



National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



union farmer

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2015 Beingsner Award for Excellence in Writing

Stewart Wells (centre) with the winners of the 2015 Beingsner Award for Excellence in Writing. This year's recipients were Katia Huszka (left) and Stuart Oke (right). Read their submissions on pages 21 to 23.

Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

The National Farmers Union Annual Convention is often a highlight of the year for staff and members who are able to attend. It is a time to re-connect with like-minded farmers from across the country and a time to set aside the daily farm and household chores for a few days of 'rest' and 'relaxation'. Or maybe given the late night socializing, the early morning panels with top-notch speakers and the need for careful consideration of resolutions, there is not really much opportunity for rest and relaxation. But, a change is as good as a rest.

The annual convention sets the stage and the agenda for the NFU for the next year. Members choose who they want to make decisions and speak on their behalf through the election of presidents and vice presidents. The policy resolutions brought to the floor give the board and staff insight and direction on positions and actions to take over the coming year.

Since we are not all able to attend the annual convention, the NFU is making it a priority to report on the convention in the Winter Issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* (UFQ). As usual, you will find messages from our three elected presidents: Jan Slomp, returned as NFU President; Coral Sproule, returned as NFU Women's President and newly elected Youth President, Ayla Fenton. A new item this year is the introduction to the newly elected vice-presidents: Hilary Moore, 1st VP (Policy); Glenn Tait, 2nd VP (Operations); Toby Malloy, Women's VP; and Dana Penrice, Youth VP.

Along with elections, a key responsibility of members at the annual convention is to make decisions on policy resolutions. The resolutions carried at the 46th Annual Convention are printed on pages 16 to 20. Most of the resolutions began their journey to the floor of the NFU 46th Annual Convention at 2015 regional conventions. The resolutions passed at regional conventions which have national implications are brought to the national convention floor to give farmers from across the country the opportunity to make the final decision on whether or not a particular policy position or action will become part of the NFU's policy and work for the coming year.

2016 NFU Regional conventions will take place in the coming months. If you have an issue that you would like the NFU to take a position on or action you would like the NFU to take, now is the time to discuss the issue with other NFU members, find out our current policy, write a clear and succinct resolution and bring it to your regional convention.

Finally, the Annual Convention is a time to hear a variety of perspectives on issues related to the theme of the convention or of importance to family farms. This issue of the UFQ includes reports on three convention panels. Additional reports will be published in upcoming issues. If you were unable to attend the convention, or if you want to hear a presentation again, an order form for CDs is included on the back page. Power point presentations from those speakers who had one, as well as CD order forms, are available on our website at www.nfu.ca/about/46th-annual-convention-2015.

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union farmer quarterly

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





—by Jan Slomp

A message from the President

Dear NFU members and friends,

As I write this message in mid-December, the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP 21) has just concluded. While the global activist group Avaaz claims that the final agreement is a major breakthrough, La Via Campesina (LVC) is less positive in their statement. The LVC, which is the global, grassroots organization of farmers, peasants and farm workers to which NFU belongs, points out that *“There is nothing binding for States. National contributions lead us to a global warming of over 3 degrees Celsius, and multinationals are the main beneficiaries.”* In LVC’s previous statement, they predicted the sobering outcome of COP 21 in Paris and addressed the need for leading climate change mitigation action to come from the grassroots of society.

In November, NFU members and visitors at the 46th NFU National Convention in London, Ontario heard firsthand about the wide range of pioneering work NFU farmers are doing to enhance soil biology, plant health, soil fertility, soil conservation and carbon sequestration. The convention illustrated what creative farmers with biological knowledge and enhanced grassroots power can do against the general tide of accumulating input dependency, growing disease pressures and extreme weather events. These pioneering farmers will lead the way in climate change mitigation, erosion control, and soil and crop health. Eaters are raising concerns about the social and ecological factors affecting their food supply and it is important for the NFU to highlight the on-farm solutions.

It is equally important that we address the growing generation gap in farming. This gap was clearly illustrated in the recent NFU youth survey and again at the convention. The panel on Critical

Issues for Young Farmers focused on the stories from four young female NFU farmers. These aspiring farmers are stifled by the lack of access to credit on one hand and by the heavy capitalization of land and production quota on the other hand. Global overproduction of most of the main commodities is an additional difficulty shared with all conventional farmers in Canada. Low prices and the lack of access to land and quota are preventing social and ecological innovation in agricultural production.

The systematic alteration of Canadian agriculture through the dismantling and hollowing out of public institutions, infrastructure, marketing boards and regulations has characterized this last decade of political darkness in Canada. A new era has been announced by the newly-elected Canadian government, with a renewed respect for democratic process. However, the NFU cannot accept the status quo as a starting point for a new beginning. We must address how agriculture got here and expose the full consequences of the unfairness of the last decade before working on a way forward.

The National Farmers Union is planning to meet with elected representatives in Ottawa and at the provincial level. Unsustainable levels of farm debt, lack of farmer marketing power, reclaiming our public institutions and ensuring that regulations work for the public, common good, will be the common threads in our engagement with both the new federal government and the provinces.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





A message from the Women's President

—by Coral Sproule

Greetings to NFU members from our cozy nest on the farm in Lanark County, Ontario. As I write this report I have the newest addition to our farm family, Tennyson Sproule Stone, slung around me and sound asleep. He was born on December 11, and not a moment too soon! Regretfully, I was unable to attend convention this year as I was advised not to travel so close to my due date. After having attended every convention since I first joined in 2009, it left me feeling a little amiss of an event that I look forward to each year. However, I could not be more overjoyed with the outcome here!

While spending time at home and perusing our website, I came across an inspirational address from the NFU's founding Women's President, Evelyn Potter. She writes of the many paths forged by the women involved in hashing out the original constitution of the NFU in 1968, including the creation of intentional positions for both women and youth on our national board and executive. Some thought it best to have everyone duke it out for the same positions as the men in our organization, but I am glad that some members fought for the inclusion of these positions. As Evelyn described it, at that time it was never considered the norm for women to attend local union meetings, and dedicated positions were required to provide balance and representation for all farmers regardless of gender or age. As we see to this day, the NFU has more balanced leadership at all levels compared to other farm organizations, and I believe this is in part due to our inclusion of these specific positions for women and youth.

I feel fortunate to have grown up in a time when women from all backgrounds and social status are empowered to sit at the table discussing political and social issues at an equal level. Many women leaders have inspired me. My brother and I were home-schooled by our mother who also worked and was involved in her union and in many community groups.

