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Cover Photo:

Terry Boehm's 12 year old daughter, Miranda, offers manicures as a fundraiser for the NFU.

—Photo Courtesy of Dean Harder, Winnipeg, MB.



Message from the Editor...

—by Carla Roppel

What a convention! If I were pressed to say what I remember most about convention, I would share a quote from Shannon VanRaes, reporter with the *Western Producer* who attended convention. In the December 18 issue of *The Western Producer*, she wrote,

“...the National Farmers Union has a message that Canadians desperately need to hear. Time and time again the union is not only right about the effects of policy change on producers, it is practically clairvoyant. The NFU is thorough in its economic assessments of the realities farmers face, taking into account both government policy and consumer trends. Its analysis looks at the big picture, and it does it without losing sight of the details.”

Could we have described our contribution to Canadian society more clearly or accurately? VanRaes’ assessment is a far cry from Minister Ritz’s description of the NFU as a “splinter group”, or one of the “elites” that Teresa Healy referenced

from an essay by Clark Banack for the book she is co-editing. According to Banack, in calling for public policies supporting seed sovereignty, reliable grain transportation and public interest research, the NFU “elite” is out to use and abuse democratic process. We want to impose our backwater wills on “ordinary Canadians,” whose interests just happen to coincide with what the lobbyists from BASF, Monsanto, CN, Cargill, Richardson and their global big brothers are telling our government is best for us. (See my editorial in the Fall 2014 *Union Farmer Quarterly* about [Toxic Sludge is Good for You](#) for more about how the PR spin doctors implant beliefs and principles into populations without their conscious awareness.). In pitting ‘elites’ against ‘ordinary people’, Harper has successfully pulled the wool over our eyes to pit Canadians against each other.

This is exactly why the NFU’s voice is even more critical today than it has been in the past. Our research and analysis of federal and international policies is grounded in values that engender not just the best interests of farmers, but those of all Canadians. We offer a solid framework that will solve the problems of corporatization, and that is a policy framework based on the principles of food sovereignty. The solutions we propose to complex problems are themselves complex, but they are much more realistic than the mantra of “jobs, prosperity and growth” with which Harper and his crew answer almost every question asked. —nfu—

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





—by Jan Slomp

A Message from the President

Teresa Healy, author of “The Harper Record” (2008) and keynote speaker at our recent convention, offered her reflections about how the Conservative government manages to manufacture consent in Canadian society. She questioned why the Canadian public would continue to accept the fundamental erosion of democratic processes, institutions and publicly funded, public interest programming, while also allowing a drastic increase in active combat missions and rising homeland security budgets. National and international observers see the Conservative government as making changes that have made Canada barely recognizable.

According to Healy, when the Conservatives label those expressing even the remotest sympathy for protesters against dirty energy projects as militant terrorists, we are seeing Harper apply his version of (or vision for) sociology. This government’s response to civil society protests against the gutting of public institutions and programs has stigmatized concerned citizens as belonging to a “political elite”. On the other hand, those who lambast civil service and reject the public interest while fully engaging in materialistic pursuits are praised as respectable citizens and rewarded with tax cuts. Only by pitting citizen against citizen in a war of words can Harper build the consent he seeks to advance corporate power at the expense of social, economic, ecological, and government constraints to consolidation of corporate power in Canada.

While other general farm organizations and commodity groups endorsed Bill C-18, the NFU adamantly opposed it. The same can be said about our position on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). As well, most farm groups herald CETA’s expanded quotas while the NFU points to the hollowness of that expansion. Europe is not going to relax its food safety rules on GMOs or growth hormones or promoters like ractopamine in poultry, pork and beef. Canada currently meets less than half the export quota it has now. How will it come close to meeting expanded quota?

The NFU has also been the only general farm organization to decry protection of corporate interests under UPOV ’91, such as allowing seed companies to “freeze bank accounts and seize movable and immovable assets of farmers in case of an alleged infringement.” Invoking this so-called protection will cause a litigation chill that will discipline farmers into buying all their seed every year rather than exercising their “privilege” to save seed and thereby triggering unpredictable and costly litigation.

CETA obliges Canada to import an additional 17,000 tonnes of European cheese at the expense of domestic fluid milk production. In the Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations, the US and New Zealand are targeting Canadian supply management for further reductions. The NFU, however, will staunchly defend supply management and resist any further erosion in domestic markets.

The NFU made a submission to the Canadian Transportation Agency Review process in which we pointed to problems arising from the loss of the CWB single desk: lack of coordination, both in quantity and quality of grain moved to and loaded at port; the loss of farmer representation in the grain industry; the lack of price discovery for farmers; and the loss of ability to discipline railways.

Despite the Conservative’s unrelenting attacks on agriculture and democratic process, the NFU pulls more than its weight according to associate member Josh Coles. He is active in many Canadian civil society groups and observed that the NFU is well known in these circles, highly regarded as “the” Canadian farm organization that speaks truth to political power. According to Josh, the NFU brings a vision for agriculture that these organizations rely on, and our impact on the debate about food and agriculture is bigger than our size indicates!

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





—by Coral Sproule

A message from the Women's President

It's time to take a well-deserved breath after our convention in beautiful (but cold) Saskatoon. For most of us, our year moves from a go-go-go farming season into some form of equally demanding and often less rewarding off-farm seasonal work.

As rural population declines, and people migrate to urban settings, farmers and farm communities face the loss of essential services and infrastructure that supports us. We may also feel less empathy for and greater disconnection from all that goes into the rural life that farmers have fought long and hard to establish. These losses have eroded, and in some cases, dismantled orderly collective marketing for farmers. The loss of the Canadian Wheat Board, for example, has been devastating for prairie farmers. Many sold not a single bushel of wheat during the 2013-2014 winter. Now we see that supply management is under attack, and that our inherent right to save and use our seed on our farms has been reduced to mere privilege.

I can't help but think that the peaks and valleys of the landscape are like the gains and losses, ups and downs that we seem doomed to repeat forever - two steps forward and a step (or two) back. Here are two examples of just that! The week before convention, Bill C-18 passed third reading in the House of Commons. This will be a loss for independent small-scale farmers who save and reuse their own seed. Not two days later, however, the government of Ontario announced plans to regulate the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. It's rewarding to know that together with the Ontario Beekeepers, NFU Ontario grain farmer members and the NFU's strong support for the Precautionary Principle has influenced government policy-making.

Faced with the loss of family farms everywhere in the world, we might also feel that we are losing our

capacity to engage with and politicize those who remain on the land. How does one answer questions that are hard to answer even for oneself, let alone for others, such as "What does the NFU do?" or "What does it give to me?" I've been inspired by the speakers and by the work of the Branding Development Work Group. They are gathering and analyzing input to clarify a "21st century look and feel" of what the NFU is, what we want to say and how we want to be perceived.

I've concluded that my personal answer to those questions is this: "We are not selling discounts, tractors or tangible "take-homes". We are, however, offering a vision and a set of values along with trusting relationships, honesty and intelligence. We offer critical thought, healthy debate and respectful dissent about issues and ideals related to farming, food and social justice. These aspirations aren't easily boxed, wrapped and be-ribboned, which is part of why the questions are so hard to answer.

As we always do, NFU members will continue to speak truth to power, uninfluenced and unfettered by the corporatization rampant in the food and farming system. Many will see us as a threat, having gained their power through dishonesty, fear and the disempowerment of others. They may try to undermine us, but we will continue to form new alliances with like-minded people here and around the world as we seek empowerment for all.

In closing, I hope that each of us feels like we are part of something more and bigger - something that can spur us on to keep creating magic with and from our soils. Let's lift each other up and face the next year's challenges together. I look forward to working with you all over the coming seasons.

In Union, Coral Sproule





— Alex Fletcher,
Youth President

A message from the Youth

A big thank you to everyone who organized and participated in this year's annual NFU convention. It was great to connect with members – familiar and new – and as always, there was lots to learn. We had good attendance by and engagement of youth members, many of whom expressed that they were really inspired by their experience there. To those who couldn't make it this year: you were missed and we hope to see you in London, Ontario next year!

At convention, our Youth Vice President, Lisa Lundgard from Grimshaw, Alberta stepped down from her position. Lisa has brought a lot of great energy to the NFU Youth and really appreciated the opportunity to serve on the Board of the NFU. She assures me she will continue to stay actively involved. On behalf of the NFU – thank you Lisa!

