

THE

# Union farmer

QUARTERLY

SPRING 2014



Vol. 20 Issue 1

## Under Attack:

### Your Right to Save Seed

They want to make you pay when you save and re-use your seed.



We are working to safeguard YOUR rights. Work with us to protect your access to productive, affordable seed.



Join us in working for Seed Savers' legislation



**SAVE OUR SEED STOP BILL C-18!**

Farmers' age-old practices of saving, reusing, exchanging, and selling seed are in jeopardy.

More information: [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)

*Photo: Terry Boehm, former President and Chair of the NFU Seed and Trade Committee launches the NFU's "Stop C-18" campaign at a media conference on January 20, 2014.*

## Message from the Editor...



Carla Roppel

In a previous editorial, I talked about solidarity as the key source of strength in the NFU. There's much more to say about solidarity, whether it's working alongside allies to achieve common goals or supporting like-minded organizations in their efforts to

seek justice. The same applies to how we work within our organization - we work alongside each other to address national priorities while at the same time supporting each other's regional or more local issues.

Sometimes we need to stop just for a moment to remember to give ourselves credit for the ways we work in solidarity within the NFU through national, provincial and local structures. Here's just a taste of what that solidarity looks like.

Across the country, we are working to "Stop Bill C-18" and prevent adoption of UPOV '91, holding public meetings and getting petitions signed. At the same time:

- Vancouver Island members are defending scarce farmland from proposed changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve legislation, while in the Peace River area, harmful emissions from processing bitumen are driving long-time farmers from their farms.
- In Alberta, members have filed letters, comments and briefs protesting the loss of farm land and the

environmental damage from pipelines, fracking and mining and heavy oil processing – all done with no regard for the farmer's wishes.

- Prairie members are pressuring the government and railways to ensure that their grain is transported to port before their bills come due and a debt crisis looms.
- PEI has record soil erosion because potatoes are planted too often in short rotations, and groundwater supplies could be threatened should a moratorium on deep-well irrigation be lifted.
- In New Brunswick, members are working to stop fracking and its negative environmental effects and calling on the government protect blueberry producers on the Acadian peninsula who produce 40 million pounds of wild blueberries annually. Out-of-province Oxford Frozen Foods is slated to obtain thousands of acres of crown land to produce blueberries along with \$37.5 million to build a processing factory.
- Ontario is dealing with loss of pollinators due to neonicotinoid seed treatments, and the threat that Forage Genetics International will sell GM alfalfa seed which will inevitably contaminate all alfalfa and destroy potential markets.

I think it's remarkable that an organization can work on such diverse issues but still be bound together by a commitment to acting in union – united, unified – as we work for the best interests of the most farmers possible. In Union is Strength!

# union farmer quarterly

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



# A message from the...

# President



—by Jan Slomp

## Our Role in Rebuilding a Broken Democracy

In 1999, I was a new board member/ Region 7 coordinator when I appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture at a meeting in Vulcan, AB, one of many meetings across the country. I was impressed with the genuine interest of the MP Committee members on the subject and the NFU's take on it. I didn't know all the MPs in the room, so I found it hard to determine party affiliation based only on the discussion. I was awed by this democratic process, which was undertaken before the House would vote on any Bill. This is not what happens in today's hyper-partisan committee and senate activities.

The NFU played a crucial role in the Senate's 1999 vote to disallow the use of Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH) in Canada by sharing information provided by senior Health Canada personnel. Democracy was working at its best then and the Senate, the "House of Sober Second Thought" defeated the government's legislation.

What does Canada's democratic process look like today? Although Canada's democratic processes started to erode much earlier, the process escalated between the Conservative's 2004 minority and its 2011 majority. We learned as we tried to save the CWB single desk that once the Conservatives put their own agenda on an issue forward, their next step would be to limit budgets for Standing Committees, and thus limit discussion and public input. If the Conservatives still didn't have enough control of the outcome within their timeline, the next step was to limit debate in the House and Senate to achieve the desired outcome. Add to this reality Gerry Ritz, whose mantra is, "If you're not with us, you are not there at all." His announcements to support "agricultural success, innovation and competitiveness" are always made in the presence of his favorite industry-dominated commodity groups. As further evidence of our compromised democratic process, just look to the

government's long list of unilateral actions: budget cuts, closure of research sites and one-of-a-kind libraries, muzzling of scientists. And exclusion of the NFU though we know that the more we are ignored and disparaged, the more correct our position.

Marc Mayrand, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, is responsible to report evidence of fishy electoral dealings by parties or individuals directly to Parliament. In early February, he told reporters that the Conservatives' proposed "Fair Elections Act" endangers our Canadian democracy - strong words from a bureaucrat who truly understands the negative consequences.

These days, however, we don't get a chance to do much more than expose destruction and react to calamities. Canada's conventional farming sector will continue to be fatally stressed by low grain prices, transportation problems, high debt, diminished safety nets and land grabbing. Although small scale direct marketers, organic farmers and farmers in supply management sectors also receive little support from Ottawa, they do reasonably well because, for the most part, they sail under the Conservatives' radar.

The NFU will continue to feed the democratic process, pairing vital information and critical analysis with historical knowledge and foresight based on the experience, knowledge and understanding of our diverse members. We will use our knowledge of how to form cooperatives and market collectively, and educate and empower our members. But we need to understand how best to build grassroots capacity and engagement, so we are talking with Unifor to determine how we might access their national leadership courses.

Today, we live in probably the most undemocratic period in Canadian history. This period will end and when it does, we will be ready to organize for our own empowerment – economically, socially and ecologically. We will ramp up a grassroots movement with policy written by active locals, participating in political processes at all levels and using media to our advantage. We will be ready!

*In Solidarity, Jan Slomp*



# A message from the...

# Women's President



—by Joan Brady

## NFU – Long-time Champion of Sustainability

Recently, I have been part of a process that engaged community members and decision makers to focus on what it would take to ensure a sustainable future for everyone in my home region. Additionally much of the work of community organizations are engaging in, in the food and agriculture space, is being directed through the lens of a “Sustainable Food System”, a process which examines each element of the food system from production to consumption and waste. The intent is to recognize a linked and complex system that can be affected at various levels to introduce sustainability to the entire process.

Sustainability is somewhat of a conundrum – we will not know if we have achieved sustainability until we are at the tipping point between sustainability and unsustainability. Until then we are on a continuum, striving towards more sustainability. Increasing sustainability means introducing change and acknowledging which current actions or expectations are unsustainable. Various definitions and ideologies include the following ideas:

- Living within the limits
- Balance between economic, social/cultural and environmental demands
- Equitable distribution of opportunities and resources
- An element of resilience (equipping ourselves to recover from/adapt to future crisis)

The Sustainable Food Systems process and discussion is one which is currently ramping up as reflected in many local communities, provincial organizations and various national initiatives. As with any discussion about food, its production and related mechanisms for distribution, process and access – farmers need to be part of the conversations. We need to advocate and educate on what Sustainable Agriculture looks like in that balanced economic, social and environmental view and also we need to learn from other community members about how we can work together to empower a common vision.

The NFU has many useful resources to share in this work. Our Policy on Sustainable Agriculture (<http://www.nfu.ca/policy/national-farmers-union-policy-sustainable-agriculture>), written in the late '90s, is as relevant today as it was when written. The “Food Down the Road” project (<http://www.fooddowntheroad.ca/>), led by NFU Region 3, Local 316, is a well-developed analysis of the local sustainable food system and includes various activities and resources that could be replicated or act as an example to lead to local systems change. Finally our work to share and act on the knowledge and actions related to food sovereignty outlined in the Declaration of Nyeleni (<http://www.nyeleni.org/>), in which various NFU members participated. Food sovereignty articulates the principles needed to guide the changes that will ensure sustainable futures for all. Our policy book and active resolutions also reflect many aspects of Sustainable Food System Development.

Not to be forgotten is the knowledge and passion resident within the NFU membership. Individual and group efforts have influenced various points on the Sustainable Food Systems structure including the development of farmers’ markets and cooperative marketing initiatives, support for small abattoirs, composting programs, the introduction of fair trade principles and more.