In the NFU, I can think of my good friends and mentors, including Melanie Golba on Plan B Organic farm where I learned many principals of farm business, agroecology and rural living; Hilary Moore who brought me to my first local NFU meeting here in Lanark and has provided leadership in many aspects to our broader farm community, and is now our NFU Vice President of Policy; Colleen Ross who was a mentor for me when I first became a national board member; Nettie Wiebe, who has always been a powerful voice for women both nationally and internationally; Ann Slater, a phenomenal thinker, writer, farmer, farm leader and the woman with whom I have worked with most in my time with the NFU; and Joan Brady, my predecessor in this position and someone who has provided much insight into the world of farm politics, social movements and community organizing, for which I am ever grateful.

These teachers have led me to where I am today, a farmer with a small scale mixed farm and community supported agriculture (CSA) business, an educator in my community, a lover of food and farm community, an avid learner, mother, step-mother, and partner. Perhaps one day I will inspire little girls, and hopefully my little boy, to be whatever it is they want to be in life (and hopefully it will involve some aspect of farming!). I write this humbly from my heart and hope you all have a fantastic farming year in 2016!

Coral Sproule, Women's President

Note: Evelyn Potter's Address can be found at this link:

http://www.nfu.ca/sites/www.nfu.ca/files/NFU_40th_National_Convention





— by Ayla Fenton,
NFU Youth President

A message from the Youth

Happy new year everyone! Before I started farming, I always hated this time of year because it meant the beginning of a cold, dark, depressing winter. Now, I love it because after a hectic growing season, we have time to rest, reflect and plan for the future. For me, this time is very much enhanced by attending the annual NFU convention. The chance to connect with such diverse, passionate, committed farmers is always inspiring and re-energizing at a time of year when I am most in need of a boost. I want to thank all NFU members and staff for creating such a vibrant, strong community and for working so hard for the causes that unite us.

I found this year's convention to be particularly exciting because of the number of new young farmers in attendance. I want to extend thanks to NFU Region 3 who enabled many new youth to attend by providing generous bursaries and by choosing new farmers as local delegates. The NFU Youth is building a strong movement for new farmers and your support is absolutely critical to our growth. I also want to thank everyone who supported us through the silent auction at convention. We raised over \$1,200 which will help fund our annual spring youth retreat.

I need to extend a huge thank you to Alex Fletcher, who has stepped down from the position of Youth President. It has been a privilege to work closely with Alex over the past year. The leadership he has provided over the past two years has enabled the NFU Youth to grow in numbers, capacity and ambition. Alex leaves big shoes to fill, but I am reassured by knowing that he will continue to be actively involved.

A warm welcome goes to Dana Penrice, our new Youth Vice-President. Dana raises pastured beef, lamb and chicken near Lacombe, Alberta with her partner Ted. Dana has been actively involved with the NFU Youth since attending the 2014 youth retreat and has been a great asset to the National New Farmer Coalition project. She is currently the Young Agrarians coordinator in Alberta. Her

experience working with a number of organizations on strategic development and capacity building will be a great asset to the NFU Youth and I am really looking forward to working together!

The National New Farmer Coalition will be our main focus for the upcoming year. Last year we focused on research and analysis, with the New Farmer Survey and the New Farmer Report. That report provides a comprehensive baseline on new farmer challenges, opportunities, and policy recommendations. We are grateful for the support of the National Farmers Foundation, which made this work possible. The Coalition's next step will be to develop a media-friendly summary report and to build a strong campaign around it. We will need your help to disseminate this report and spread awareness of new farmer issues. As always, if you would like to get involved or just want more information, please contact newfarmercoalition@gmail.com or join our Facebook group, "National New Farmer Coalition".

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of the NFU Youth. As an aspiring farmer myself, it means a lot to hear your words of encouragement and know that I am part of a group of passionate, intelligent farmers and allies dedicated to supporting the next generation of agriculture in Canada.

In Solidarity, Ayla Fenton

NFU Youth Retreat

We are beginning to plan our annual youth retreat, which will likely occur late February or early March. Location to be determined. If you are interested in participating and are not already on the NFU Youth email list, please contact us at nfuyouth@nfu.ca.



It's about time that NFU members got to know their elected representatives a little bit better. There has been the realization that you do not really get the chance to hear from elected representatives, other than the Presidents. So, over the next issues of the UFQ, we will be getting to know who they are.

In this issue, we start with a short biography from the people currently holding Vice-Presidents positions.

1st Vice President - Policy



– Hilary Moore

At University, I became interested in food politics and the concept of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). After graduation I packed up for Amagansett, NY to apprentice on one of the first CSA's in North America. I fell

in love with farming. So I went to another twelve-month farm apprenticeship in Lincoln, MA, where I learned how to drive horses, as well as organic animal husbandry of sheep, goats, pigs and milk cows and more vegetables. I have been operating Teamwork CSA for fourteen years. I started out borrowing land, eventually settling in at Dunbrae Farms in Almonte, ON, where I operated for seven years before my husband Nick and I bought our own beautiful 100 acre farm in Lanark, ON in 2008. I took a huge amount from the experiences of being welcomed onto the farms of three different families. The biggest lesson is how personal farming is.

Currently, Nick and I raise pigs, and produce honey, vegetables, eggs and, given the opportunity, new farmers. Nick is also a furniture maker. We own two Suffolk Punch workhorses who have been helping us bring the farm back to life after many years of sitting fallow. In the next couple of years we plan to produce maple syrup for sale (we currently do it for fun) and a bit of grass-fed beef, and drastically reduce our vegetable operation.

I was involved in the formation of the Ottawa Food Security Council (renamed Just Food) and remained as the Chair for its first year. At that same time, I was also involved in building schoolyard gardens in inner city Ottawa, and incorporating them into curriculum. I was the President of my NFU local for nine years, and currently sit as the VP. I was also the Region 3 Representative on the International Programming Committee for six years, acting as Chair for one year.

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2nd Vice President - Operations



– Glenn Tait

I am a fourth generation farmer at Meota, Saskatchewan where I operate my great-grandfather's homestead with my father and my brother-in-law. My two children are the fifth generation to live in the

same house. We seed about 2500 acres, mainly to wheat and canola, and have enough hay, pasture, and wetlands for a few purebred Black Angus cattle. It is a conventional, nearly average Saskatchewan family farm.

I received my B.S.A. from the University of Saskatchewan in 1985 with a major in crop science. Most ag grads enter agribusiness but I have never had an occupation other than farming. Far from being chained to the plow, I have been fortunate enough to travel from Aberdeen to Adelaide. I have also been on various boards and councils for nearly all of the last 30 years. I spent eight years on municipal council and five years as a trustee of a school division so large that it took three hours to drive across it. Twice I have tried to unseat my Member of Parliament, the previous Minister of Agriculture. I am currently serving a four-year term as a Director of the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission.