Our new Youth Vice President, Ayla Fenton, manages an organic vegetable farm near Kingston, Ontario. Ayla has been a NFU member since 2013 and attended the NFU Youth retreat in the spring of 2014. She is involved in the National New Farmer Coalition project and has been organizing for Young Agrarians in Ontario. On behalf of the NFU – welcome Ayla!

To help reduce the costs for youth attending convention, we organized some alternative accommodations for 14 youth members. This included accommodations provided by two NFU member/supporter families in Saskatoon, both of whom generously offered to host a couple of our youth members in their homes during convention.

The Youth silent auction this year raised over \$1,300. Thank you to everyone who contributed items and made bids on items! Also, the National Farmers Foundation approved our proposal for funding to support a 2015 NFU youth gathering during convention. Thank you to the NFF and their supporters. We are currently in the process of organizing this event (likely to be in Ontario), so please get in touch (nfuyouth@nfu.ca) if you are interested in participating and aren't already on the youth email list.

Food Secure Canada (FSC) Assembly and Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN) Conference, Halifax:

A couple weeks before the NFU convention, I, along with several other NFU and NFU Youth members, had the opportunity to participate in Food Secure Canada's 8th national assembly. This event was coordinated to coincide with ACORN's 15th annual conference. Both events were well attended, full of learning and networking opportunities and provided support to several young farmers to reduce their costs of attending.

I was invited to speak on a policy plenary panel in the FSC assembly on behalf of the NFU about the challenges facing new farmers, with Liberal and NDP MPs present to respond. Our main message was that, while we do need programs and policies that reduce barriers for new farmers, new farmer challenges don't exist in isolation. To truly address the declining number of young farmers, we need to fundamentally fix our dysfunctional food system by moving Canadian agricultural policy away from a narrow focus on export growth towards a comprehensive approach based on the principles of food sovereignty.

In the coming months, NFU youth will be building on the energy, insights and connections we made at these events. We are already planning for the 2015 youth retreat, and are continuing to advance the National New Farmer Coalition. Our goal is to roll out a new farmer policy report and new farmer engagement strategy in 2015.

Thank you, NFU members, for your continued support of the National Farmers Union and NFU Youth.

In Solidarity, Alex Fletcher



Refining an NFU brand for the 21st century

A presentation by members of the Brand Development Working Group: Carla Roppel, Executive Director; Joan Brady, former Women’s President; and Alex Fletcher, Youth President. Other members include Dean Harder (member, R5-MB), Marcella Pedersen (former Women’s Vice President), Karen Eatwell (R3 Coordinator/NFU-O President), Sarah Bakker (General Manager, R3/NFU-O) and Edith Ling (member, R1 – PEI).

Brand is what your audiences say about you rather than what you say about yourself, and should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the “look and feel” still represents what the organization stands for and what it promises.

The NFU logo – the green maple leaf with gold lettering – has been in place for decades, and the tagline “In Union is Strength” even longer. The objects and mandate haven’t changed in that time, but the rest of the world has – as has their perception of the NFU as a legitimate farmer’s voice.



As part of a two-year institutional strengthening project funded by Inter Pares, the NFU Board mandated the Brand Development Working Group (BDWG) to review our brand and develop print and online materials to support organizing and member recruitment, beginning with the logo and tagline. The group first collected information with a survey - online and in print - and invited feedback from members and elected officials through email, reports to Executive and Board

meetings, and articles in the *Union Farmer Quarterly*.

After considering more than 100 logo concepts, the BDWG decided to collect feedback at convention on two options, as well as the current logo. The group also reviewed more than 40 taglines and decided to collect feedback on three new options as well as “In Union is Strength.” Participants used dots to indicate logo and tagline preferences. Feedback indicated members do not want to drift too far from the maple leaf as a major element of an updated logo. Members indicated a strong preference for a new tagline: “Sound Policies. Strong Communities. Sustainable Farms,” which will be presented to the Board for approval. The BDWG will continue to refine a logo to present for the Board’s approval. There will be French versions of the logo and tagline, as well as variations for Ontario and New Brunswick.

Members’ Perceptions of NFU	
Current	Desired
Canadian (34)	Grassroots (26)
Canadian Green (12)	Trustworthy (16)
Bland (6)	Dynamic (14)
Dated (9)	Farmers/Farming (11)
Simple (4)	Professional (10)
Publications (4)	Canadian (7)
Saskatchewan (3)	Progressive (7)
Clear (3)	Vibrant (6)
Small (3)	Strong (5)

Communication is almost instant with email, telephone, video and social media; land mail and faxes seem almost defunct. People consume information differently: in “chunks” rather than pages, and in sentences rather than paragraphs. Colour and images are the norm, due to inexpensive copy and printing processes.

In fact, we are drowning in information. How can the NFU differentiate itself from this hubbub, and represent itself as a legitimate voice in Canada’s agricultural policy discussions?

Tagline	Dot 1	Dot 2	Row Total
Farming for Truth Together	3	4	7
Sound Policies. Strong Communities. Sustainable Farms.	45	26	71
Growing truth, justice and fairness.	2	7	9
In Union is Strength	25	24	49
Column Total	75	61	136

Logo	Dot 1	Dot 2	Total Dots
Green fields w/sun	33	50	83
Wheat leaf	24	10	34
Current	40	26	66
Column Total	97	86	183

Once the logo and tagline are finalized, the BDWG will develop a membership and a fundraising brochure, as well as brochure, poster and leaflet templates that will be provided to Regions and Locals to use in membership drives or promoting events. There will also be guidelines about how to use the logo and tagline, including how not to use them!

For more information, please contact Alex Fletcher at nfuyouth@nfu.ca or 250-661-8099. —nfu—



Canada at a Crossroads: Reflections on Canada's Conservative Government 2008-2014

—by Carla Roppel

Teresa Healy is an activist, researcher, author, editor, teacher and singer-songwriter who has worked with the Canadian Labour Congress and Canadian Union of Public Employees. She now lives and teaches in Vermont. Her edited collection, *The Harper Record*, was published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2008. She and Stuart Trew (Editor, CCPA's *The Monitor*) are co-editing another volume about the Conservative government's record from 2008-2014.

Teresa Healy invited NFU members and allies at convention to “be part of the co-creation” of a new book, asking for submissions of short vignettes about how Harper’s actions in the last 6 years have affected them. She and Trew have invited 45 researchers, authors and thinkers to submit essays to help our “collective remembering” about how Harper’s policy, legislative and regulatory changes have affected Canadian’s economic and social lives.

In her early reading of the submissions, Healy observed that six often overlapping themes emerged: food, water, air and earth; democracy; trade; social policy and labour; foreign policy; and insecurity and privacy. For her presentation, she reviewed one submission in each theme.

Healy began with the “earth” theme, referencing an essay submitted by Ann Slater, NFU 1st VP (Policy) outlining Harper’s destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board’s single desk without the farmer vote required under the CWB Act. He refused to allow the Agriculture Committee to review the Act as is the usual process. Instead, Harper set up an ad hoc committee to review the Act, allowing just 5 minutes of debate for each section – a previously unheard of action. He invoked closure to limit debate of the Act in

the House, and rammed it through Parliament, the Senate and Royal Assent. His removal of the single desk threw farmers back almost a hundred years, eliminating a market mechanism that ensured that farmers received 85% or more of the grain price. The 40% of grain prices retained in 2013-2014 was caused entirely by grain companies and railways capturing excess profit. Harper avoided and undermined Canada’s democratic practices at every step to entrench free market relationships in the grain sector – to the detriment of farmers, their families and communities.

As an example of the “Democracy” theme, Healy referenced “Government For the People, Not By the People: The Unique Populist Logic Underpinning Stephen Harper’s Contempt for Parliament” by Clark Banack from York University that sees Harper’s government as a puzzle: a centralized government that repeatedly overrides key elements of Parliamentary politics while arguing – successfully – that it is actually doing the peoples’ will. He describes Harper’s populist approach as “technocratic,” built on the confidence that neo-liberalism will provide solutions to all problems. He suggests that the people’s will is “pre-political” – that the election gave the Conservatives all the democratic legitimacy they needed to govern and implement their desired goals. Parliamentary debate or political actions that usually happen outside the House just did not matter.