The NFU is a credible and necessary leader in the Sustainable Food Systems movement. I encourage each of our members to become more aware of and involved in the conversation and change in their own communities and provinces. Share the great resources that the NFU has developed in response to the real concerns about the future of farmers, rural communities and all Canadians.

My favourite quote related to sustainability is attributed to indigenous lore: *“Treat the Earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”*

*In Solidarity, Joan Brady*



# A message from the... nfu Youth



— by Lisa Lundgard, Youth Vice President

Every time I get the opportunity to connect with NFU members, I always walk away with hope, inspiration, and a smile. Small farms are being consumed across Canada by large corporate farms, and of course, the corporate agenda that keeps creeping through policy. Then there is this group of farmers who haven't given up and aren't going to give up.

Every convention or meeting I attend, I'm filled with more knowledge and an energy to do something against the many injustices we see today around seeds, land grabbing, and a growing corporate agenda to control all sides of food production.

Through the National Farmers Union, I have met and continue to meet a growing number of young farmers with the same passion, to protect the small farmer and our inherent rights to grow healthy food for our families and communities. I'm very excited to be on the Board this year and look forward to meeting more and more like-minded farmers, and working together to keep the small farm alive and vibrant.

## Board Meeting

Speaking of the Board, just when the winter blues were starting to take over, I made my way down south to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where I attended my first Board meeting and was pulled out of my winter slumber! I couldn't have been more inspired. Not only inspired, but I left with a full tool kit to get out in my community and start raising the alarm over Bill C-18. There is a power point which everybody has access to for teaching other farmers and individuals in your area, along

with petitions, postcards, and a list of different ideas to reach out to the public.

## Alternative Media Group

I remember the first youth retreat I attended a few years ago where there was a consensus that there needed to be a bigger social media presence from the NFU youth.

In the past couple months that goal is starting to come to life. There is a committed group of young farmers gathering farmer profiles, interesting articles, and different blog material with the intent to get a NFU youth blog up and running. Keep your eyes peeled for the new blog on the NFU website.

## March Youth Retreat

There has been a good interest from old and new youth members who are excited to attend the youth retreat this year. The youth retreat will be taking place in Duncan, British Columbia, an area on Vancouver Island that is surrounded by a lot of agriculture activity. There will be an opportunity to work with the young agrarians to reach out to more young farmers and build a bigger union.

If you are interested in learning more about the NFU youth and want to get involved, do not hesitate to send an e-mail to Alex or me at [nfuyouth@nfu.ca](mailto:nfuyouth@nfu.ca), or give us a call.

*In Union, Lisa Lundgard*



# Regional Reports



## REGION

### ONE (PEI & N.B.)



- by Randall Affleck

#### **Carver Commission Report on the Lands Protection Act**

The Report of the Commission on the Lands Protection Act, "The Gift of Jurisdiction: Our Island Province" was tabled in the PEI Legislature in late November. If you would like to read the online version it can be found at this link: <http://bit.ly/1fmpyzy>. It gives the read a good sense of the Island land issues.

There are twenty nine (29) recommendations in the report. Carver recommends that the current aggregate land holding limits remain at 1,000 acres for individuals and 3,000 acres for corporations, but that this holding apply to arable land only. Further, it is recommended that the non-arable land holdings be set at 400 acres for individuals and 1,200 acres for corporations. Regarding land grabbing, it is recommended that Government monitor the sale and purchases of large tracts of farmland by non-farmers. Finally, a new land banking system be a priority and that Government establish a farmland trust using public funds for the purpose of buying farmland and leasing or selling it to bona fide resident farmers.

Commissioner Carver noted that 25% of potato farms are not in compliance with the Agricultural Crop Rotation Act and that soil organic matter, a principle indicator of soil quality, continues to decline. The evidence shows, he writes, that as farms have gotten bigger, soil quality has generally declined and that this is a most serious situation.

#### **Deep Water Irrigation**

A one year moratorium on deep water irrigation wells was put in place by the Government of PEI in 2001. Prior to this moratorium being put in place there were about 60 permits issued for deep wells and surface water irrigation. This winter, the PEI Potato Board launched a campaign to have the

moratorium lifted. There has been considerable push-back on the issue and will be a hot political issue for the government to manage. The province's water extraction policy is online <http://bit.ly/1hdP5tz> if you would like to examine it. The NFU District Board has been working with a group of other organizations regarding putting together a brief on the issue. The Provincial Agricultural Committee has begun hearings on the matter, having interviewed the Minister of Environment and senior staff of the Department at this point. Here is the transcript of their hearing: <http://bit.ly/1jjV81L>

#### **Stop C-18 Campaign**

The NFU has been organizing around the NFU's "Stop C-18". Petitions are being signed at various events and we hosted a public meeting in February: <http://t.co/KUaw8khFDC>. We are hoping to organize some meetings in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

#### **CETA Coalition**

The NFU in PEI has been working with a coalition of organizations to lobby against the CETA agreement. Shortly after the Prime Minister's announcement of a tentative agreement with the EU, there was a flurry of provincial government excitement about how rich we were going to get with the agreement. We felt a discussion about what we were actually reading in the leaked draft agreement and our analysis of its impact was urgently needed.

#### **District Conventions**

New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are having their District Conventions in March.

- PEI - Friday, March 14, at The Dutch Inn, Cornwall
- NB - Sunday, March 16, Gagetown, NB (see <http://nfunb.org/en/events/>) for more information.

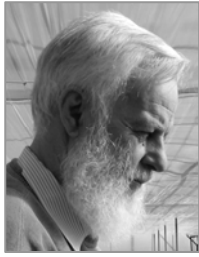
Our President, Jan Slomp, will be attending and we plan to organize some membership canvassing, media interviews and meetings with the Ministers of Agriculture. Jan will be worked like a borrowed tractor!

*In Union, Randall Affleck*



## REGION THREE (Ontario)

NFU-O



- by John Sutherland

**A**s I noted in my recent letter to past and present members, NFU Region 3 has been reaccredited as the NFU-O.

The Tribunal's decision not to accredit the NFU as a GFO, the reasons for that denial, and the interpretation of the role and rights of the Tribunal were completely discredited by the judge who conducted our Judicial Review. Judge Beaudoin demanded that the Tribunal immediately re-accredit NFU-O effective December 2012.

Council has voted to approach the Premier/Minister of Agriculture for compensation for the Tribunal's improper decision not to accredit the NFU-O. We are asking the Ministry for compensation because the NFU was wrongly excluded from the farm business registration process.

We have launched a membership campaign to invite former members to return and to recruit new members. New voices, new ideas and renewed involvement will help move us forward on both the provincial and national fronts. Some Ontario Locals have made donations to support the membership drive, and we received a \$5,000 grant from the National Farmers Foundation.

The NFU is campaigning to defeat Bill C-18, the Agriculture Growth Act, an omnibus bill proposing amendments to nine pieces of ag-related legislation, such as the Seeds Act, Plant Breeders' Rights Act and the Plant Protection Act. We are very concerned that UPOV '91 will be adopted; that the "Farmers' Privilege" (the right to save, store, clean, reuse and exchange or sell seed) will be limited and easily changed; that corporations will control Canada's seed industry; and that farmers will pay more for seed and other corporate-owned inputs.

The issues are complex, so we have prepared a tool kit – a series of fact sheets about C-18 and its implications – that members will have received recently in a special edition of the *Union Farmer Newsletter*. The kit offers suggestions to help members to organize community meetings about C-18 for fellow farmers and the wider community.

*We need your help to defeat Bill C-18!* Collect signatures on our petition at your community businesses, recreation centres and churches. When you have 25 signatures, take the petitions to your MP. Democracy doesn't work by giving up! It works by resisting, mobilizing and proposing alternatives.

Let's not forget other concerns. For instance, the role of neonicotinoids in bee health and stopping sales of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa because of its possible (probable) effects on farmers and forages. Given that there are already feral populations of GM alfalfa in the north western states of the USA, we must remain vigilant and continue to call for de-registration of GM alfalfa varieties.

Approved Council minutes are forwarded to Locals to keep our officials and members up to date with what is currently happening in Council.

The Ontario Caucus held at the National Farmers Union convention in Ottawa was very well-attended.

The Memorandum of Agreement and Service Agreement between NFU and NFU-O is being discussed and we look forward to completing both in the near future.

