 19 <sup>TH</sup>
RUSSELL	RUSSELL INN	MARCH 20 <sup>TH</sup> TO 22 <sup>ND</sup>
TREHERNE	CREEKSIDE HIDEAWAY MOTEL	MARCH 26 <sup>TH</sup> TO 29 <sup>TH</sup>
PORTAGE	CANAD INNS	APRIL 2 <sup>ND</sup> TO 6 <sup>TH</sup>
CYPRESS RIVER	---	APRIL 9 <sup>TH</sup> TO 12 <sup>TH</sup>