I have been a member of the NFU for longer than I can remember when I joined the Saskatchewan contingent working on the Estey-Kroeger transportation review. I only became really active after being nominated to the board in 2006. As a board member I was able to do things like attend a North American workshop on the cattle crisis in Billings, Montana, and speak in Wisconsin about the Canadian Wheat Board and supply management in the Canadian dairy industry.

—nfu—



Women's Vice President



– Toby Malloy

My husband, Lance, and I farm a part of his family's home place in the Nanton area of Alberta, growing organic grain, hay and vegetables, and raising pastured heritage breed pigs. Off the farm I

am a social worker and therapist. Lance and I are both musicians and enjoy making music with friends and family when the chores are done! I believe in the family farm and its tremendous value in sustaining and creating healthy, inclusive and resilient individuals, families and communities. My interests include the local food movement and food sovereignty.

Personally and professionally I have always been involved in social justice issues, and I am very happy to have found the National Farmers Union because it is an organization that reflects my values and beliefs about equality and human dignity. I was first drawn to the NFU after attending an ecology conference for helping professions. It was there that I heard Nettie Wiebe speak about farming, the environment and our sacred relationship with food. I was hooked!

I appreciate that the NFU steadfastly gives voice to concerns faced by family farms in Canada, as well as promoting inclusivity and equality for farming women and youth, at home and on an international level.

I feel that the National Farmers Union exemplifies what can be achieved through a democratic process that is respectful and generative, and I am proud to be a part of such a strong community of support.

I became a member in 2014 and am excited about serving in my new role.

—nfu—

Youth Vice President



– Dana Penrice

Dana Penrice works to develop capacities in individuals and communities and is involved in a wide range of endeavors.

As part of her B.Sc. in Agriculture, she participated in a University of Alberta program called 'There's a Heifer in Your Tank'. The program gave students the opportunity to engage the public through 'science answers to quirky questions you never knew you had about animal agriculture.' Through this experience, Dana began exploring new approaches to learning, and is one of the co-founders of The Institute for Free Range Learning. Free range learning, like the life of a free range chicken, involves exploring new territories, developing your own initiative, searching out new resources, while dealing with emerging challenges and opportunities.

She is also the Chair of Leadership Edmonton and a board member for the Human Venture Institute, both working to develop resourceful, resilient, responsible and life ranging human beings. Dana works as a program coordinator for Organic Alberta and is excited to be the Young Agrarians Coordinator for Alberta.

She and her partner also run C & E Meats at Lacombe, Alberta, raising grass-fed, pasture-raised beef, lamb and chicken. They believe that grazing livestock and poultry can heal our planet. Using Holistic Management and intensive grazing, they have seen dramatic improvements in the soil, land and ecosystem. The dung beetles are back!

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The Policy-Soil Interface: – *from the plant to the planet*

Panel: Policy-Soil Interface: with panelists:

Gary Martens, small farmer and retired Plant Science Instructor; **Doreen Stabinsky**, Professor of Global Environment Politics; and **Blake Hall**, NFU member, Region 7 (Alberta).

The United Nations declared 2015 the *International Year of Soils*, inspiring the theme of the NFU 46th Annual Convention, *Soil: Our Common Ground*. Our first panel, *the Policy-Soil Interface*, focused on policy related to soil and climate change. Speakers were Gary Martens, a small farmer and retired Plant Science instructor; Doreen Stabinsky, a professor of Global Environmental Politics who studies the impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security; and Blake Hall, an NFU member involved in a soil carbon study on his farm.

Doreen Stabinsky outlined the big picture. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main greenhouse gas (GHG) responsible for global warming. We add it to the atmosphere, primarily by burning fossil fuels, which contain carbon that has been in the ground for millions of years. Once a fossil fuel is burned, its carbon stays in the atmosphere for thousands to tens of thousands of years. We put carbon into soils (sequester carbon) when we incorporate manure, compost, mulch or use cover crops. Carbon sequestered in soils and trees can quickly and easily be re-released. Rising temperatures accelerate the release of sequestered CO₂ such that soils and trees are expected to change from being a sink to a source of CO₂ by 2100.

Sequestering carbon in soils is good because it helps with adaptation to climate change by improving soil health, including its ability to cope with both drier and wetter conditions. However, Doreen cautions against seeing soil sequestration as climate change mitigation (prevention or reversal) because it is not permanent. She points out that preventing emissions from fossil fuels and putting carbon into soils are not equivalent. Summing up the impossibility of capturing all the fossil fuel emissions in soils and trees, she quoted a Scottish scientist who said “we can’t put the geosphere into the biosphere.” Nevertheless, putting carbon back into soils is good in and of itself, and focusing on soil

sequestration gives soil health a higher profile in public policy.

Doreen recommends against carbon markets as a policy tool. Such systems allow GHG emitters to offset CO₂ output by buying carbon credits from renewable energy and sequestration projects. Proponents believe carbon credit markets would shift investment toward alternatives. However, carbon markets are based on the false idea that fossil and sequestered carbon are equivalent and can be traded as if they were of equal value. Both the stability and value of sequestered carbon are uncertain, making carbon credits a risky investment. If, or when, soil carbon is re-released into the atmosphere, carbon credit investments will decrease in value.

To make soil carbon into a tradable commodity it needs to be measured accurately. This is very difficult and costly due to the variables and the technical challenges involved. Yet, soil carbon credits could still be priced high enough to promote land-grabbing for soil and forest reserves that would take land out of food production. Finally, most trade in carbon credits is merely speculation in carbon credit derivatives.

Instead on the policy front, Doreen recommends direct funding to programs to promote agricultural practices that increase soil organic matter and biodiversity and reduce GHG emissions. Policies also need to promote natural infrastructure, healthy soils, and sustainable agriculture methods for their climate change adaptation benefits. Many such policies are being implemented in California. See <http://calclimateag.org/climate-and-agriculture-legislative-roundup-2015/> for details.

Gary Martens began by recalling a presentation where Preston Manning advised farmers on how to sell an idea: find and ride the wave, and help the politician look good by adopting your idea. He suggested farmers providing ecological goods and



services to society is the wave, and that society will pay farmers to do so because it is always cheaper to prevent problems than to fix them later. We can influence the soil health with the proper incentives. To open discussion, Gary offered four specific policy ideas that are simple and use existing infrastructure:

1 – Adjust crop insurance premiums based on how you farm. If you have three-year crop rotation your crop insurance premium stays as it is today. If you have a 2-crop rotation your premium would be higher; with a 1-crop rotation, even higher. With a 4-crop rotation your premium would go down, and if you had a perennial crop in your rotation your premium would be even lower.