Region 3 extends a big "thank you" to Rick Munroe for his work on the proposed reversal of oil flow on Line 9. The company wants to change the direction and volume of flow on this line, which is a major concern because of the line's age and close proximity to vulnerable sites, especially in Toronto. A line break because of the reversed flow and increased pressure at these sites would have serious repercussions. The government has not yet made a decision.

*In Union, John Sutherland*



## FIVE (Manitoba)

### REGION



- by Ian Robson

Minister Gerry Ritz established a Working Group on Rail Service on November 9, 2011 even before passing Bill C-18 ending the farmers' Canadian Wheat Board and removing its role in coordinating grain transportation. What has this Working Group been doing? Farmers are not able to deliver grain to elevators due to poor rail service, prices are half what they were, and there is no longer a premium for high protein wheat. Deregulation of the Crow Rate didn't solve grain rail shipping problems, so there is no reason to think that Mr. Ritz's solution of giving more money to the railways will solve any problems for farmers. To learn more about the farmers' Canadian Wheat Board, visit the NFU website at <http://www.nfu.ca/issues/canadian-wheat-board>.

Fred Tait and I attended the Manitoba Cattle Producers AGM in Brandon in February. Cow and calf prices are slightly better but we have past losses to recover. The number of cows in Canada and in North America are down because of the many years of very poor prices. The NFU's Livestock Crisis Report of 2008 pointed out that cattle supply had to be managed better so production could meet demand without over-supplying the market. With fewer cows, and a cattle sector controlled by large packers and traders, this drop presents a problem. Farmers – and our environment – need the benefits provided by mixed farming, but the long-term erosion of prices has not and will not attract a steady supply of cattle. It will take years for producers to rebuild cow herds, but we will still be susceptible to falling prices if we over-produce in the future.

The Manitoba Canola Growers Association collects revenues of \$2.5 million from canola check-offs. Although its mission is to maximize farm net income through sustainable canola production, canola seed costs have risen beyond reason. Some

seed is now \$600 a bushel (including seed treatment, royalties and technology use fees). Bill C-18 proposes to introduce UPOV '91, which will further increase seed costs for all crops including canola, hand more control of the seed sector over to corporations and greatly limit the control that farmers and our government can exert.

At the Association's Annual General Meeting on February 18, just 40 minutes were allotted to hear all the Board reports and financial discussion, and for members to discuss resolutions and other matters. That 40 minutes was hardly adequate to discuss the sole resolution opposing Bill C-18 and UPOV '91. The resolution was lost when a tie vote of 8 to 8 was broken by chair Ed Rempel's "no" vote. The idea that won the day was just what corporations want us to believe - that the only way to get new varieties was to increase farmers' costs by charging royalties.

In February, we attended Seedy Saturday at the Canadian Mennonite University and Manitoba Food Matters' "Growing Local" conference, where we had a display and handed out Stop C-18 campaign information, petitions and postcards along with other NFU materials.

Try talking to your neighbours about grain transportation or UPOV '91 and share the NFU's analysis and ideas. Invite them to join the NFU – you might be surprised at the results.

*In Union, Ian Robson*

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The Region 5 Convention will be held:

**Saturday, July 12, 2014**  
**Onanole, Manitoba**

*More information to follow closer to the date.*





## SIX (Saskatchewan)

### REGION



- by Ed Sagan

**C**ongratulations to the candidates who put their names forward as Directors for either the Saskatchewan Wheat or Barley Development Commissions. We were successful in encouraging candidates to stand for the position who we knew would do a good job in protecting our interests while spending our wheat and barley check-off money on research. Thank you to every one of you, and well done!

At the end of January, we had a successful face-to-face Board meeting in Saskatoon. We had directors attending from across Canada (although we missed our Region 3 directors). There were a number of new young members attending, and I was very impressed with their participation. It looks good for our future to have such enthusiastic and intelligent young people taking part in NFU governance.

We have to stop Bill C-18! Our age-old practices of saving, reusing, exchanging and selling seed are in jeopardy - yet again. Just before Christmas, the federal Tories introduced C-18 before the House Commons. If passed, this will give the biggest seed companies in the world almost total control over seed in Canada. If they don't collect royalties when seed is sold, these companies can charge royalties on the farmers' entire crop. C-18 assigns the Cabinet the power to make changes to regulations to quickly undo or severely limit the so-called "Farmers' Privilege" to save seed. What a gift to farmers!

Grain transportation is a mess on the prairies. We have 38 ships waiting in port for our grain. Our farm bins and grain bags are full; our elevators are full; we can't get rail cars because it's too cold - they're sitting in port waiting to be

unloaded or at some elevator siding waiting to be picked. This is happening because the Conservatives destroyed the CWB, which had the power to force the railroads to haul our grain to port and to force grain companies to have the grain at terminals to be loaded onto waiting ships. Ritz and his cronies have turned the clock back to the early 1900s for farmers. What progress!

Don't forget to renew your membership! Talk to two neighbours about grain transportation and Bill C-18 and ask them to join the NFU. We know what works for farmers.

*In Union, Ed Sagan*

### A word from Glenn Tait, Region 6 Board Member:

**L**ast November, I was fortunate enough to be elected as one of the seven board members of the brand- new Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (SWDC). An interim board had been appointed by the provincial government to set up the office and get things running. Though they reasonably discharged their duties, none were elected. All seven elected directors supported orderly marketing and ran on platforms of public plant breeding. What shall the governments say about that?

The mission of the SWDC is to be strategic in investing farmers' check-off money (\$.50/tonne on wheat), taking up a job that was once tasked to the CWB. Whether through breeding, agronomic research, or advocacy and advice, funds should serve the best advantage of Saskatchewan wheat producers. The Commission has already made submissions on transportation and the variety registration process.

*In Union, Glenn Tait*



## REGION

**SEVEN (Alberta)**

- by Blake Hall

Region 7 is proud to have one of our members and former regional coordinator, Jan Slomp, elected as President of the NFU this year at our national convention.

Jan has been a leader in our region and our membership is happy to see him take a leadership role at the national level. We have no doubt that Jan's guidance will help keep us strong and effective in our action.

On the other hand, Jan leaves some big shoes to fill. I agreed to step forward as regional coordinator until an election is held at our regional convention (sometime in June) provided Jan and his counterpart, board member Doug Scott, were willing to mentor me.

My name is Blake Hall and I have been a member of the National Farmers Union since 2011 when I was actively recruited by the NFU Youth and by former Women's Vice President Kathleen Charpentier. I am a native of Red Deer, Alberta where I grew up in town, the son of a school teacher. I tumbled out of high school down the slippery slope into agriculture. Horticulture was the gateway, but ultimately I built my skill set around pasture management, low-stress livestock handling and grass-finished beef cattle. In 2010 I bought my first herd of cattle, later attending the meat processing program at Olds College, one of two schools left in the world that continue to teach the art of slaughter in addition to meat cutting, curing, and sausage-making.

Since returning in 2011 after spending some formative years in Region 3, I have established a herd share program, through which I market

seasonally killed, pasture-slaughtered, grass-finished beef and pastured pork. Customers buy the live animals and contract me to tend to them and fatten them, and then butcher the meat on their behalf. This community-supported model has allowed me to kickstart a farming operation as a new farmer with no starting base of land, livestock, or infrastructure.

An advantage of this direct marketing model is the relationships that we develop with the "eaters" in town – in my case 100+ families. These urban people care deeply about the food system and are very concerned about many of the same issues as the NFU. I have been able to leverage my relationship with these families to support and participate in the fight against GMO alfalfa as well as in the ongoing fight against Bill C-18.

I believe that by engaging non-farming eaters in the challenges facing Canadian agriculture, our government will be forced to once again enact policy that is aligned with the best interest of food consumers and producers alike.

Presently, farmers in Region 7, like all prairie farmers, are dealing with crashing grain prices, a complete rail backlog and inability to ship grain to Vancouver and Prince Rupert ports. The vital role that the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) played in orderly marketing and rail transport is now clearly evident to all but the most blind. It will be an interesting spring.

*In service and solidarity,  
Blake Hall*



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

REGION



- by Peter Eggers

To divert the attention away for western Canadian NFU members from the woes of our new reality show: after the loss of the single desk logistics and marketing nightmare. [or the ostrich farmer at work].