Banack suggests that Harper sees Canada’s democratic processes as allowing “elites”, those with special interests, to use the institutions of representative democracy and responsible government to their benefit, while distorting the will of “ordinary” Canadians and impeding their well-being. Harper argues that the mechanisms intended to keep

(continued on page 16...)



Photo:

Teresa Healy engages with convention participants in a dialogue/question and answer session following her presentation.



Research Team reports on Land Ownership and Concentration in Three Saskatchewan RMs

Annette Desmarais, Canada Research Chair at the University of Manitoba, **Nettie Wiebe**, farmer and Professor at St. Andrews College, and **Darrin Qualman**, former NFU Executive Secretary and Researcher, presented findings from their research about land ownership and concentration in the SK Rural Municipalities (RMs) of Excel, Lajord and Harris. They looked into the investment funds, pension plans, other highly capitalized entities and farmer/investor hybrids that constitute farmland investors (FLI) in the province.

There are 201,121 acres of farmland in the 3 RMs studied (Table 1). Their population declined by an average of 30% between 1991 and 2011, while the amount of land owned by FLIs increased sharply (Table 2).

On average, FLIs owned 10.3% more acres of farm land in 2014 than 1994 in the 3 RMs, ranging from a high of 13.1% in Harris to a low of 8.5% in Excel (Table 2).

The team used CLO4 (concentration of land owned by the four largest entities) to determine concentration. The average CLO4 for the 3 RMs was 21.0%, ranging from 15.7% in Excel to 28.1% in Harris, with each exhibiting different concentration patterns (Table 3).

In Excel, large, non-farmer investment FLIs were the largest landholders, while ownership in the RM of Lajord was more complex.

Several parcels owned by people living outside are rented to others. In the RM of Harris, however, farmer/investor hybrids such as Nil-Ray Farms Ltd. (Nilsson Brothers) and Cor Van Raay's company are the largest FLIs (Table 2).

Table 1. Characteristics of selected rural municipalities.

	Area of RM		Area of farms	Pop., 2011	Pop., 1991	Pop. Change
	Sq. Kms	Acres	Acres	Persons	Persons	1991 to 2011 %
RM 71, Excel	1,122	277,258	263,034	427	630	-32%
RM 128, Lajord	944	233,235	205,133	993	1,032	-4%
RM 316, Harris	805	199,024	134,897	224	295	-24%
Average for 3 RMs	957	236,479	201,121	548	652	-16%
All SK RMs, total	307,847	76,070,650	61,628,148	147,585	209,923	-30%

Data sources: area of RMs: Statistics Canada 2011b; area of farms: Statistics Canada 2011a; population in 2011: Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2012; population in 1991: Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2006.

Table 2. Area and portion of land owned by investment funds, pension plans, and other investors or by farmer/investor hybrids, RMs 71, 128, and 316, 1994 and 2014.

	Area (acres) of farmland owned by:				Portion of farmland owned by investment funds, etc. & hybrids		
	Investment funds, pension plans & other investors		Farmer/investor hybrids		1994	2014	
	1994	2014	1994	2014			
RM 71, Excel	~0	22,474	0	0	<<1%	8.5%	
RM 128, Lajord	0 - 3,200	19,301	0	0	<1.5%	9.4%	
RM 316, Harris	160	160	0	17,506	<<1%	13.1%	
Average for 3 RMs						10.3%	

Data sources: 2014 source map data adapted from Information Services Corporation Ownership Dataset. Source map data reproduced with the permission of Information Services Corporation. 1994 data taken from archived maps of individual RMs.

Table 3. Farmland ownership concentration: CLO4 values for 3 RMs, 1994 & 2014.

	CLO4	
	1994	2014
RM 71, Excel	7.3%	15.7%
RM 128, Lajord	6.8%	19.1%
RM 316, Harris	11.8%	28.1%
Average of the 3 RMs	8.6%	21.0%

Data sources: 2014 source map data adapted from Information Services Corporation Ownership Dataset. Source map data reproduced with the permission of Information Services Corporation. 1994 data taken from archived maps of individual RMs.

Desmarais noted that concentration of ownership and control of land by entities with no attachment to local people, communities and ecosystems raises questions about how power dynamics are changed. Further research is needed about how these changes in power affect land use; soil and water; biodiversity; larger environmental consequences; viability of rural communities; and control of food production, security and sovereignty. The team is also looking to expand its research to cover all SK RMs, and then across Canada.

For more information, please contact Annette Desmarais at Annette.Desmarais@umanitoba.ca, Nettie Wiebe at nettie.wiebe@usask.ca or Darrin Qualman at darring@sasktel.net. —nfu—



THE NFU NEEDS YOUR HELP

Fellow NFU Members,

When allies tell an organization that it “pulls weight well beyond its size” and “kicks butt,” that organization knows it is doing **something very good** and doing **it very well!** This is exactly the feedback I received during our convention in Saskatoon. Allies respect the integrity of the NFU’s policy positions and value our research and analysis in our shared efforts to protect the rights and interests of farmers and of all Canadian citizens.

Delegates and members at convention heard first-hand about the **precarious financial situation the NFU is projecting for 2014-2015 - a deficit of more than \$75,000**. As usual, our members faced this challenge head-on. In less than two days, **120 delegates and visitors contributed \$15,000 to defray our budget shortfall!**

Careful management by the Board of Directors allowed the NFU to absorb similar or larger revenue losses in each of the last two years without reducing staff or noticeably cutting services. Staff, volunteer Board members, and members across the country all worked together to provide the policy analysis, research and publications that farmers – in fact all Canadians – need in these hostile times.

Even with the emergency fundraising at convention and the Board’s careful stewardship, **the NFU cannot survive a third revenue shortfall of this size without cutting staff and services** to the point that we will no longer fulfill our mandate or be able to recruit or retain members. **That is, unless we work together once again to “kick butt.”**

While your generous contributions will help us through the next year, the NFU will balance modest cost savings with increased revenue by recruiting new members, conducting special donor appeals, initiating the Sustainer campaign, asking allies for one-time emergency funding and other activities to be identified.

Your Board is asking you for a **generous donation of \$100 or more** to help us bridge this difficult year. **If every one of our farm families donates a minimum of \$50** to this special appeal, **the NFU will be able to operate in the black in 2015** – AND start to rebuild our reserves!

Please write out a cheque or money order payable to the NFU today. Drop it in an envelope made out to the NFU National Office, 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6. **You can also make your donation online at www.nfu.ca . Or call National Office at (306) 652-9465 and we can take your credit card donation.**

Friends - fellow NFU Members – let’s remember that “In Union is Strength.”

Together, we can overcome this financial challenge!

***In Solidarity,
Jan Slomp, NFU National President***



Debate fiercely; respect diversity

— *Key points from NFU National President Jan Slomp's Opening and Closing Addresses to the 45th Annual National Convention*

The National Convention is a great help in overcoming any sense of isolation members might experience because of our policy positions, according to NFU President Jan Slomp. He suggested the perception that our policy positions are “out of step” with current thinking goes back to the 70s, when the US decided to drop the gold standard and Chicago School of Economics began. Corporations obtained greater economic and political control, setting up their own think tanks and institutions that allowed them to influence politicians in their interests. Slomp pointed to their role in climate change discussions; climate change and fossil fuel use as its cause are denied, while its supporters demonized. That the Conservative government forcefully refuses to participate in international greenhouse gas emissions agreements is the result of an “Alberta” government running Canada.

Slomp visited all NFU regions last year, often to attend Regional Conventions, and commented on the richness of our members’ farming experiences. PEI members really know their issues and take very strong positions with their Minister of Agriculture. NB’s vibrant local food movement did not stop the province from giving a non-resident corporation 30,000 acres of Crown land to which local producers would have liked the same access. Clearly governments see distant corporations – not local farmers – as drivers of economic power. Cooperation between NFU Region 3 and the Ontario Beekeepers Association has resulted in regulations that will allow the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments only when needed and after integrated pest management training. Prairie farmers continue to cope with loss of the farmers’ CWB single desk and the Conservatives continue its privatization. No clear information about the terms or expectations is publicly available, although it appears the winning bidder would both own the CWB and retain their bid money. BC is home to enthusiastic young farmers and a thriving direct food marketing sector where there is great potential for new membership.

Bill C-18 was passed before convention, but we can be proud that our campaign raised farmers’ seed saving rights with tens of thousands of Canadians. Slomp ended his opening address by encouraging

members to debate fiercely so that we can define the very best policy and claim our livelihoods.