2 – A property tax merit/demerit system to recognize soil carbon content. If you are building soil carbon your property taxes would go down because you are providing a benefit to society, and vice versa. This policy would be implemented in a revenue-neutral way for the municipality.

3 – Implement a best management practices program that rewards farmers by reducing fees, taxes and/or premiums for using good practices. With enough good practices, a farmer would actually be paid.

4 – ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) programs that pay farmers for ecological goods and services. ALUS was introduced in Manitoba in 2005 as a pilot project in one municipality. Even though it was very successful, it was dropped when the money ran out. ALUS programs have since been introduced in other provinces, and reintroduced in Manitoba.

Blake Hall's family farm, Tamara Ranch, south of Red Deer, Alberta, is part of a study comparing carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services of "AMP" (Adaptive Multi-Paddock) grazing. AMP grazing involves moving cattle around and providing the land with a rest and recovery period in a controlled manner. Tamara Ranch has used AMP grazing for 25 years. It is across the fence line from land using the set stock approach, offering a great situation for comparing the two farming systems.

In the past 200 years the world's agricultural soils have lost about half their carbon, and about twenty percent of global CO₂ emissions come from the soil. Globally, the largest fluctuations of carbon are in the oceans; the second largest are in the world's 3.5 billion hectares of pasture lands. Carbon gets into soil when plants use photosynthesis to create



Panelists Blake Hall (left) and Gary Martens (right).

carbohydrates (sugars) from CO₂. Plants give off these simple sugars into the root zone, which then feeds the biology in the soil. The soil life processes underground feed the plants, which feed the animals and us.

The scientists working on Blake's land propose that by switching existing pasture land to AMP grazing it could sequester nearly 3.5 gigatons of carbon annually, which is most of the excess carbon stored in the atmosphere. The study uses Carbon 13 (C¹³), a rare isotope of carbon, to track how carbon behaves on Blake's farm. It will also investigate how long carbon stays in the soil. For comparison, the same procedure was done on the neighbouring land that uses continuous grazing.

Blake compared his grandfather's biodiverse half-section farm that supported two families with the farms common today, which have grown larger as a response to lower prices. The larger equipment now used makes it difficult to leave habitat intact.

He asked, will the future see even bigger equipment on larger farms? Will there be more weather catastrophes like the 2013 flood that inundated downtown Calgary? Or is the future going to be running sheep and cattle together in a 'flerd', carefully moving them to build soil organic matter? Or mob grazing our cover crops in our annual grain production? Or driving around the slough, letting it rest long enough to let the ducks finish nesting?

Blake senses that there is a wave, that society is recognizing the costs of environmental mismanagement and is going to incentivize farmers' stewardship – and pay farmers for it – going forward.

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NFU Institutional Strengthening Project Update

Behind the scenes, the NFU Institutional Strengthening Project is in full swing, ensuring that the NFU is a financially viable organization that is strategically well positioned to advocate for the family farm. This article will shine a light on some of the background on the project, what the committee has been working on over the past year and the direction in which this work will be heading.

Background

A few years ago, the board of the National Farmers Union held a number of strategic planning sessions. These sessions came largely out of a desire to improve the financial situation of the organization as well as the need to strengthen the NFU voice for farm issues in a hostile political climate (at that point in time).

These strategic planning sessions identified the need for the NFU to:

- increase our membership numbers;
- increase the base level of knowledge that exists within our membership, including orientation and policy briefings to bring new board members up to speed;
- increase the ability for people to become and stay active in the organization;
- focus on our ability to run effective national campaigns;
- increase our political power;
- be pro-active, shed light on our existing policies and actively develop new policies;
- increase our ability to talk about our issues in a clear and understandable way;
- increase our ability to highlight and embody solutions;
- increase the ability for our volunteers to rejuvenate and re-energize through the activities of the NFU; and
- increase the overall presence of the NFU.

With the above needs identified, the NFU managed to secure funding from Inter Pares to kick-start the work of strengthening the organization. Inter Pares graciously agreed to fund two years of this work.

Year one of this project (2013/2014) funded the NFU's Brand Development work which focussed on streamlining the NFU "brand" – how we project ourselves and how others perceive us. This work was completed in 2015 and has been written about in previous editions of the *Union Farmer*.

Year two of this project (2014/2015) funded the beginning of a multi-year Institutional Strengthening Project. This multi-year project focuses on bringing in new members and inviting members to be more involved in the NFU at varying levels. Increased membership will stabilize the organization financially and increased member activity will allow the organization to better respond to, and influence, farm policy issues.

The Inter Pares grant helped fund Phase 1 of this project, which wrapped up in December of 2015. Additional support from the National Farmers Foundation (NFF) helped fund the educational aspect of the project. Phase 2 of this project will begin in 2016.

Overview of Institutional Strengthening Project - Phase 1:

Much of the work the NFU is engaged in depends on members who are passionate, knowledgeable and active. This engagement happens when we are surrounded by others who are engaged. The NFU launched this project to counter the effects of declining numbers of farms, decreasing numbers of NFU members and Canada's large geography and the resulting isolation. This project will ask members to reach out to neighbours, friends interested in farm issues, and other members to come together in Kitchen Table meetings. In these meetings, members will learn and discuss the issues faced by family farms and collectively become the hive of grassroots passion, knowledge and action to inspire and draw others in. *(continued on page 9...)*



(NFU Institutional Strengthening Project Update, from page 8)

In Phase 1, we aimed to develop a clear process beginning with the recruitment of new members. By engaging these new members in a meaningful way in NFU activities and developing members' knowledge of the NFU and its policy, these members will ideally become active in the organization and its policy making, as shown visually here:



Another part of this project under Phase 1 was to further develop the idea of asking people who do not farm, but who support the work of the NFU, to become financial donors of the organization.

In order to implement Phase 1, we hired three contractors:

- 1) The goal for the **Membership Development Trainer** was to develop a toolkit to assist in the recruitment of new members and a process for engaging these new members.
- 2) The goal for the **Educational Resource Developer** was to develop a series of discussion packages to be used in Kitchen Table meetings that would deepen the understanding of the NFU and its policy by new and existing members.
- 3) The goal for the **Donor Campaign Facilitator** was to create a strategy for finding and communicating with new potential donors by targeting people who do not farm but who support the NFU's goals and values, particularly around food sovereignty.

Reflecting on Phase 1 and Moving forward into Phase 2 and beyond

At the time of writing this, the NFU Strategic Planning Committee has just received the final reports of all three contractors and are starting our conversations about Phase 2 of this project.