I want to point your attention to a research paper released the University of Canterbury in England in the summer of 2013. The work compares aspects of North American and European agriculture such as wheat yields and issues around seeds, agro-biodiversity, resilience, chemical use and sustainability for corn, canola and wheat in the periods 1961 – 1985 and 1986 – 2010.

During the study, researchers found the following comparisons between yields:

- Between 1961 and 1985 (first time period), corn yields were significantly higher in the U.S. than in Europe.
- Between 1986 to 2010 (second time period), however, U.S. yields were slightly lower than Europe's.
- Over the whole 50 years of the study, average U.S. and European yields were almost the same.
- Perhaps not coincidentally, GMOs were introduced during the second time period (i.e., when European corn yields were slightly higher than U.S. yields).
- Canadian canola yields have always been lower than those obtained in Europe (largely due to climate), but in the second time period (1986 – 2010) of the study, the yield differential grew wider – again, coincidentally with the adoption of genetically modified crops in Canada.
- European wheat yields are higher throughout the study, but the gap widened during the second time period of the study, although there is no GMO wheat on the market at this time.
- Also significant is that the US used more pesticide, while Europe used significantly less.

When findings about seed were examined, a few points of concern became evident, such as:

- Seed-saving was a common practice in North America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 1917, the discovery of a new variety of corn variety led to today's situation, in which that one variety is the gene pool for most current corn varieties.
- When hybrids became popular around 1960, corn seed quickly became an annually purchased input for farmers; corn seed was saved no longer.
- Likewise, farmers saved soy and canola seed until GMOs and patented varieties were introduced in 1996. Today, North American seed-saving is almost non-existent in soy, canola and corn.
- Public plant breeding programs produced most seed (e.g.) in the 1980s, but by the late 1990s, the private sector had taken the lead.
- There are risks associated with a narrow gene pool, as was demonstrated by an almost total failure of the U.S. corn crop due to Southern Corn Leaf Blight.
- Identity preservation, which is a common practice in North America, does not permit on-farm research and variety selection. At the same time, however, Europeans have preserved agro-biodiversity and improved their yields using the same tools.

Clearly, the additional gene patent and plant breeders' rights extended by UPOV '91 favours giant agri-business corporations, which does not contribute to sustainability and a resilient food system. The use of herbicide-resistant GMOs means that farmers buy more chemicals from the rights' holder, which means higher costs and greater pressure for both the farmer and on the environment. This industrialized model has no long-term vision, and instead, significantly narrows our choices now and in the future.

If we truly want a sustainable farming and food system, from land to plate, we must start by preserving our traditional seed-saving rights. Down with Bill C-18!

*In Solidarity, Peter Eggers*



# Feeding Our Struggles:

## *Stories and Learnings from Near and Far*

—International Program Committee

*Nettie Wiebe (SK), Reg Phelan (PEI) and two youth – Ayla Fenton and Dan Kretschmar (ON) – represented the National Farmers Union at La Via Campesina North America’s regional meeting hosted by the Farmworkers’ Association of Florida (FWAF) January 25 to 29, 2014.*



*Regional meetings are key moments to assess the current political context, assess our organizational and regional capacities, identify common concerns, develop a regional work plan and – most importantly – build solidarity.*

*FWAF, the second largest farm workers’ organization in the US, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. It runs diverse programs, from legal training and assistance to farm workers to relief from natural disasters and community gardens. Shown is a banner made by proud farm workers’ children display for La Via Campesina, showing how they grow vegetables and bring them to market.*



## The human cost of cheap food: migrant workers in North America

—by Ayla Fenton with contributions from members of the IPC and Caroline Laurin (Union Paysanne)

The slogan of La Via Campesina is “Globalize struggle, globalize hope”. The North American regional meeting brought together delegations from Mexico, the United States and Canada to do just that: to share our varied experiences. The most important thing that we Canadian youth brought home was a better understanding of the real human costs built into

our corporate-driven food system.

Our hosts, the Farmworkers’ Association of Florida showed us that agriculture in their state depends on a large pool of exploitable migrant workers from Mexico. Some of these workers are there legally through the seasonal “guestworker” program; many are working illegally as undocumented immigrants.



While in Florida, we heard some of the workers' stories first-hand. We knew intellectually that poor conditions exist just from reading the news and hearing the odd statistic. But it is a profoundly different experience, and a heart-breaking one, to hear these stories straight from the people who live them. It was unsettling to be confronted with their realities - how they often have to fight to be paid their dismal wages. On ornamental fern plantations they are forced to work through the night and to wade through snake-infested waters. Older workers have serious health problems from lifelong pesticide exposure, while young workers are struggling to obtain the basic workplace safety standards that we take for granted so they don't end up sick like their parents.

Temporary agricultural workers in the US are supposed to be afforded decent workplace protections. In reality, however, these protections exist only on paper. A fundamental problem with the program is that workers are bound to the employer that hires them and are, therefore, too afraid to complain about abuses for fear of being deported.

I worked with a migrant worker in 2013 on a medium-scale farm in Ontario. Overall, it was a great experience and we have become good friends. He is interested in learning about organic production and will be returning to work with us on the same farm again this year. I was dismayed, however, to realize that how afraid he was to tell us if something was wrong (i.e. if he was sick and wanted a day off). It took a few months for him to overcome his preconceptions and tell us if he was sick without fearing retaliation.



*Besides producing fruits and vegetables, Florida is a major ornamental flower producer. With Valentine's Day approaching, fern industry workers were working long hours to provide the world with flower bouquets. Here, a farm worker shares her story of working, from age 4 to 21, picking different crops.*

For me, this reinforces the notion that we need to be conscious of the inherent oppression built into migrant worker programs. The Southern Poverty Law Centre in the US reports that: *"Because of this arrangement, the balance of power between the employer and worker is skewed so disproportionately in favor of the employer that, for all practical purposes, the worker's rights are nullified."* Many employers exclusively hire guestworkers because they are known to work longer hours at lower wages and under worse conditions without complaint.

Circumstances are even worse for the thousands of undocumented immigrants working in America's agricultural sector. For these "illegal aliens", just a word from their employer could land them in prison. We tell ourselves that this is an American problem; that illegal immigration in the States exposes desperate and vulnerable workers to all sorts of abuses that our Canadian political and economic context prevents. But is that really true? Perhaps we should not feel so disconnected from the problems our neighbors are facing in our shared, integrated economy.

When NAFTA was implemented, Mexico was flooded with cheap, subsidized agricultural products (especially corn) from the US and Canada. No longer able to compete, millions of Mexican smallholders have been forced to abandon their land and migrate north in search of work to support their families. The entire industrial agri-food system now depends on the labour provided by these disenfranchised workers so that Americans and Canadians can have the cheapest food in the world.

Every time our government opens our border to more commodities that are the fruit of migrant workers' exploitation, we are complicit in the exploitation and should challenge our own definitions of and beliefs about human rights. Moreover, these imported products compete with Canadian products on grocery shelves, a further obstruction to our ability to offer good working conditions and wages to induce Canadians to work in our own fields and food processing plants.

The last 25 years of "free trade" and export-oriented agriculture policies have favoured the consolidation of agribusinesses control over our whole farming and food system. Farmers are pushed

*(continued on page 14...)*



to 'grow big or die', surviving with crippling debts, low farm-gate prices and the destruction and disappearance of collective production and marketing bodies. These challenges, combined with government policies that systematically push toward greater urbanization, have caused farmers and young people to migrate from rural communities to cities. According to a recent North-South Institute report, the number of resident Canadians willing to work in horticulture has declined by more than 25 per cent since the 1990s.

The Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAWP) established in 1966 was a “temporary” solution to farm labour shortages. For the first 30 years, the number of workers remained low – between 5,000 and 12,000. Since 1996, however, the number of CSAWP workers has skyrocketed – to almost 30,000 in 2012 – coinciding with a massive integration in the agricultural sector and the loss of more than 100,000 farms in Canada.