Acclaimed to a second term as NFU President, Slomp said the NFU’s diversity in size and type of farming across the country was matched by the presentations of convention speakers and panels. He said that he favours the NFU’s reputation as rebels, saying the last decade makes it clear that only rebellion can stop the slaughter of our democratic processes. As investment companies drive up farmland prices, new farmers’ access to land is reduced. Without the support of a family farm or sufficient financial support, young people who want to farm cannot. Slomp believes the NFU owes it to these youth to address these shortcomings.

The NFU’s financial discussion figured high on the agenda, as the NFU is facing a significant and unsustainable revenue shortfall this year. Members immediately launched a special appeal that netted \$15,000 by the end of convention. Slomp said our weakest response would have been to prepare an exit strategy, especially given the energy of the youth at convention.

Closing his address, Slomp said that current political environment and regulatory regimes facilitate industry and cause too many farmers to feel their success depends on industrial production. He believes that our inclusivity in welcoming and embracing all kinds and sizes of farms is a clear sign of maturity of which we can be proud.

—nfu—



Photo: Dan Kretschmar (left) and Matt Gehl (right) join others in closing the convention with our usual chorus of "Solidarity Forever."



The State of Farm Debt and Agricultural Financialization

—by Carla Roppel

Sarah Martin provided a big picture view of the financialization of agriculture - the increasing importance of financial motives, actors, markets and institutions in the operation and governance of economies.

Martin highlighted the mismatch between finance and agriculture. Finance seeks certainty while agriculture is fundamentally uncertain. Finance wants short-term profits but agriculture requires long-term investment. To bridge this mismatch, the state (i.e. national governments) constrained finance to reduce both the potential losses of investors and the exploitation of farmers.

Since the late 1980s, deregulation allowed the finance sector to gain power along the entire agri-food chain. The sector expanded and created new ways to invest in agricultural commodities, farmland and agriculture-related businesses, all of which increased financial-based profits, but not the profits of food producers. Martin stated that the finance sector's expanding and deepening influence is reshaping agriculture and food globally.

Governments have not only lifted constraints on finance, they have begun participating as investors. World-wide pension fund investments in agriculture (including Canada's CPP Investment Board) rose from \$6 billion in 2002 to \$320 billion today.

In this deregulated environment, farmers bear the risks of production while investors cream off the profits in the form of interest payments. In 2010, the federal government reported that Canadian farmers are managing risk and volatility by relying on off-farm income. Martin wondered how many bankers work a second job to manage their industry's risks.

In his presentation about current farm debt situation in Canada, Ken Rosaasen noted that today's realized net farm income (what is left after the bills are paid) is a much smaller fraction of the debt than in the past. In 1975, total farm debt was about twice the net farm income; now it is more than 12 times net farm income. This is a concern because the ability to service debt is based on cash sales and realized farm income.



Photo:

Sarah Martin and Ken Rosaasen answer questions following their presentation.

Canadian land values peaked in the 1980s when interest rates were high, operating loans were at 20% and mortgages at 9% to 14%. Subsidies in the 1985 US Farm Bill changed everything. By 1987 the value of Canadian farm capital – primarily land – fell, and did not recover until 1994. The crisis led to creation of the farm debt review boards and farmland security laws, and deals were cut with financial institutions.

A lot of land will be changing hands in the next couple of decades as farmers age. Succession planning is important. Pension plans are now buying farmland with before-tax dollars, taking advantage of income tax rebates on investments. Farmers, however, must buy land with after-tax dollars for which there is no tax rebate. This is unfair, a policy flaw that favours big investors. Yet recently, we've seen some big investors lose money, fail and undergo restructuring, including Big Sky Farms, One Earth Farms, Broadacre and Wigmore farms. Rosaasen would like to see a study of the effects of lenders' decisions, whether they give preference to large debtors, and the outcomes of these implicit economic policies.

—nfu—



Corporate Power and the Extraction of Rural Wealth

André Magnan from the University of Regina, **Scott Harris** with the Council of Canadians, and **Bernie Wiehle**, an Ontario beekeeper, shed light on three ways that corporations extract wealth from farmers and rural communities.

Land Acquisition — André Magnan:

André Magnan compared patterns of farmland ownership in Canada and Australia in the context of the global land grab. The Canadian prairies and Australia's grain-growing states have similar demographics, production methods, financial pressures and policy frameworks. Both also have relatively low, but rising farmland prices, making speculation attractive.

Farmland investment companies have invested more than \$400 million in Canada, mostly in Saskatchewan. They typically buy, then lease to operators to avoid production risk. In Australia investments are larger and include foreign ownership. \$1.5 billion worth of farmland was bought there between 2010 and 2013. In Australia land is not typically leased out.

Agriculture and farmland are becoming very attractive targets for finance capital. The process and structures of consolidation in agriculture makes farmland attractive to these investors as well. Public policy and social debate about the implications of these land investment patterns is needed.

Trade Agreements — Scott Harris:

Scott Harris emphasized that trade agreements are not about trade, but are tools to reduce governments' ability to regulate in ways that would limit corporate profits. Existing tariffs are low, so agreements focus on “non-tariff barriers” or what we call government regulations, local content rules, and public services.

Canada is in an unprecedented push for trade agreements as a means to implement an undemocratic framework that promotes and locks in corporate rights. Investment protections continue for decades in the event any of these deals are cancelled.

The Investor-State Dispute System enforces trade agreements by allowing corporations to sue governments for lost future profits if they violate their sweeping new rights. The possibility of being sued causes a “policy chill” that stops governments from responding to citizens' legitimate concerns.

The good news is that the push for new trade agreements builds common cause. All around world people are backing out of these agreements. Heat can overcome a chill.

Neonicotinoid (neonic) Seed Treatments — Bernie Wiehle:

Bernie Wiehle showed *A beekeeper and an industry under threat* (available at <http://tinyurl.com/qbufb45>) as an overview of the effect of neonics on beekeepers' livelihoods.

First noticed in 2006, losses mounted until the massive bee die-offs in 2012. In 2013, the Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) concluded neonicotinoids were the cause, and that current use of the insecticide is “unsustainable.”

Neonics are the world's most widely used insecticide. Ontario studies show that it is only needed on 20% of fields, but untreated corn and soybean seed is not available unless you order early, and all winter wheat seed is treated. Southern Ontario is so extensively cropped in corn and soybeans it is impossible for beekeepers to avoid neonics. Exposure is not limited to dust during planting; all tissues of plants grown from treated seed contain neonics. As well, the chemical is water-soluble and persists in soils and surface water.

This fall, Ontario announced its goal to reduce neonic use by 80% as new products come onto the market, especially after 2017 when neonic patents expire. The current battle is merely a skirmish in a much bigger war.

—nfu—



Farmer Power: Past, Present and Future

—by Carla Roppel

Allan Slater is an “NFU Elder” from Ontario who was involved in setting up the supply management system for Ontario and Quebec farmers and its expansion to the rest of Canada. Slater shared his recollections of how farmers used their power to obtain better livelihoods for dairy farmers and their communities. NFU Youth members Alex Fletcher (Youth President), Virginie Lavallée-Picard, Dana Prentice and Ayla Fenton described their recent work to engage young and new farmers to build their “Farmer Power”. Convention-goers then shared their own stories of farmer power in table-top discussions. The information from these conversations will be used to inform the NFU’s future work.

Before 1965, Slater stated that dairy farmers were at the mercy of a free market system that kept milk prices below the cost of production. Farmers established co-operative processing plants and product-specific associations, but the system was so fragmented that large corporations held all of the power. Surpluses were processed and stored, and used to keep prices low. Although governments all over the world (except Canada) were subsidizing dairy farmers to keep them in business, farmers could not earn a decent return on their labour and investment.