Although we do not yet have a detailed plan for Phase 2 at this time, the following is what we're thinking about and planning:

- 1) Train key people in each region to help with the recruitment of new members.
- 2) Roll out a free 1 year E-membership to get people better acquainted with the NFU.
- 3) Develop orientation packages for new members and newly elected officials.
- 4) Develop more discussion packages for Kitchen Table meetings and field test the ones that were developed under Phase 1.
- 5) Better integrate the recruitment of new members with their engagement in the NFU.
- 6) Figure out how the NFU can actively engage donors into the work of NFU. This will help connect them with the organization and strengthen donations in the long-term. We need to engage donors in a similar process as we try to engage our new and general members. (Recruitment – Engagement – Knowledge – Active in the organization)
- 7) Develop communication tools so that members in one Kitchen Table meeting can learn and share with members in other Kitchen Table meetings, Locals, Districts, Regions, Board and Staff.

Invitation to Join this Work:

If what you have read so far seems interesting, we would like to invite you to join this work. We welcome participation on the NFU Strategic Planning Committee or as a key organizer or contact person in your local, district or region. If you are interested, please contact the committee through the NFU office at nfu@nfu.ca .

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Flying in the Face of Neoliberalism

– *Farmers Earning a Living Wage*

Panel: Supply Management - Threats, Opportunity and Challenges with panelists:

Bruce Muirhead, Prof. & Assoc. VP of External Research, University of Waterloo; **Patrick Groenewegen**, Plant & Process Manager, Co-owner of Limestone Organic Creamery; and **Scott Graham**, Chair, Egg Farmers of Ontario

Bruce Muirhead described himself as an "unapologetic supporter of supply management". Scott Graham talked about the need for two ears and one mouth when it comes to communication.

Bruce, Scott and NFU member Patrick Groenewegen were presenters on an early morning panel at the NFU 46th Annual Convention titled *Supply Management – Threats, Opportunity & Challenges*. Scott is the chair of the Egg Farmers of Ontario (EFO) and a second generation egg farmer from St. Marys, Ontario currently in the process of turning the farm over to the next generation in his family. Bruce is a History Professor and Associate Vice President, Research at the University of Waterloo in Ontario. Patrick is a co-owner of Limestone Creamery in Elginburg, Ontario. His story is covered in the sidebar accompanying this report.

Based on the idea that the corporate model is the most effective and efficient method of economic growth, neoliberalism advocates for free trade, deregulation, and privatization. It eliminates the concept of public good from the role of government, favouring the theory of trickle down economics. Supporters of neoliberalism and corporations dislike regulated regimes like supply management intensely. According to Bruce, the mere existence of supply management defies the current globally accepted economic laws which are based on the neoliberal ideology.

In his presentation, Bruce described supply management as a system which:

- has allowed farmers to earn a living wage, thereby helping to preserve smaller farms;
- is highly regulated and is the last of its kind in the world;



Panelists Scott Graham (left), Patrick Groenewegen (centre) and Bruce Muirhead (right).

- does not rely on government subsidies; and
- most importantly, provides an intermediary between farmers and processors and supermarkets in those sectors in which it operates (dairy, eggs, chicken and turkey), thereby playing a key role in levelling the playing field.

The EFO represents 430 egg farmers spread across Ontario, in regions or zones that are distinctly different from each other. The average size of those farms is 25,000 hens. This is in contrast to the US where the average size of an egg farm is 600,000 hens with 300 million birds owned by just fifty families. Similarly the average dairy farm in Canada is 77 cows, while the average in the US is 187 cows, although that average masks the fact that 85 percent of milk in the US comes from herds with over 1000 cows and that 30,000 cow herds are not unusual, especially in central California.

(continued on page 13...)

Based on conversations with people outside of his own family and community, Scott has come to realize that the movie *Food Inc* is a common reference point on food and farming. He suggests that the movie provides an image of farming in the US and that the Canadian reality is distinctly different. He says that as farmers we need to tell our own story both to the public and among ourselves, but that we also need to listen to each other.

In terms of telling their story to the public, EFO runs a successful *Who made your eggs today* campaign, which highlights, among other information, that it takes an average of four days for an egg to get from the farm to the supermarket shelf to your fork. A current initiative of the EFO board is to share stories among their own members about the origins of supply management.

Communication, however, cannot be one sided. EFO strives to listen to consumers and to provide them with the choices they desire. Similarly, EFO is working to find ways to increase the number of egg farmers. While Scott says the number of egg farmers in Ontario has gone up by ten in the past year and the next generation is getting involved in current egg farms, the EFO board intends to continue search for ways to get more people involved in the egg business, through programs like its new entrant program.

Both Bruce and Scott are fairly confident that supply management in Canada remains on solid ground with good support from provincial and federal governments, although Bruce notes he was less confident a few months ago.

—nfu—

Bringing back home-delivered milk in glass bottles

Limestone Creamery opened its doors in 2012 near the village of Elginburg, just north of Kingston, Ontario. The impetus behind the creation of the on-farm dairy processing plant, home delivery service and retail store was a desire to keep the Groenewegen family fully employed on their 300 acre, organic dairy farm. As twenty-seven year old Patrick told the attendees at the NFU 46th Annual Convention, additional dairy quota is almost impossible to access in Ontario and, in his words, we are not making any more land. So instead of expanding the farm, Patrick and Olivia, and their parents Kathie and Francis Groenewegen turned their thoughts to the idea of bringing back milk in glass bottles delivered to people's houses.

Along with the usual day-to-day work on a dairy farm, such as milking cows and harvesting crops, the Groenewegens and their ten employees now also make time to process and deliver milk, operate an on-farm retail store, and talk to customers and groups, like the NFU. They process milk two days a week, most as bottled milk but also a small amount of butter. Their delivery truck is on the road four days a week delivering milk and other local products to 470 homes as well as stores in their region. Their most popular product is two percent milk, followed by chocolate milk. Although Patrick says it is a pain to make, eggnog is a must-have for the Christmas and New Year's holiday season.

During his presentation, Patrick described some of the community programs and initiatives that helped them establish the creamery. At the same time that the Groenewegens were pulling together their plans, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) was also looking at options to meet the demand from consumers for local, direct market dairy products, while also keeping the products safe and within the realm of DFO. They set up a pilot project called Project Farmgate which included three farms who wanted to process and sell bottled milk from their farms, including Limestone Creamery. The Ontario Rural Economic Development (RED) program had a parallel program titled Project Origin, which provided grants to help set up on-farm processing. According to Patrick, the timing of these programs meant Limestone Creamery had fairly smooth sailing when it came to meeting government regulations.