CSAWP workers are mostly from Mexico, although other Caribbean Commonwealth countries also participate. Workers come to Canada on contract to a single employer, and can work here for up to eight months per year. Their ability to return year after year depends on receiving a positive report from their employer. The inevitable result is that workers feel they have little recourse if and when their rights are infringed upon. Workers who have attempted to unionize or approach migrant worker help centres have been blacklisted. Recent reports from the Cooper Institute and the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) both liken the arrangement to the indentured labour practices of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This is, of course, not to say that there are not positive examples of partnerships between CSAWP

workers and Canadian farmers – mine is one of them. That farmer turned to hiring migrant workers because they could not recruit Canadians and felt they had no other choice. It was a better option to go through the long, expensive, socially and culturally challenging process to hire and host a foreign worker than to have no worker at all.

But beyond welcoming migrant workers with the same respect and dignity we expect as Canadian workers, the NFU believes it is time to start a conversation about foreign farm workers. CSAWP is only a temporary solution to farm labour shortage. We need to ask ourselves why thousands of people are forced leave their families behind and migrate all this way north every year to earn a living in the first place. Does the NFU accept an agricultural model based on the increasing migration of vulnerable labour? What solutions exist to sustain our countryside and food systems, here and abroad, more prosperous, resilient and socially just?

Our time with Farmworkers' Association of Florida has convinced us that the vulnerability of migrant and undocumented farm workers in Canada, the United-States and Mexico links intimately to our own distress as farmers – the result of an industrialized, corporate-driven model that disempowers communities and the people who want to live and work there. This issue affects us all, whether or not we employ migrant workers. La Via Campesina offers space for farmers and farm workers' organizations to work together to identify the root causes of our collective plight and unite our voices to demand real, structural change: food sovereignty for all.

We don't pretend to have the answers – this is an extremely complicated and nuanced issue. For more information about migrant workers in North America, explore the following resources.

“Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013)

Available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/close-to-slavery-guestworker-programs-in-the-united-states>

“The Status of Migrant Farm Workers in Canada 2010-2011” (United Food & Commercial Workers, 2011)

Available at [http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/awa/publications/UFCW-Status\\_of\\_MF\\_Workers\\_2010-2011\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/awa/publications/UFCW-Status_of_MF_Workers_2010-2011_EN.pdf)

“Migrant Workers in Canada: A review of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program” (The North-South Institute, 2006)

Available at <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2006-Migrant-Workers-in-Canada-A-review-of-the-Canadian-Seasonal-Agricultural-Workers-Program.pdf>



## The NFU and La Via Campesina Change a Life

**M**y name is Dan Kretschmar. I've been a member of the NFU for longer than I can remember, but have only been active recently. Not too long ago, I had a radical life transformation – something deep in my heart and soul was triggered.

I'll start at the beginning.

My family farm is one of the only farms in the area, so I was one of the few farm kids in school. There was definitely a social stigma against farming in the community. I had a teacher ask me, "Why would you want to be an uneducated farmer when you could go to college, get a real career and buy your food?" This and other comments from teachers and other people around me convinced me that there was no value in farming.

I moved away from the farm to go to college looking for that "career", but there were no jobs after graduation. I worked menial jobs just to get by and pay the bills for years. Meanwhile, back at the farm, my mom, who still paid my NFU membership, tried unsuccessfully every year to get me to go to the national convention. By 2012, I'd had about enough of the path I was on. I decided to give the NFU convention a shot and was offered the opportunity to go to Saskatoon as a Youth delegate for my local. I hopped on a bus in North Bay, Ontario and headed to Saskatoon, not knowing what to expect.

The experience opened my eyes to a new world and lifted the 'farming' stigma from my mind. I felt right at home; I had finally met a group of people I could relate to. I was totally blown away by the in-depth conversation, debate, and the whole NFU democratic process. I left Saskatoon feeling like "the NFU is the agricultural intelligentsia in Canada." Just as Andrew Nikiforuk had said.

I spent the entire bus ride back to Ontario drafting a five-year plan for the farm....

### Today....

**I** am writing this having just returned from the La Via Campesina (LVC) regional meeting in Florida where I was a youth delegate.

After spending 5 days with comrades from the United States and Mexico, I feel energized, outraged and empowered all at the same time. The experience was quite overwhelming. Hearing the stories from undocumented migrant/immigrant farm workers about their working conditions and their struggle for rights made the situation we all hear about at home that much more real.

There is a very apparent class system in place. Farm workers are unable to take a day off if they are sick, because they would be fired. Many workers who harvest citrus fruits have serious skin conditions from pesticide exposure, and pregnant women are required to work basically until they go into labour.

I am saddened that this is what the industrial model of agriculture has become.

I felt like I was among family from the moment I arrived at the LVC meeting. The plights of all small-scale farmers and farm workers are mirrored across the region.

I am motivated to fight for change. We must continue to fight for peasants' and farmers' rights and help to change the consciousness among people. It all starts with consuming oppression-free food. Nor can we be fooled when the government throws us crumbs in an attempt to quiet us down. The only option is to take the crumbs, throw them back and shout even more loudly, "That is not good enough!"

*In Solidarity, Dan Kretschmar*



# A Cuban International Agroecology Encounter

-by George Neville, Associate Member, Region 3 (Ontario)

An international delegation of over 200 delegates participated in the week-long 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Agroecology encounter November 17-24, 2013, organized by the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) of Cuba. I was only able to visit Cuba for one week and chose to spend the first two days of the Encounter Week (the second of a three-week ANAP program) on intensive field visits to ANAP farms (fincas). Fifteen visitors and campesinos (farmers) toured a total of 14 fincas in Artemisia province, while a larger group toured fincas in other provinces. For the rest of the week, the two groups got together to discuss their findings and impressions - in Spanish, although individual translation was provided as needed.

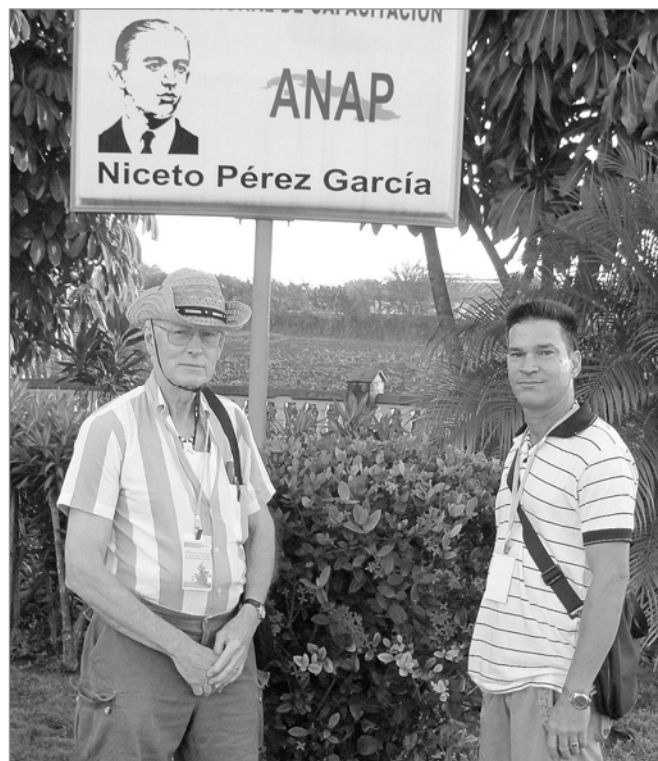
The fincas we visited in Artemisia each represented their respective co-operative formation (los cooperativos), comprising 12 to 26 fincas that reflected various agroecological specialities: livestock, vegetable, floral, fruit, botanical, micronutritive<sup>1</sup>, or semi-mountainous practices. At each site, samples of produce from all members of the specific cooperative were on display. Farmers expressed concern about pollution of rivers and wells by industrial metals and the impact on their fruits and vegetables. Composting was valued as a way to increase the soil's humus (organic matter) level and the importance of soil micronutrients was recognized (although toxic to plant growth at higher levels). It was also impressive to see how Cubans used hillside cultivation on marginal land. They grew squash plants among mango trees, and the squash hung down between the branches. They also grew plots of 'mountain' garlic on hillsides.