Low milk prices during the 1960s, coinciding with huge membership growth in the Ontario Farmers Union, led to widespread unrest and civil disobedience, including an action at the provincial Minister’s

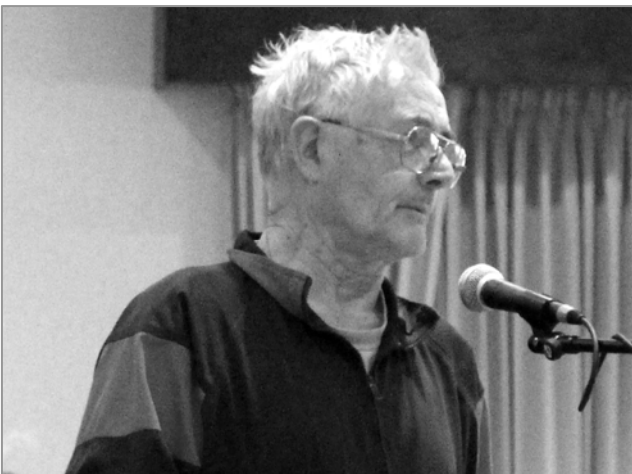


Photo: Allan Slater, shown here at the mic following another presentation, is one of the few remaining members who were involved in setting up Canada’s supply management system.

farm. By 1965, the Milk Act established a single desk for buying and selling all Ontario milk, but it didn’t solve low prices or address lack of market power.

In June 1966, a young farmer tied a sign that said “I’m tired of waiting – join me” to his old Case tractor and began a community tour. Within days, farmers across the province were slowing traffic. It was clear they had to go to the Legislature in Toronto, where thousands of farmers and urbanites joined together to demand action on milk pricing. Government leaders did not come out to talk, so a few farmers decided to go in and find them. Surprisingly, the guards stepped aside and the farmers walked in. Slater said that to this day, no one knows where those chickens came from, but suddenly they were fluttering around the legislature! While the guards were busy catching chickens, the farmers took an unguided tour of the legislature.

That farmer action led to the development of the Ontario Milk Marketing Board. Later, Ontario and Quebec farmers went to Ottawa to solve the subsidy problem. In 1972, the Marketing Agencies Act was passed, laying the foundation for a national supply management system. Slater concluded that since then, Canada is the only major dairy-producing country that does not use tax dollars to subsidize dairy farmers.

The NFU Youth noted that demographic trends show a rapid and steep decline in the number of farmers under age of 35. Farm debt and other structural issues create an inhospitable environment for farmers today - facts that underscore the importance of efforts to mobilize young farmers in the NFU.

Because NFU policy supports youth drawing on the strengths of other like-minded organizations, the youth are working with several groups in the National Young Farmer Coalition, a new farmer-driven and directed project that aims to advance food sovereignty, engage civil society, do research, work with all levels of government and promote young/new farmer empowerment. NFU youth have also organized events, including NFU retreats and weekend mixers with the Young Agrarians, where young farmers can meet each other, talk about policy ideas and practical methods and feel less alone. Young farmers see rebuilding community as an important source of farmer power, creating solidarity and inspiring them to work together to change Canada’s farming and food system. —nfu—



Livelihoods in a Post-CWB World

*University of Saskatchewan economics professor **Richard Gray**, NFU Board member **Ian Robson**, and former CWB elected director **Larry Hill** provided their perspectives on prairie grain farmers' situation without the single-desk Canadian Wheat Board.*

Richard Gray expects a trend of falling farm prices for wheat that started in 1940 to continue. In the same period, crop output increased five-fold while input use rose 50%. Access to export positions has the most effect on crop prices, as demonstrated by the wide basis of the huge 2013-14 crop, which cost producers at least \$2 billion. Persistent high basis levels will make losses more important in determining farmers' livelihoods, especially if grain prices fall.

Gray stated that rail deregulation is not the solution. He suggested options such as winter incentives under the revenue cap; increased west coast terminal capacity; container back-haul agreements; a west coast-based futures market to permit hedging on sales to Asian markets; third party coordination of rail service; better crop forecasting; and innovation in technology and institutions.

Ian Robson said the open market took a 70-year vacation during the Wheat Board years, and now that it has returned, farmers are not happy. We need that single desk. Without the Wheat Board and its audited statement, there is less information about pricing. Smaller farmers must choose between searching for prices or doing essential chores, while bigger operations hire market advisors. Robson advises that farmers beware of disclaimers disavowing any responsibility for the consequences of following their 'expert' advice.

Deciding when to sell is always challenging; knowing how much one will have to sell even more so. Farmers know the price when they harvest and can sell then, or contract to sell a certain volume at a given price in the future – without knowing whether they will harvest enough to fill the contract. John Morriss (Ed., *MB Cooperator*) suggests that farmers get the best price by selling a little every day – which is exactly what the Wheat Board did in a very organized way, talking directly to buyers.

When Larry Hill was elected as a Director, Wheat Board research showed that the single desk provided farmers with \$6 to \$20/tonne of value by selecting markets, selling to processors (not middlemen) and managing transportation costs. On any day, the Board sold different qualities of wheat to various buyers at



Photo: Ian Robson (left), Larry Hill (middle) and Richard Gray (right) during the question & answer session of their panel.

different prices, but it always filled the premium markets that paid for quality and assured supply first.

The Board selected the cheapest route to the buyer, sometimes choosing sales with lower transportation costs over higher-priced sales. It managed vessels coming to port to avoid demurrage. The CWB made railways bid for lower freight rates and had the power to challenge them in court for failure to provide service. No entity has that power now, and railways are urging the government to implement a bid car system. Grain companies will bid against each other and charge the cost to farmers.

The government is racing to eliminate all traces of the former CWB and Canada's quality assurance system, believing that the market will solve all problems. Hill noted that in an open market farmers cannot add value in the ways the single desk did. You can't brand, and therefore can't sell for a premium price. Moreover, trade/economic agreements will make it very difficult to restart a single desk.

Dismantling our current quality system by getting rid of varietal development and inspection systems will harmonize us with US regulations, but Canadians will be worse off because the US is closer to cheap water transportation.

Farmers need a balance of power between producers and railways. If producers don't control car supplies, railways will charge what traffic will bear. Railways will use the idea tweaking rates as a wedge issue with the end game to get rid of revenue cap – which farmers must resist.

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Acting for Our Livelihoods

Mixed organic farmer **Cathy McGregor-Smith** from Ontario, dairy farmer **Helen Groome** from the Basque region in Spain, and Saskatchewan grain farmer, **Cam Goff** offered their practical approaches to claiming our livelihoods.

Long before organic was cool, Cathy and husband Gary were doing it! They bought a 240 ac. farm in S. Ontario in the 1980s after quitting their jobs. They assessed their strengths and weaknesses, obtained the training needed and learned from Gary's grandmother.

Their direct marketing business started with home deliveries to their former co-workers. They would leave home with empty pockets and a van full of produce, and return with full pockets and an empty van. Over time, they added product lines and opened an on-farm market.

Cathy and Gary added livestock and poultry for eggs and meat to earn a year-round income, obtaining an exemption from the 14,000-bird minimum quota to organically produce and direct market 1,000 birds. Now they raise and market about 4,000 birds. They also grow organic feed grains for their own use and for a small sideline feed business.

The pair are happy with their farm operation, and now also help their daughter and son-in-law's successful flower farm.

In 1982, British-born Helen Groom went to Spain to write her thesis, which led to employment with the Basque Farmers' Union, EHNE. She lived on a dairy farm run by two brothers, which had gradually intensified in line with government policy. Intensification increased dependence on purchased inputs and required more work, while input prices rose and milk prices stagnated or declined. They were

losing their livelihoods, becoming less satisfied and less sustainable.

Fifteen years ago, the brothers started to de-intensify, which Helen described as going forward in a different way. The family bought less feed and chemical, reduced their herd to 30-35 cows and deliberately lowered milk yields, which improved both cow health and milk quality. About 4 years ago, they became organic, further reduced their herd to 20-25 cows, and used more farm-grown forage and grazing. The family pasteurizes their own milk, which meets higher standards than required, and produces 4 kinds of cheese and yogurt in their dairy. They sell to small shops and farmers' markets within 100 km.

Their project was subsidized, and was helped by selling surplus milk to a co-op while cheese production ramped up. The farm supports 5 full-time jobs and is considering another, but the family is not interested in endless expansion. The Basque Farmers Union is promoting projects like this, but farmers also need support for necessary learning.

Cam Goff believes the best way for farmers to claim their livelihoods is through political awareness and action. The easiest ways to correct perceived deficiencies is inform yourself, talk with your neighbours, or join and contribute to an organization like the NFU. You can offer your moral, public and financial support to those who do stand up and speak out for the values you believe in, and donate money to help them run campaigns. *(continued on page 16...)*



Photo: Cam Goff (left), Helen Groom (middle) and Cathy McGregor-Smith (right) shared their ideas and experiences about what it takes to ensure farmers claim their livelihoods.