The work done over the past fifteen years by NFU Local 316 has also been important to the success of the creamery. Local 316's efforts to increase awareness of the importance and availability of local food in the Kingston area has led to a community that is keen to drink milk produced and processed just down the road.



Soil: Our Common Ground

– Thoughts from NFU members across the country

Panel: Top Soil Builders with panelists:

Alyson Chisholm, CSA Farmers Region 1; **Ken Laing**, Horse-powered CSA Farmer Region 3; **Larry Marshall**, Organic Grain Farmer Region 6; and **Peter Eggers**, Organic Mixed Farmer Region 8.

Alyson Chisholm runs Windy Hill Organic Farm in McKees Mills, New Brunswick with Will Pedersen. Half of their five acres is in vegetable production each year, with the other half planted to cover crops. Along with the vegetables, which are sold through their 100-member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and at a farmers' market, they raise goats and chickens. Alyson opened the *Top Soil Builders* panel by listing their farm goals when it comes to building soils. Very similar to the goals of the other panelists, Windy Hill's goals are:

- protect the soil from erosion;
- build up the quantity and diversity of macro and micro life in the soil;
- build soil that drains well and has good water holding capacity;
- have high bioavailability of nutrients in the soil to support plant growth;
- try to maintain as closed a loop as possible by recycling the farm's products back into production; and
- produce very nutritious and delicious food.

The manure and vegetable trimmings generated on the farm are layered into a pile and allowed to decompose, but are not fully composted. This manure is spread prior to planting cover crops to maintain the organic standards related to the use of manure in vegetables. Compost used on the farm is a mix of wood chips and seafood waste. This compost is purchased and piled a year before they want to use it to give it time to build fungal hyphae for further decomposition and nutrient release. They view the compost as a soil inoculant rather than a primary nutrient source.

Larry Marshall runs a 3000-acre organic hemp and crop farm in northern Saskatchewan with his family and hired help. He also spoke of the importance of inoculants. Through farm exchanges



Alyson Chisholm (left) and Ken Laing (right).

with Costa Rica and Cuba, Larry has become very familiar with the use of micro-organisms as inoculants in animal feed, in compost and in the soil. The most common inoculant used on his farm is a collection of over eighty different micro-organisms, started from a purchased EM product but then propagated on the farm. When they make compost they use a high heat method with six turnings over a three and a half month period. The compost is inoculated with as many micro-organisms as possible, at the beginning and towards the end of the composting period. When green manure crops are worked back into the soil, they are sprayed with the EM mixture at the same time to ensure the soil is really alive with micro-organisms.

Creating habitat for micro-organisms and other soil life was also a key message from the two other speakers on the panel - Peter Eggers and Ken Laing. Peter raises livestock and crops, like alfalfa seed, in the Peace River area of Alberta. To encourage soil life, he pays attention to the minerals in the soil by shifting them as necessary, keeps most of the farm

(continued on page 15...)





Peter Eggers (left) and Larry Marshall (right).

in perennial forages, intensively grazes livestock by moving them quickly from one strip to the next and allows sixty or more days between grazing so that plants are able to express their full potential both above and below the ground.

Ken Laing is from a horse-powered CSA farm (Orchard Hill Farm) in southwestern Ontario. In his presentation Ken stressed the importance of keeping soil covered as much as possible. This can be a challenge for organic farmers who rely on tillage to terminate crops, create seed beds and control weeds. Over the last few years, Ken and his wife Martha have been working hard to develop strategies which allow them to practice organic no-till in their vegetable and grain crops. Ken describes their current practice as reduced till or 'lit-till', rather than no-till. In closing his presentation, Ken stressed the importance of continuous green living plants, getting rid of pesticides and toxic fertilizers, practicing no-till and increasing diversity across the farm as key strategies to support soil life so that the many organisms in the soil can actively maintain soil quality, soil health and productivity.

—nfu—

NFU brings European Farmers to Canada February 22 - 27, 2016

TOUR TITLE: *Sowing Seeds: A European Perspective*

DESCRIPTION: European farmers tour Canada to share experiences on farm policies, seed laws, trade, and advocacy.

National Farmers Union Region 5 (NFU-MB) has secured funding from Growing Forward 2 and the National Farmers Foundation to bring two European farmers to Canada to discuss and understand how those countries' farmers are dealing with major farm policies. This is a huge opportunity to educate each other on the impacts and abilities of farm advocacy and education in relation to UPOV'91, CETA and other farm policies. After making submissions to our friends in La Via Campesina, the NFU was able to secure two fantastic speakers:

Claudia Schievelbein (Germany) Part of a northern German farm family that grows everything from organic potatoes to oilseeds and grains, Claudia is a member of Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) and a journalist with knowledge about German seed laws, and the effects of international policies.

Guy Kastler (France) A farmer since 1983 in southern France, Guy has taken leading roles in the Confédération Paysanne, l'Institut technique de l'agriculture biologique, and as an observer for La Via Campesina at UPOV. He has been an advisor and an activist on key seeds rights legal actions in France.

The tour will go to key locations in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec:

Monday, February 22nd: Winnipeg, Manitoba - University of Manitoba, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM, Ag Building

Tuesday, February 23rd: Brandon, Manitoba - Knox United Church, 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Wednesday, February 24th: Winnipeg, MB - Canadian Mennonite University - Evening - TBA

Thursday, February 25th: Kitchener, Ontario - TBA

Friday, February 26th: Ottawa, Ontario - TBA

Saturday, February 27th: Saint-Charles-sur-Richelieu, Quebec - Union Paysanne Convention

Times subject to change. Volunteers needed. Please e-mail coordinators to get involved.

Information and Updates:

Manitoba: www.nfu-mb.ca

E-mail: mb@nfu.ca

Lead Organizer: Rozanne Nevakshonoff

Ontario: www.nfuontario.ca

E-mail: jbrady@hay.net

Lead Organizers: Joan Brady & Karen Eatwell



Therefore Be It Resolved...

Resolutions passed at the NFU's 46th Annual Convention November 26th to 28th, 2015 – London, Ontario

1. Union Paysanne

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union and Union Paysanne share many values and collaborate on many projects including La Via Campesina, and
WHEREAS the National Farmers Union in New Brunswick has and recognizes the benefits of multi-unionism, and

WHEREAS the francophone members of the National Farmers Union could highly benefit from closer ties to a francophone organization and would have access to a larger range of resources in their langue,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union of New Brunswick lead discussions with the Union Paysanne in order to bring about collaboration between the two organizations.