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the loss of Russian oil, Cuba had no choice but to resort to agroecology to produce food. Today, the fruit and vegetables cultivated on Cuba's small farms still goes to feed the population. Cuba is free of GMO

<sup>1</sup> Minerals needed only in very low concentrations (e.g. copper, selenium). On the other hand, plants need much more magnesium, for corn in particular.

seeds and related glyphosate herbicides. As well, Cuba has retained and is increasing its reserve of natural seed stocks. Elsewhere in the world, these seed stocks are being appropriated or destroyed by multinational seed corporations, which have lobbied our governments to pass laws granting them patent and plant breeders' rights over seeds. ¡Viva agroecología en Cuba!

—ntu—



*The NFU and ANAP are both part of the world-wide La Vía Campesina movement which embraces and promotes the practice of agroecological, sustainable, and co-operative agriculture. These organizations work to educate others to defend farmers' rights to seeds and resources.*

*George Neville (L) with Cuban amigo and ANAP member, Ovidio Díaz Rodríguez stand beside the event billboard at Güira de Melena in Cuba. (photo courtesy George Neville)*



# Regional meeting to discuss responsible agricultural investment

-by Hilary Moore (with notes from Paul Hagerman, Susie Walsh, Cathleen Kneen and Ryan Mulligan)

*“The expected outcome of the inclusive, consultative process within CFS is a set of principles to promote investments in agriculture that contribute to food security and nutrition and to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.” ...*

Source: Terms of Reference to Develop Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment. Available online at [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1314/rai/CFS\\_RAI\\_ToRs.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1314/rai/CFS_RAI_ToRs.pdf)

On January 14, I attended a North American regional consultation organized by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to discuss the zero draft (essentially a first draft) of the rai principles released by the CFS early in 2013.

The rai principles can be seen as a response to the global land grab: an attempt to set out what “responsible” agricultural investment should look like, as a way to encourage investment that promotes food security and the right to food, yet discourages exploitative investment. There are sections that apply to governments, to investors, and to other actors (academics, research institutions, civil society, etc).

The consultation happened simultaneously in Ottawa and Washington, DC, with the two locations joined by video for part of the day. Seven representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as representatives from the private sector, research bodies and Canadian government attended in Ottawa, and representation in DC was similar.

Our comments, and those from other regional consultations, will inform the next draft in February, 2104, which will also be open for further comment. The goal is to have a final draft by July 2014, and agreement at the CFS meeting in Rome in October 2014.

The following emerged as significant areas of difference or areas needing more work:

1. Greater clarity on definitions, goals, audiences, accountability and relationship to other documents (such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure).
2. CSOs wanted strong enforceable language, while governments wanted broader language

that emphasized the voluntary nature of the principles.

3. Governments and the private sector want the principles to clearly encourage more investment. While not opposed to this, CSOs want the principles to identify and discourage investment that is not responsible.
4. CSOs sought wider inclusion of stakeholders, including women, indigenous groups, youth, fishers, farm workers and consumers.
5. CSOs sought wider inclusion of resources and issues, including seeds, water, “the commons”, research, food waste/ post-harvest loss, biofuels and credit.
6. There is ongoing tension about the kind of agriculture the principles should promote. Governments and private sector push language such as “efficiency” and “maximum production”, while CSOs push for “resilience”, agro-ecology, and “sustainability”.
7. The principles currently treat all investors alike, but there was general agreement that small, family-based investors (i.e. farmers) should be differently than large, foreign-based and/or speculative investors.
8. There were many suggestions for improving the format of the principles, to make them shorter, easier to understand, and internally consistent.

If you would like to participate in the discussion of rai principles, you can join the CSO email list by contacting Cathleen Kneen at [cathleen@ramshorn.ca](mailto:cathleen@ramshorn.ca).

Hilary Moore is Chair of the NFU International Program Committee, and farms organic vegetables, pigs and laying hens with her husband in Lanark County, ON. Her email is [teamworkcsa@hotmail.ca](mailto:teamworkcsa@hotmail.ca)



# Defeating Austerity, Reclaiming Canada

*Myth-conceptions excerpted from Jim Stanford's (Unifor) presentation to the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention*

**Myth-conception 1:  
The Conservatives are good economic managers**

## Do the Math

<b>"Official" &amp; Actual Unemployment September 2013</b>	
Official Unemployment	1.4 million
Lost Participation	350,000
Involuntary Part-Time	450,000
Waiting for Job to Start	150,000
<b>Total Actual Unemployment</b>	<b>2.35 million</b>
<b>As Percent (Adj) Labour Force</b>	<b>12%+</b>

In September 2013, 1.4 million Canadians were listed as 'officially unemployed'. Another 350,000 people simply gave up looking for work, and 450,000 are working 'involuntary' part-time. There were 150,000 workers waiting for their jobs to start. The actual unemployment is 2.35 million workers – 12% of the Canadian labour force – rather than the 7.1% touted by the Conservatives.

If 2 million of the 2.35 million workers that are really unemployed went back to work, and their average productivity was \$100,000 each, Canada's GDP would rise by \$200 billion. The 35% of that new GDP would go automatically to the government as taxes and withholdings, creating \$70 billion in new government revenue – enough to erase both federal and provincial 2012 deficits.

## Fiscal Benefits of Putting Canadians Back to Work

New Employment	2 million
Average Productivity / worker	\$100,000
New GDP	\$200 billion
Automatic Government Share	35%
<b>New Government Revenue</b>	<b>\$70 billion</b>
<b>Total Fed &amp; Prov Deficits (2012)</b>	<b>\$45 billion</b>

## Federal Debt Ratio



Was there really a debt crisis in 2008? How bad was it? Bad enough to justify slashing government spending on everything from research to food inspection to veterans?

Are the Conservatives good economic managers? What grade would you give them? \_\_\_\_\_



**Myth-conception 2:  
Canada's economy survived the recession better than any other!**

# Change in Employment Rate OECD, 2008-2012

Rank	Country	2008	2012	Change	Rank	Country	2008	2012	Change
1	Israel	59.8	66.5	6.7	18	Australia	73.2	72.3	-0.9
2	Chile	57.3	61.8	4.5	19	Italy	58.7	57.6	-1.1
3	Turkey	44.9	48.9	4	20	Canada	73.6	72.2	-1.4
4	Germany	70.2	72.8	2.6	21	Finland	71.3	69.5	-1.8
5	Luxembourg	63.4	65.8	2.4	22	U.K.	72.7	70.9	-1.8
6	Hungary	56.7	57.2	0.5	23	Norway	78.1	75.8	-2.3
7	Poland	59.2	59.7	0.5	24	Estonia	69.7	67.2	-2.5
8	Austria	72.1	72.5	0.4	25	Slovak Rep.	62.3	59.7	-2.6
9	Korea	63.8	64.2	0.4	26	New Zealand	74.7	72.1	-2.6
10	Mexico	61.3	61.3	0	27	U.S.	70.9	67.1	-3.8
11	Czech Rep.	66.6	66.5	-0.1	28	Iceland	84.2	80.2	-4
12	Switzerland	79.5	79.4	-0.1	29	Slovenia	68.6	64.1	-4.5
13	Japan	70.7	70.6	-0.1	30	Denmark	77.9	72.6	-5.3
14	Sweden	74.3	73.8	-0.5	31	Portugal	68.2	61.8	-6.4
15	Belgium	62.4	61.8	-0.6	32	Spain	65.3	56.2	-9.1
16	Netherlands	75.9	75.1	-0.8	33	Ireland	67.9	58.8	-9.1
17	France	64.8	63.9	-0.9	34	Greece	61.9	51.3	-10.6
	OECD Avg	66.5	65	-1.5					

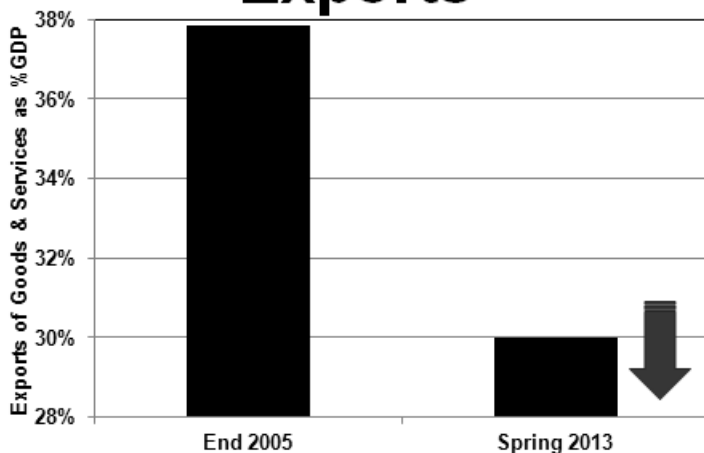
Source: OECD Employment Report 2013, [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/employment-rate-2013-1\\_emp-table-2013-1-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/employment-rate-2013-1_emp-table-2013-1-en)

According to the OECD, Canada ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 34 in terms of employment between 2008 and 2012, bested by Chile (2), Turkey (3) and Mexico (10.)