(Acting for Our Livelihoods, from page 15)

The hardest action is to step forward to help turn beliefs into policy and promote their adoption by government. Such political involvement ensures that farmers' needs and interests are recognized when governments set policies and goals. Farmers compete against companies whose interests are not ours. They have huge budgets, PR departments and lobbyists to make sure governments hear what they want. While farmers are necessary, we are not glamorous and easily ignored, so we have to work harder to promote our interests.

Your farm partners must support your involvement, and you will have to learn to live with

compromise because things won't always go the way you want. You will make mistakes, but you will learn, and your participation will improve policies. Compromise does not mean you have sold out, and you must not give up.

Cam became politically active after trying to find a replacement for Ian McCreary as an elected director to the Canadian Wheat Board. Cam eventually decided to step up and was elected. He is happy with his decision as he meets many people who share his views. Cam encouraged everyone to consider political involvement as a way to look after yourself and others in the community.

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(Canada at a Crossroads, from page 7)

governments accountable to their citizens between elections are outdated and unnecessary; elections give all the legitimacy needed. This analysis perfectly describes Harper's actions in dismantling the CWB. The majority of farmers who supported the CWB were the "elites" whose special interest was retaining the single desk, thus interfering with the will of the "ordinary people" – the minority of farmers who wanted the end of the CWB.

In the "Economy & Trade" theme, Healy referenced an essay by Prosper Bernard Jr. (City University of New York) titled The Politics of Economic Policy During the Great Recession of 2008-2009. Bernard noted that under Harper's minority government, Canada's stimulus spending was among the largest in OECD countries, despite our relatively mild recession. About 4.4% of GDP went to prop up the financial sector to ensure continued lending to consumers and businesses, while infrastructure spending went to projects that generated few jobs and required no ongoing expenditure. Surprisingly, Canadians spent about the same as Spain, France, Austria, Germany and the US spent on bank rescues. Infrastructure got attention, but social programs and supports got very little.

Things changed with Harper's 2011 majority government, when he introduced market-led responses and restructuring despite the deep financial crisis. He acted on his election promise to balance the budget by 2015 and implemented deep austerity measures to downsize the public sector to its smallest in 50-plus years. He reduced spending on social programming such that Canadian safety nets provided minimal protection against job loss.

York University James Fitzgerald's essay, Truth and Reconciliation: Harper Government Policy and Aboriginal Funding, was Healey's choice for the social policy theme.

Fitzgerald asserts Harper's intention to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into Canada's economic and social structures and practices by conferring rights to privately own land and take on debt. He pointed to allegations about the fiscal ineptitude – even corruption – of Aboriginal chiefs and governments. Ideology once again trumped evidence when Harper pulled funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which had a proven record of success, supporting Aboriginal people to recover from the traumas of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse in residential schools.

In the labour area, Healy presented highlights from John Connelly's essay, A Party for New Canadians: the Rhetoric and Reality of Neo-Conservative Citizenship and Immigration Policy. Connelly notes that in Harper's "winner takes all" approach to governing, the Conservatives creatively (but cynically) obtained a majority. Knowing that Quebec was lost, Harper adapted a traditional neo-Conservative discourse to Canadian multiculturalism to create a "minimum winnable coalition," a very different approach from the usual brokerage style of Canadian politics. Harper managed to graft support from immigrant communities and ordinary people onto the party's base without changing the party's inherently unwelcoming principles and policies. Connelly suggests that the radically reformed Citizenship Act enables a highly exclusionary vision of Canadian militaristic patriotism that describes "special-interest elites" rather than government policy as stopping immigrants (i.e. the "ordinary people") from succeeding in the free market and integrating into Canadian society.

A wide-ranging and informative dialogue/question and answer period followed Healy's presentation that is well-worth hearing. See the back page for instructions on how to order copies of this and other presentations.

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Therefore Be It Resolved...

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE NFU'S 45TH ANNUAL CONVENTION NOVEMBER 27TH TO 29TH, 2014 – SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

1. Climate Change

WHEREAS farmers need support to help cope with climate change, and

WHEREAS the public needs support to reduce its impact on the climate, and

WHEREAS there are some new and old technologies that can help reduce the effects of climate change,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU explore inviting experts to educate NFU members on some new and old technologies that can help reduce the effects of climate change.

2. CETA

WHEREAS the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will have a huge impact on the Canadian economy in general, and

WHEREAS the implications of this Agreement have been kept secret from the Canadian people,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge the provincial governments to hold meaningful public meetings and have public input on this and other trade agreements before they are ratified.

3. Water Retention

WHEREAS 60% of Sask. wetlands have been drained, and

WHEREAS the potential flow in the Assiniboine basin in Manitoba has increased beyond capacity, and

WHEREAS Manitoba is highly affected from extra water flowing from Saskatchewan and extra floods have been created from it,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to optimize water retention ability to mitigate downstream flooding.

4. Health Testing and Monitoring of Neonicotinoids

WHEREAS there is a growing awareness of the negative effects of neonicotinoids on the bee population,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that NFU request to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that human wellness in agricultural communities be given the same consideration as employees of other industry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU request the government immediately begin health

testing and monitoring for the neonicotinoid chemicals in use within our farming communities.

5. Increasing Restricted Farm Loss (RFL) Tax Rule

WHEREAS many young and beginning farmers depend on off-farm income to help support their farm or farm family, and

WHEREAS current Restricted Farm Losses (RFL) tax rules limit deductible farm losses to \$17,500 annually, and

WHEREAS spending by farmers helps to improve the overall economy,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to increase the Restricted Farm Losses (RFL) rule to a maximum of \$50,000 annually and thereafter tie the maximum limit to the national inflation rate.

6. Synthetic Biology

WHEREAS synthetic biology has been defined by the Royal Society as an emerging area of research that can broadly be described as the design and construction of novel artificial biological pathways, organisms or devices, or the redesign of existing natural biological systems, and

WHEREAS synthetic biology includes but is not limited to the use of microbes that have been synthesized to produce an array of materials, and these microbes are fed on sugar derived from sugar cane, which is at the leading edge of tropical landgrabbing, and

WHEREAS synthetic biology has been used to produce products commonly derived from plants grown and tended by farmers worldwide and is seen to be an existential threat to their livelihood, and

WHEREAS synthetic biology remains largely unregulated, and

WHEREAS synthetic biology carries with it a high potential for disastrous consequences ecologically, socially, and economically,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union strongly urge the provincial, territorial, and federal governments, as well as the United Nations, to place an indefinite moratorium on the practice and products of synthetic biology until such time as its potential ramifications can be more fully comprehended and effectively regulated.

(continued on page 18...)



7. **Aquifer Contamination**

WHEREAS the incidences of non-saline aquifer contamination by the oil and gas industry are currently hidden by non-disclosure agreements.

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby federal and provincial governments to openly and publicly acknowledge and identify the incidences of non-saline aquifer contamination by the oil and gas industry.

8. **Associate Membership**

WHEREAS the NFU is part of a greater food sovereignty movement and plays a unique role in that movement, in part because it is led by and for family farmers, and

WHEREAS the NFU has policy to reach out and develop strategic alliances with other organizations including union associations, consumer groups, indigenous peoples organizations and educators, and

WHEREAS associate members may be connected to other said organizations, and can support the goals of the NFU in developing said alliances, in part because of the range and diversity in skill sets and seasonal availability of associate members that would complement those of NFU members,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU revisit our position on associate membership with a view to enhancing and clarifying the role of associate members in the workings of the organization, nationally, regionally and locally.

9. **Spray Drift**

WHEREAS spray drift in rural Canada is becoming a common occurrence that is affecting adjacent fields with potential environmental downgrading of crops affected,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU bring to the attention of governments with jurisdiction that the matter of spray drift be dealt with as an environmental offence.

10. **Grain Handling and Transportation**

WHEREAS a detailed powerpoint of Ian McCreary's presentation at the Grain Summit of March 26, 2014 is available at www.grainsummit2014.ca, and

WHEREAS the eight key recommendations are: 1) Revisit the GTA approach; 2) Ensure an aggregate service commitment; 3) Forward rail contracting; 4) Improve price transparency and discovery through mandatory price reporting; 5) Enhance position of non-facility owners; 6) Rail competition; 7) Maintain Revenue Cap; and 8) Improve West Coast capacity (all capacity).