2. Bilingual Logo

WHEREAS a new bilingual logo has been developed for the National Farmers Union, and

WHEREAS the new bilingual logo is not suitable for use on clothing, and

WHEREAS the proposed logo for use on clothing is unilingual only,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the two new bilingual leaves be used on all clothing in the same layout as is used on NFU-UNF merchandise in New Brunswick.

3. Promote formation of farmer-controlled grains board

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union promote the establishment, under federal legislation, of a Canadian Grains Board that has similar powers to the former Canadian Wheat Board and be democratically controlled by farmer elected directors.

4. Green Cover Program

WHEREAS perennial forages are a large part of sustainable agriculture especially in environmentally sensitive areas and poor soils, and

WHEREAS the political and economic climate for business risk management subsidies by government is declining, and

WHEREAS perennial forage legumes and grasses increase soil health, water quality and pollinator diversity, and

WHEREAS livestock producers can economically justify improving marginal acres due to better market conditions for livestock,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby both the federal and provincial governments to re-establish a new Green Cover Program to help Canadian farms overcome environmental extremes and improve the sustainability of livestock farms.

5. Food Education

WHEREAS people who eat home-cooked meals are more likely to choose local, in-season ingredients, and

WHEREAS more than 25 per cent of Canadians are obese, but only about 3.6 per cent of Japanese adults are overweight according to the latest statistics from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and

WHEREAS in most Canadian schools, home economics class is an elective compared to the situation in Japan where twenty-two years ago, home economics became a core course, like science and math, mandatory for boys and girls from Grades 5 to 12,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union advocate to all appropriate levels of government that food and nutrition becomes a core course for Grades 5 to 12 with an emphasis on local, environmentally responsible, healthy food.

6. Limitation of SPCA (Society to Prevent Cruelty to Animals) Powers

WHEREAS the actions of the OSPCA as it relates to the welfare of farm livestock has made it clear that its agents have no expertise in this area, and

WHEREAS there is precedent in Saskatchewan, where there are limits to the power of such groups,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU explore the option of encouraging governments to implement a model, such as that in Saskatchewan, which limits the reach of Societies to Prevent Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) with regards to farm livestock and entering farm premises.



7. Cost-Sharing Program for Perimeter Fencing

WHEREAS there is a shortage of livestock in Ontario, and

WHEREAS increased livestock numbers are needed to meet the demand and to maintain the infrastructure, and

WHEREAS fences have deteriorated over the years, creating a need for reinvestment in this infrastructure,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby all levels of government to obtain cost-sharing funding that would enable producers to perimeter fence land that would be suitable for pasturing livestock, allowing producers to raise larger numbers of livestock.

8. Restoring and Maintaining Prison Farm Programs

WHEREAS the Pittsburgh Institution abattoir is a key infrastructure component of the local food system in the Kingston area, and

WHEREAS the former Frontenac Institution dairy farm spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on inputs at local farm suppliers, and

WHEREAS the prison farms were a successful rehabilitation and employment training program for inmates, and as such, benefited Canadian society, and

WHEREAS in 2015 there will be a federal election, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU write to the Prime Minister urging him to re-open the Frontenac Institution dairy farm and to ensure the continuation of the abattoir at Pittsburgh Institution.

9. Contamination of Farmland

WHEREAS in this day and age, there are many hazardous materials that are being transported, both agricultural and non agricultural which have the potential to contaminate a farmer's land which could lead to a longer term loss of income, and

WHEREAS any such spill event will most likely have liability concerns associated with it, that the farmer be absolved of any immediate and longer term liability,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby for provincial and/or federal regulations which will require any company or organization involved in hazardous material spills, which affect farmland, be required to pay for the cleanup and also for future loss of income to the farmer.

10. Slow Money

WHEREAS small businesses, including family farms, contribute significantly to the economic output and jobs to the Canadian economy, and

WHEREAS there are upwards of 3 trillion dollars under management in Canada through stocks, bonds, mutual funds, pension funds, and life insurance funds, all of which are invested in large, corporate and multinational businesses detrimentally affecting the viability of rural communities and family farms, and

WHEREAS Slow Money is an investment framework that values soil, food and family farms much like the NFU itself, and

WHEREAS in Nova Scotia they have created Farmworks Investment Co-operative Limited as a fund that invests in local farms and food businesses to great success,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU will receive research to develop Slow Money investment vehicles for family farms.

(continued on page 18...)



NFU Board of Directors & Advisory:

(front row to back row, left to right)

Glenn Tait, Jan Slomp, Ayla Fenton, Karen Eatwell, Toby Malloy, Dean Harder, Marion Drummond, Marcella Pedersen, Rachele Ternier, Lydia Carpenter, Doug Scott, Ted Wiggans, Glenn Norman, Tony Straathof, Ian Robson, Katie Ward, and Martin Boettcher. (Absent: Hilary Moore, Coral Sproule, Dana Penrice, Dan Kretschmar, Ed Sagan, Reg Phelan, Peter Eggers, Lois Robson, Ted Chastko, Lisa Lundgard)





Members lining up at the mike to voice their opinions.

11. **Bill C-51**

WHEREAS many civil society groups, and legal experts have criticized the federal government's Bill C-51 as dangerous and unconstitutional in its designation of over-reaching surveillance and disruptive powers to agencies, and its criminalization of ideas and dissent, and

WHEREAS Bill C-51 includes the Sharing of Information Act which states, "nothing in this Act prevents a head, or their delegate, who receives information under subsection 5(1) from, in accordance with the law, using that information, or further disclosing it to any person, for any purpose" (6.), and

WHEREAS the NFU-O is committed to policies and actions that limit corporate attacks on farmers and the environment,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU oppose the federal government's Bill C-51, and all related changes to laws, that infringe upon the human right to privacy and criminalize dissent.

12. **On-Farm Biodiversity**

WHEREAS the NFU's Policy on Sustainable Agriculture underscores the importance of on-farm biodiversity to sustainable farming and encourages farmers to, as much as possible, work with nature, not against it, and

WHEREAS, according to the international Convention on Biological Diversity, to which Canada is a party, the Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development and biological diversity is a global asset of inestimable value to present and future generations, and

WHEREAS biodiversity is the origin of all species of crops and domesticated livestock and the variety within them, and is also the foundation of ecosystem services essential to sustain agriculture and human wellbeing, and

WHEREAS biodiversity plays a major role in mitigating climate change by contributing to long-term sequestration of carbon in a number of biomes (naturally occurring communities of flora and fauna occupying major habitats such as forests and grasslands), and

WHEREAS on-farm biodiversity can be conserved and enhanced through the maintenance, restoration and construction of living structures such as fence lines, hedgerows, buffer strips in riparian areas, forest edges, grasslands, wetlands, etc., and

WHEREAS such structures can be comprised of and habitat for numerous species of flora and fauna beneficial to agriculture, and

WHEREAS numerous organizations exist that are eager to assist and support farmers who wish to conserve and enhance on-farm biodiversity including specific government ministries, conservation authorities, and environmental groups,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU proactively and vigorously promote to all farmers the importance of on-farm biodiversity to sustainable agriculture.