What grade do you give the Conservatives when it comes to surviving the recession? \_\_\_\_\_

**Myth-conception 3:  
Conservatives are strengthening Canada's role in the world economy**

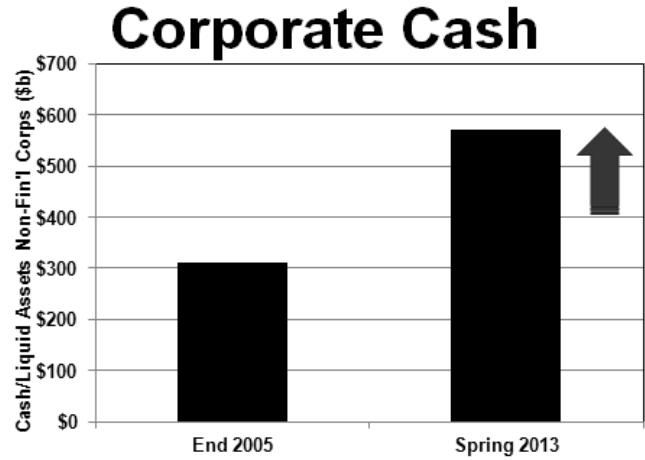
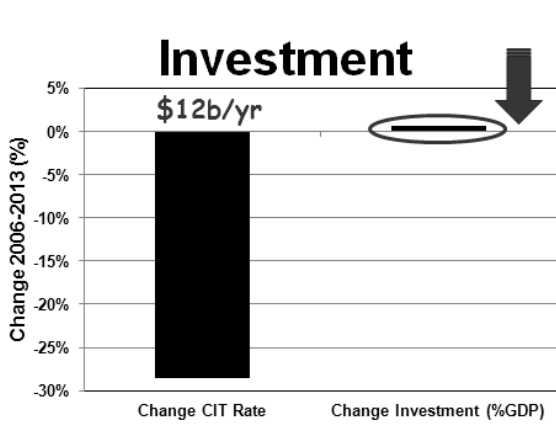
## Exports



Exports as a percentage of GDP are down by 8%, from almost 38% in 2005 to 30% in 2013.



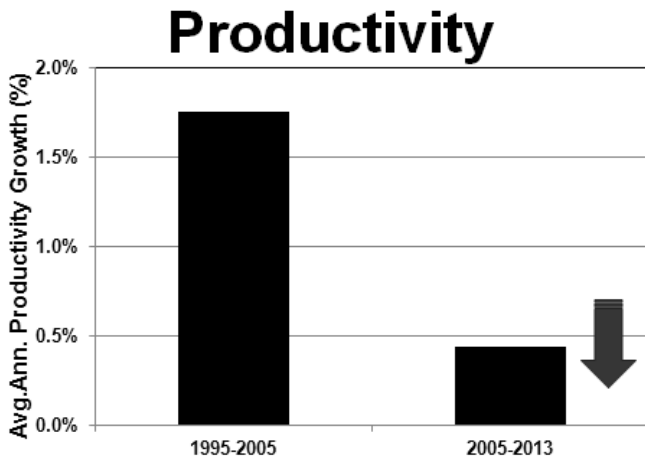
**Myth-conception 4:  
Conservatives policies stimulate investment  
(note: CIT Rate refers to the Corporate Income Tax)**



The Conservatives dropped corporate income tax rates by almost 30% between 2006-2013, saying that corporations would invest that money in Canada.

What has happened however, is that the amount of cash retained by corporations has almost doubled from \$300 billion at the end of 2005 to the spring of 2013.

**Myth-conception 5:  
Conservative policies stimulate productivity**



Average annual productivity between 1995 and 2005 grew at a rate of about 1.75% annually. Between 2005 and 2013, productivity growth has dropped by more than a full percentage to less than 0.5%.



# Say **NO** to UPOV '91

-by Matt Gehl

Behind the noise of the Rob Ford and Senate scandals, the Canadian government is angling to legislate removing a farmers' right that should be non-negotiable.

Ottawa is moving quickly to implement the UPOV '91 plant breeders' rights convention with the *Agricultural Growth Act*, an agricultural omnibus bill. Its proponents say this will keep private plant breeding money in Canada and stop us from somehow immediately turning into Luddites.

What is never acknowledged by UPOV '91 supporters is what will be taken away from farmers. In exchange for increased patenting of seed stocks, farmers will lose the right to save, store, sell and re-use farm-saved seed.

Think about this for a second. In contrast to the practice of thousands of years of open source plant breeding – which has given us our present bountiful harvests – a farmer will NOT be allowed to save the seed they have grown to plant again the following spring if it has Plant Breeders' Rights (PBRs) attached to it.

We have a similar system in place for almost all canola grown in Canada. As a GMO, seed companies have been able to patent canola gene sequences and force farmers to pay royalties every year. The yearly cost of buying new seed is always a sore point with canola growers.

Staying out of UPOV '91 will not diminish Canada's importance as a wheat-growing region. Research will always be done here because of our strength in growing wheat. More importantly, we do not need to be hostage to private plant breeders - our public plant breeding system has been doing a good job for a century.

In fact, canola originated with an Ag Canada public plant breeder who changed rapeseed's oil profile, making it usable as a cooking oil. This work was turned over to the private sector which commercialized – and claimed PBRs on – varieties expressing the trait.

UPOV supporters point to the canola model to support their call for giving the entire plant breeding



sector over to

private interests. But are the so-called 'amazing gains' made by privately-bred canola better than the gains in wheat yields and quality achieved by Canadian public plant breeders? Dr. R.J. Graf, an eminent Canadian plant breeder, points out that over the last 35 years, canola yields have increased just one-tenth of a bushel per acre more per year than have wheat yields.

Improving canola yields by that fraction, however, has cost three times that of the public plant breeding system's efforts to improve wheat.

There can be no denying that farmers and consumers have benefitted from the work done at Ag Canada research centres that was ongoing until the Conservatives began cutting public-interest breeding program budgets.

Even a hundred years of successful public-interest plant breeding is nothing compared to the historical importance of farm-saved seed. Since the origin of agriculture, farmers have been selecting, saving and replanting seed from one year to the next, and sharing improved varieties with their neighbours. Ottawa is about to sign an agreement and bring in a law that would eliminate that right for Canadian farmers.

Interestingly, those who normally scream the loudest about protecting their property rights are now championing UPOV '91. Only intellectual property belonging multinational seed corporations will be protected, not the intellectual commons developed, collected and controlled by farmers over millennia.

Stop Harper and Ritz from favouring the rights of plant breeders at the expense of the rights of farmers and consumers to use grain varieties developed impartially in the public interest.

Keep your right to use farm-saved seed. **Say NO to UPOV '91!**

**Matt Gehl is an NFU Board member who farms near Regina, SK.**

**He can be reached at [mattgehl.nfu@gmail.com](mailto:mattgehl.nfu@gmail.com)**

*(This article was originally an opinion editorial and has been edited for length)*



## We Remember ...

### **FATHER JAMES PROFIT: priest, activist, friend**

Long-time friend of the NFU, Father James Profit, S.J., died January 11, surrounded by his family in Summerside, PEI at the age of 57. Profit was a well-known community activist in Guelph, ON, where he was director of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre until 2012. In 1980, after finishing a BA in agriculture at the University of Guelph, Profit entered the process to become a Jesuit priest and was ordained in 1991. He then did mission work in Jamaica and First Nations people on Manitoulin Island before returning to Guelph in 1999.