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU help foster a broad coalition of farm groups on grain handling and transportation based on the presentation of Ian McCreary at the Grain Summit of March 26, 2014 in Saskatoon.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU continue to articulate its independent position and analysis which affirms the Canadian Wheat Board as the best possible option and remain ready to cooperate with any potential allies to press this idea forward as a better long-term solution.

11. **Ban on Glyphosate as a Desiccant**

WHEREAS the common practice of glyphosate desiccation (spraying glyphosate a few days prior to harvest) is creating high levels of glyphosate residue in our wheat, barley and oat crops that are destined for our dinner table, and

WHEREAS the Netherlands has banned the use of glyphosate and other countries are considering similar actions, and

WHEREAS glyphosate use is ubiquitous on our food producing farm land, and

WHEREAS glyphosate-resistant weeds are becoming a reality and problem for farmers, and

WHEREAS glyphosate creates profit-driven corporate dependency among family farmers and promotes corporate control of our seeds, and

WHEREAS there is mounting scientific evidence and concern that the use of glyphosate on our fields is causing devastating environmental and human health problems,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call on the Federal Government to ban the use of glyphosate as a desiccant or herbicide in food and feed crops just prior to harvest.

12. **Mail-in Ballots for Directors of Groups Administering Check-off Fees**

WHEREAS farmers have millions of dollars a year collected in check-offs on every commodity, and WHEREAS these funds are to be used to further the varietal development and markets for those commodities, and

WHEREAS each province has established commissions or associations to oversee the collection and allocation of these check-offs, and

WHEREAS all farmers should have the opportunity to vote on who represents them on the board of directors for every provincial group for which they grow the commodity, and

WHEREAS government-appointed directors and directors elected at in-person meetings disenfranchise the farmers whose money is being collected and spent,



THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby all provincial governments to ensure that all agricultural commodity groups which collect and/or administer check-off funds hold elections by mail-in ballot to ensure that all affected producers are given the opportunity to vote on who will be spending their check-off dollars.

13. Pilot Project for Memberships

BE IT RESOLVED that we offer unlimited free one-year trial electronic memberships to new members in each region in 2015 in regions which have no stable funding as a one-year pilot project.

14. NFU Youth-National New Farmer Coalition and Policy Platform

WHEREAS NFU policy states that: "Given the rising average age of current farmers, and the increasing number of barriers preventing young people from entering farming, the NFU shall work with like-minded individuals and organizations to promote policies and programs that support the entrance of new farmers into food production." [NFU Policy Statement, Nov. '05], and

WHEREAS the National New Farmer Coalition (NNFC) and Policy Platform project is a direct outcome of the 2014 NFU Youth Meeting and is inspired by the successful work of the National Young Farmers Coalition in the US, and

WHEREAS the Board of the NFU moved that "the National Board support the NFU Youth National New Farmer Policy Platform...initiative to support new farmers across Canada in cooperation with national staff and regular report-backs to the Board." [May, 2014], and

WHEREAS the goals of the NNFC are to:

1. Network, leverage the strengths and catalyse the work of new farmer organizations, initiatives and supporters.
2. Research new farmer challenges and opportunities.
3. Develop a National New Farmer Policy Platform, and
4. Connect, engage and mobilize new farmers and civil society, and

WHEREAS this coalition is not intended to become a separate organization and is meant to help the NFU youth engage more new farmers and attract new members to the NFU,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU continue to support the work of the NFU Youth to develop a National New Farmer Coalition with the goals of engaging new farmers, researching, new farmer barriers and opportunities, and establishing a National New Farmer Policy Platform.



Photo: Tyrone Tootoosis of the Poundmaker Cree Nation in Treaty Six Territory, brings greetings to the NFU's 45th Annual Convention, November 27th, 2014, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

15. Endorsing the Work of the Branding Development Work Group

WHEREAS the ways people communicate and share information have changed immensely since the inception of the NFU in 1969, and

WHEREAS there is immense competition in print and online media to capture the attention and interest of potential new members, and

WHEREAS recognizing that the NFU has not revisited its visual look and feel for several decades, along with the need to unify the NFU visual identity across the country, the NFU Executive and Board approved the mandate of the ad hoc Brand Development Work Group to review and make recommendations about the NFU brand, including refreshing or redesigning the logo and tagline in April 2014, and

WHEREAS the NFU and in particular the members of the working group have invested and will continue to invest time and resources into this project, and

WHEREAS the NFU Board, and through it, the Brand Development Working Group, requires the full support and endorsement of NFU members to complete its mandate by December 31, 2014,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2014 Convention endorse the Branding Development Work Group's continuation of its work to fulfill its mandate.

(continued on page 20...)



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2014 Convention designate the NFU Board and Executive to oversee and approve recommendations made by the Brand Development Work Group in fulfilling its mandate of “improving the NFU brand”.

16. Alternative Fundraising

WHEREAS the NFU is in dire financial straits,
BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU encourage its members consider “Planned Giving” in their wills.

17. Provincial Acquisition of CWB Assets

WHEREAS the federal government of Stephen Harper has expropriated the Canadian Wheat Board, and

WHEREAS wheat and barley producers in Western Canada invested more than \$200 million in the CWB Contingency Fund, and

WHEREAS wheat and barley producers of Western Canada require a means of recapturing and controlling their equity in the CWB, and

WHEREAS the government of Canada has indicated its willingness to sell the CWB in a manner that returns the purchase price to the purchaser,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge the provincial governments of the western provinces to express their intent to purchase the assets of the CWB with the intent of returning the CWB assets to its rightful owners: the wheat and barley farmers of Western Canada.

18. Aboriginal Treaty Rights

WHEREAS the November 2013 NFU Policy Statement 9.d “Land Use & Tenure” states the National Farmers Union recommends a system of land tenure ... which achieves the following goals include the

“preservation of the rights of native people”, and

WHEREAS First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada have experienced land theft, cultural assimilation, sexual and physical violence through the residential school system, and

WHEREAS recent Supreme Court decisions have confirmed Aboriginal rights in Canada, and

WHEREAS the government of Canada has dishonoured the treaties, underfunds education and other services for First Nations people and refuses to address their grievances,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU affirm its responsibility as treaty people to:

1. Inform our membership on the historical relationship between First Nations and the government of Canada and the aspirations of First Nations people in Canada, and
2. Publicly support initiatives by First Nations people to assert their aboriginal rights.

19. Monthly Membership Payment

WHEREAS as a membership driven organization we need to focus great energy on gaining and retaining membership, and

WHEREAS some potential members have a small income stream, and

WHEREAS many membership driven organizations offer membership payment options, and

WHEREAS the process monthly payments for voluntary contributions already exists,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU will explore and implement, if needed and where possible, a monthly payment option for paying membership dues.

20. Maintaining Dairy Border Protections and Supply Management

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union were foundational leaders in 1971 when supply management was first introduced in Ontario to help stabilize farm gate milk prices and organize farmers market power, and

WHEREAS a deliberate anti-supply management media campaign has been trying to devalue the importance of this key Canadian farm policy to rural communities and consumers, and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has agreed to increased European cheese imports under the CETA agreement, and

WHEREAS Canada's supply management policy has been targeted by USA and New Zealand under the current TPP negotiations,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge the Government of Canada to maintain strong border protections from imported foreign dairy ingredients,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU reiterates its support for supply management as a key Canadian farm policy, essential to the economy of rural Canada.



Photo: F. Alan Kennedy (left) of Manitoba is presented the Grassroots Member Award from Ian Robson (right).



21. Continued Opposition to UPOV '91

WHEREAS Bill C-18 is now before the Senate and will soon bring Canada's Plant Breeders Rights Act in line with UPOV '91,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that regardless of the adoption of Bill C-18 and UPOV '91 by the Government of Canada, the NFU continue to promote our document "The Fundamental Principles of a Farmer's Seed Act" and continue to oppose UPOV '91 in all of its iterations.

22. Continued Opposition to CETA & Other Trade Deals

WHEREAS CETA and other so called trade agreements are really constitutions for international corporations and financiers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU continue to oppose CETA and other arrangements, like FIPA, through continued analysis and public exposure of that analysis regardless of its future implementation.

23. Food Sovereignty at the ACWW

WHEREAS the NFU Women's Advisory is a long-time member of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), and

WHEREAS the ACWW develops agriculture policy and engages in policy as an organization with Consultative status at the United Nations, and

WHEREAS Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food production through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems, and

WHEREAS Food Sovereignty is a framework of resistance and resilience for both farmers and communities, offering an alternative to a corporate controlled globalized food system that does not consider sustainable and equitable futures for farmers or communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU recommend that the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) begin a campaign to bring awareness and understanding of Food Sovereignty to the organization and its members during the next triennium (2015-2017),

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a motion be put to the ACWW membership at the 2018 Triennium Conference to accept Food Sovereignty as part of ACWW agricultural policy.

24. Canada's Indigenous Women

WHEREAS Canada's indigenous women and girls are vulnerable and targeted for violence, and

WHEREAS the Canadian legal system is negligent in ensuring safety and justice for missing and murdered indigenous women,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union advocate to all levels of government to provide adequate resources to prevent further violence and indignities to Canada's indigenous women and for timely resolution of outstanding cases.

Your NFU Board of Directors & Advisory:



(L to R) Back Row: Alex Fletcher, Youth President; Peters Eggers, Region 8 Board Member; Doug Scott, Region 7 Board Member; Ed Pedersen, Region 6 Board Member; Kathleen Charpentier, Women's Vice Pres.; Matt Gehl, Region 6 Board Member; Charlie Nixon, Region 3 Board Member; Ed Sagan, Region 6 Board Member; Ian Robson, Region 5 Board Member; Joe Dama, Region 3 Board Member; Karen Eatwell, Region 3 Board Member; Reg Phelan, Region 1 Board Member.

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Front Row: Dean Harder, Region 5 Youth Advisor; Jan Slomp, President; Glenn Tait, 2nd Vice President (Operations); Coral Sproule, Women's President; Ted Chastko, Region 7 Youth Advisor; Lois Robson, Region 5 Women's Advisor; and Ann Slater, 1st Vice President (Policy).

Missing: Bev Stow, Region 5 Board Member



The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Alana Krug-MacLeod (age 17) of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, who was the winner of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing.

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 Importance of Seed to Small Farms".

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 railways. Since 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, and was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.

Seeds: Sustenance and Sustainability

—by Alana Krug-MacLeod, Age 17, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

While seeds' value is dispersed around the world in virtually every single biome and niche, whether disturbed or at rest, nowhere is the importance of seeds more obvious than on small farms. Using a series of vignettes from daily life, I reflect on what each encounter with seeds reveals about seeds' value in those settings and also to small farms.

A young chipmunk stands, tail outstretched, front paws raised in begging position. Comically, around its mouth in a perfect halo that gives it the appearance of a lion, emerge the fluffy ends of an entire thistle head. Metres away, a sibling scurries along—hastily stuffing its expandable mouth full of seeds from a low-growing plant.

Just as seeds maintain life for these chipmunks, seeds nourish and sustain the lives of subsistence and small farmers around the world. Wild creatures gather seeds and use them for their own consumption. The beauty and wonder of seeds is that they can be stored until required, with both their nutrition and their latent reproductive potential intact. Through farmers' labour—given the right environmental conditions—seeds multiply to provide nutritious food for farmers' families, and sometimes for livestock and wildlife. In a sense, then, for

farmers, seeds sown are even more valuable than the seeds foraged by wild creatures. Seeds also demand that small farmers stay "in tune with" their natural surroundings in order to find suitable growing conditions to ensure success in multiplying the seed stock. Thus, for small and subsistence farmers, seeds are "noteworthy" because they heighten environmental awareness.

Students at school plant seeds as part of a hydroponic system in a classroom redesigned as a grow room. They produce fresh, nutritious produce to be consumed directly, to donate to the cafeteria, or to sell to individuals. Profits can be used to fund-raise for social projects or to expand the facility so that more can be grown in the same space.

In this setting, seeds produce nutritious food, but they also provide a source of income, much like they would for small farmers. As in this school grow room, small farmers make an income in a way that encourages sustainability. Using seeds as their base, small farmers provide healthy food for society. They also circulate the wealth within their communities so that its value is realized locally rather than as profits that are whisked away or used to serve large corporations or the extremely wealthy. Small farmers



reinvest their profits into their farms and generally contribute to the social projects in their communities. None of this could happen, if it were not for seeds and the natural resources of land, water and minerals that make them grow. On small farms, and in the communities in which they are located, these values and connections are evident.

After thirty-five years of experimentation, a Saskatoon couple successfully creates a variety of lemon tree that can grow in the prairies, specifically in confined space under low-light conditions. Using both heated space in already warmed homes and excess carbon dioxide, these trees can allow prairie dwellers to grow food inside and at the same time improve indoor air quality.

Although the lemon tree developed after decades of experimentation is not necessarily grown directly from a seed, and eventually will be designed to produce seedless fruit, seeds are responsible for its root stock and genetic origins. The story of the prairie lemon tree highlights the history of small farmers breeding seeds that meet their farms' unique requirements and environmental conditions. Seeds, and control over what happens with the seeds they grow, are both imperative for small farmers. This combination is what allows small farmers to produce and reproduce seeds unique to their particular needs and suitable for microclimates and local environmental conditions. It is also what allows farmers to be responsive to change as climate and other conditions evolve or natural disasters occur. Just as potato farmers in the Andes grow hundreds of varieties of potatoes each year, farmers who have full access to seeds are able to choose which ones are best suited to their farms' capacities and needs at any given time. Seeds—and the range of diversity preserved in, and exhibited by, them—are essential

for long term sustainability on small farms because they allow for diversification and responsiveness.

On Seedy Saturday, individuals who have connections to seeds gather to share their resources and/or to fill their needs. Seed savers and individuals who are committed to preserving heritage seeds sell their stock to those who wish to grow unique varieties of their own.

At the Seedy Saturday events that take place in much of the world, independent seed savers sell heritage and locally produced varieties they have collected or reproduced, and many of them do so in part to generate income. In this way, seed savers contribute to food security by protecting the diversity of seeds so the right kind of seeds or the genetic diversity stored within them are available when conditions change. Small farmers have an essential role in ensuring that the genetic diversity of seeds is retained. Because they work on pieces of land that they know intimately, small farmers are able to grow and save seeds suited to the specific conditions of their land. It is critical that their right to develop and save seeds, and to generate income from these activities, is preserved. Seeds are vital to small farmers and a means to ensure long-term sustainability not only for farmers, but for the rest of the world.

For small farmers, seeds are a source of sustenance and of income; a means of raising environmental awareness; plus a route to sustainability and to food security. Tiny things with a huge role, seeds are a resource with the power of survival encapsulated within their protective shells; the potential to become, to give, and to sustain, life. To retain seeds as accessible property is an essential act. Protect them and they will protect us, and life itself! —nfu—

Resources:

<http://words.usask.ca/news/2014/09/16/lemons-on-the-prairies/>

http://www.bede-asso.org/lang/angl/actu_EN/last_publications/semences_reglemmentations_EN.pdf

<http://www.nfu.ca/issues/save-our-seed>

<http://www.nfu.ca/issue/video-series-save-our-seeds>

http://www.nfu.ca/sites/www.nfu.ca/files/Fundamental%20Principles%20of%20a%20Farmers%20Seed%20Act_0.pdf

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/aug/29/seeds-role-africa-farmers-drought>

<http://seedssystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/pb6-10-English.pdf>

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/06/0610_020610_potato_2.html

<http://grist.org/food/seed-savers-vandana-shiva-and-female-farmers-stand-up-to-monsanto/>



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6	Research Update - Land Grabbing and Concentration in Saskatchewan: <i>Annette Desmarais, Nettie Wiebe, Darrin Qualman</i>	
7	Corporate Power and the Extraction of Rural Wealth: <i>Andre Magnan, Scott Harris, Bernie Wiehle</i>	
8	Farmer Power: <i>Allan Slater, NFU Youth</i>	
9	Banquet and Awards	
10	Reports: Women's Caucus; Youth Caucus; International Program Committee	
11	Livelihoods in a Post-CWB World: <i>Richard Gray, Ian Robson, Larry Hill</i>	
12	Acting to Claim Our Livelihoods: <i>Cathy McGregor-Smith, Cam Goff, Helen Groome</i>	
13	Closing	

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DAY 1

Session 6 - 9
DAY 2

Session 10 - 13
DAY 3