Fr. Profit was committed to a healthy and sustainable agricultural model, and started an organic farming community on the Jesuit's 650-acre property. He worked with local farm families and social activists in the area, and fought for a decade alongside a broad Guelph-based coalition against Walmart's plan to build a Walmart just south of the Jesuit Centre.

Through his life, Profit focused on ecological issues at both personal and community levels and linked the daily concerns of life and matter of the innermost spirit with the fundamental responsibility of all persons and nations to respect and protect the earth.

(adapted from an obituary by Doug Hallett in the *Guelph Guelph Tribune*)

### **Corrections to Union Farmer Quarterly, Winter 2013:**

Resolutions #1 (p18) and #20 (p20) were TABLED. Resolution #6 (p18) was not printed in whole. Italics show text not included in Winter 2013 edition.

#### **Page 18, #1: This resolution was TABLED.**

The NFU's Raw Milk Committee has developed a protocol that is available at <http://www.nfu.ca/story/protocol-legal-sale-fresh-unpasteurized-milk-within-supply-management-system> and an action plan summarized as follows:

- a) Seek support of Health Canada ... [to sell] fresh unpasteurized milk for human consumption [and] ... appropriate regulations to govern such sales.
- b) Seek support of one or more Dairy Boards for a pilot project to test the proposed regulations.
- c) Set up meetings between NFU, a provincial dairy board and Health Canada to negotiate ... a pilot project... [including] a group of interested consumers who would in aggregate pledge to buy the quantity of milk produced and who are supportive of both supply management and fresh unpasteurized milk for human consumption.
- d) Seek support of the Canadian Quality Milk program to develop a module for producers [selling] ... fresh unpasteurized milk for human consumption.
- e) Monitor ... and revise the proposed regulation as necessary.
- f) Roll out to additional jurisdictions

#### **Page 18, #6: VARIETY REGISTRATION FOR ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA**

**WHEREAS** the Ontario Forage Crop Committee has recently recommended up to six Roundup Ready alfalfa varieties for registration, and

**WHEREAS** seed distribution companies can now ask the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to register those varieties, possibly within the next month,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the NFU contact CFIA and the federal Minister of Agriculture to ask them to cancel registration and halt any further registration of all genetically modified alfalfa varieties.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the NFU encourage NFU locals, regions and members to take similar action.

#### **Page 20, #20: This resolution was TABLED.**



# National Farmers Foundation Report

In the 2012-13 financial year ending September 30, 2013, the Foundation received \$7,999 in member donations. In addition, we earned \$4,856 in interest earnings from investments of \$93,120. While the Canada Revenue Agency requires us to pay out 80% of donations received in each year, we, in fact, paid out in projects \$10,000 – well above our \$6,400 obligation under CRA rules.

**Since our last report, donations were received from the following members up to December 30, 2013:**

**Donations:** *Jerry Szack; Vivian Hylands Hostetler; John Oberg; Dianne Dowling; Wilf Harder; Westdale United Church; Margaret Bricknell; George Rogers; William Bocoock; Charles Hopkins; Ian Gordon; Karen Pedersen; Alphonse Meloche; Eleanor Ellins; Myrtle Baleman; Edmund Pedersen; France Oommen; Percy Affleck; Janice McKean; Siegfried Kleinau; Harold Helm; Dawn Vermette; Merv Johnson; Alan Tanenbaum; Raymond Morris; Alan Bangay; Manitoba All Charities Corporation; United Way of PEI; Doreen and John McConnell Fund; Clint Robertson; Raymond Morris; NFU Region 6 District 9; Garrett P. Corrigan.*

**Memorial Donations - In Memory Of:** *Lyle Ross – Isabella Proven; Bill Hope – Ernest Bittner; Howard Williams – Edmund Pedersen; Floyd Van Slyke – Dale Fankhanel; Scott MacArthur, Albert and Hazel Dolbearr – David and Edith Ling; Wineva Jones – R. Bruce Jones; Harry Joe Elder – J. Elaine Morris; Leodaro Piroli – Anthony Piroli; Fay Schofield – Joyce Neufeld, NFU Swift Current, Ken Hymers, Vilda Laing, Marcella and Gil Pedersen, Anne Nisbet; Lester Jorgenson – NFU Swift Current; Fred Harrison, Dolores Shadd, Scott MacArthur, George Danychuk – Gil and Marcella Pedersen; Douglas Leland – Margaret Elder; George Danychuk and Don Robertson – Vilda Laing; Betty Brinkhurst – Marcella and Gil Pedersen; David Ling – Michelle Rose Hinson, Susanne Manovill, Dr. Wendy Duckett; Ann F. Wheatley, Pierre Yves Daoust, D'Arcy Flynn, Oyster Bed Bridge, J.P. Hendricken Inc., Marie Burge, Susie MacCallum, New Glasgow Christian Church, NFU New Brunswick, Ernst and Marion Kuechmeister, R. Gordon Carter, Anthony Reddin, Marcella Pedersen, Wilfred and Faye Lacey, Gordon and Ethel Vessey, Chris and Mary Mermuys, Leo and Vangie Broderick, Bluefield High School, Herbert and Marilyn Simpson, Sidney and Marion Drummond, Blair and Cheryl MacEwen, Ron Toombs, Janelle Mann, Lorne and Della Kielly, Barry Hill, Blaine MacDonald, Eileen Axworthy, Keith and Marilyn Lipton, Lynn Coughlin, Elwin and Gwenneth Wyand, Alfred Fyfe, Noel Saunders, Joyce Loos, Cecil and Marion Frizzell, David and Heather Best, Chester and Kathryn Stewart, Albin Keene, Leith and Ann Andrews, Urban and Mary Laughlin, Tanamy Little, Gerald MacDonald, Judy Clark, Ruth DeLong, Darren Toombs, Betty Brown, Robert and Beatrice Hughes.*

***Thank you for making the National Farmers Foundation  
Your Charity of Choice in 2013.***

***Your continued support will be appreciated.***

**An envelope is included in this issue for your convenience.**

**We look forward to receiving it!**

***As a charitable foundation (Registered No. 882622368RR) all donations are income-tax deductible.***

**National Farmers Foundation**

**2717 Wentz Avenue**

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 4B6**



## NFU BOARD MEMBERS & OFFICES

### Regional/National Offices:

Region 1: Tax: 559 Route 390, Rowena, NB E7H 4N2 Ph: (506) 273-4328

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

Region 3: 3127 County Rd. 36S, Bobcaygeon, ON K0M 1A0 Ph: in ON 1-888-832-9638 / Ph: outside ON (705)738-3993

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

### National Officers and Directors:

*Jan Slomp*, President, Rimbey, AB; *Ann Slater*, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Policy), Lakeside, ON; *Coral Sproule*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Operations), Perth, ON; *Joan Brady*, Women's President, Dashwood, ON; *Marcella Pedersen*, Women's Vice President, Cut Knife, SK; *Alex Fletcher*, Youth President, Victoria, BC; *Lisa Lundgard*, Youth Vice President, Grimshaw, AB; *Randall Affleck*, Region 1 Coordinator, Bedeque, PEI; *Betty Brown*, Region 1 Board Member, Summerfield, NB; *John Sutherland*, Region 3 Coordinator, Hillsburgh, ON; *Charlie Nixon*, Region 3 Board Member, Chesley, ON; *Ian Robson*, Region 5 Coordinator, Deleau, MB; *Bev Stow*, Region 5 Board Member, Carman, MB; *Ed Sagan*, Region 6 Coordinator, Melville, SK; *Glenn Tait*, Region 6 Board Member, Meota, SK; *Matt Gehl*, Region 6 Board Member, Regina, SK; *Blake Hall*, Region 7 Coordinator, Castor, AB; *Doug Scott*, Region 7 Board Member, Waskatenau, AB; *Peter Eggers*, Region 8 Coordinator, La Glace, AB; *Dan Ferguson*, Region 8 Board Member, Duncan, BC.

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Youth Advisory Committee: *Farrah Carter*, Sackville, NB; *Ken Mills*, Granton, ON; *Dean Harder*, Winnipeg, MB.

## The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

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

### Award Criteria and Details:

- There will be two age categories – 15 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 is: ***The Importance of Seed to Small Farms.***
- Deadline for entries is October 15, 2014.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2014.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

### Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

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

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

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