13. **Water Policy**

WHEREAS there are many new threats to the quality and quantity of water in the provinces and territories of Canada through oil and gas extraction, intensive monoculture farming, and the tendency of trade negotiators to put water on the table, and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union has a deeply held commitment to maintaining and improving the health of soil, air and water, and

WHEREAS the NFU believes that land, which by nature includes water, is to be held in trust for future generations, and

WHEREAS not all people automatically think of the land, water and air as a unity, and

WHEREAS in the existing NFU policies, the water policy is scattered throughout and responds to specific geographic threats to water supply and quantity and the obvious deficiencies in public policy to protect water, and

(continued on page 19)



WHEREAS there is a dire need across Canada for a constant reminder that water is neither a commodity to be bought and sold, nor is it a resource to be extracted and exploited, but a legacy to be preserved for current and future generations, and

WHEREAS NFU members are being called on to join other organizations across the country standing up for the protection of water and need the guidance and support of a comprehensive NFU water policy section which includes various aspects of the protection of water,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union develop a water policy section introduced by statements of the principle such as:

- That land, air and water are a unity which has a life-giving connection to humans, plants and animals;
- That water is a legacy to be preserved and protected for current and future generations;
- That water is a common trust; and
- That the protection of water supply and quantity requires a transition towards the principles of agroecology.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union demand that the federal government enact legislative changes which create national standards for the protection of the quantity and quality of water for the long term.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU demand that provinces and territories create and/or revise water acts in their jurisdictions standards for the

protection of the quantity and quality of water for the long term.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions to apply the precautionary principle in granting licenses for new access to water.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union demand that the federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions monitor all usage of water and base all monitoring on true scientific evidence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions to include the reality of climate change in their predictions of future water quantity and quality.

14. CWB Assets

WHEREAS Canadian taxpayers have been prevented from knowing how much of their money was used to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), and,

WHEREAS Canadians have been prevented from knowing the value of the farmer-paid CWB assets that have been handed over to the government of Saudi Arabia and the multinational company Bunge,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge the federal government to conduct an audit of the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board and to subsequently make the audit available to the public.

(continued on page 20...)



Youth Caucus meeting at the NFU Convention, developing their plans for the upcoming year.



15. Universal Pharmacare

WHEREAS the NFU endorses the universality of health care in Canada, and

WHEREAS Canada is the only G-20 nation with universal health care that does not include a universal pharmacare program,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU advocate to federal, provincial and territorial governments to institute a national pharmacare program.

16. Restore Farm Safety Education Programs

WHEREAS it is a time-honoured tradition for farm families to raise their children in a culture of fair division of labour and in light of current tragic events, and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of society to ensure that families grow and thrive in a safe environment, and

WHEREAS the NFU is founded on the principles of family farm advocacy,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby levels of government to restore public funding to farm safety education initiatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU encourage other farm business organizations to take similar actions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, once public funding is restored the NFU help facilitate the implementation of farm safety education initiatives and encourage other farm organizations to do likewise.

17. Bank of Canada

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urges the government of Canada under the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to cease opposition to the lawsuit of the Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform (COMER) against the government of Canada for failure to carry out the mandate of the Bank of Canada Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU urges the government of Canada to immediately begin using the Bank of Canada as mandated, to provide essentially interest-free loans to all levels of government in Canada for infrastructure, social programs and debt retirement.

18. Emergency Support

WHEREAS there are times new farmers and established farms risk being lost due to disasters, and

WHEREAS the current access to capital and support for farmers does not always work in the urgent time frame necessary,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU host a directory of names of emergency moral and financial supports that farmers can reach out to in times of disaster or immediate need.

19. Clearing Brush on Rail Crossings

WHEREAS another member of the farming community was recently killed at an uncontrolled railway crossing while farming by an oncoming train, and

WHEREAS the sight lines at the crossings have been severely restricted by brush,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU petition the Federal Minister of Transport to mandate that all brush on railway property affecting line of sight at all public crossings, protected or not, be cleared to a minimum of 750 metres in each direction and that this required standard be maintained.

20. Organic Crop Insurance

WHEREAS there is just as much risk for organic producers as conventional producers, and

WHEREAS not all provinces offer crop insurance for organic producers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU lead a discussion with each province and territory in Canada to offer organic crop insurance for large and small scale farmers.

21. NFU Harassment Policy

WHEREAS this year's Steering Committee Report established the 2015 NFU convention as a safe space free from harassment, and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union has long prided itself as a diverse organization that fosters an inclusive atmosphere,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union develop, adopt and implement a harassment policy and a procedure to deal with any complaints of harassment in an effective manner.

22. Mentorship Sign-up Page

WHEREAS mentorship is valuable to all farmers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU offer a mentorship sign-up page connecting farmers that want to be mentors and farmers who wish to be mentored.

— End of resolutions —



The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Katia Huszka and Stuart Oke, who were the winners of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing. Katia is 18 years old and from Florence, Ontario. She is currently in her first year at the University of Waterloo studying Environment and Resource Studies. Stuart is a 25-year old organic vegetable farmer who farms north of Kingston, Ontario. He has spent the past eight years farming throughout Ontario from Thunder Bay to Kingston, and is a coordinator for NFU Local 316.

The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the authors of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. There are two age categories – 15 to 21, and ages 22 to 30. The winner from each age category is awarded a prize of \$500. The theme of this year's essay was "Soil: Our Common Ground".

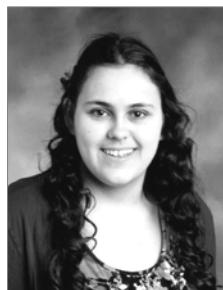
The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Paul was born on April 26, 1954, and returned to the family farm after obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few 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.

Soil: Our Common Ground

—by Katia Huszka, age 18, Florence, Ontario

Dear Humans,

My name is Soil, but perhaps you know me better by another name; Dirt. Not very fitting, considering the fact that I support all life on Earth! Compared to my counterparts, water and air, I have attracted little environmental attention. Until recently, you have taken me for granted and I have suffered great losses. As a result of your unsustainable land use practices, I have reached potentially disastrous levels of degradation, prompting the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations to declare 2015 to be the *International Year of Soils*. Finally, a little respect!



Did you not realize my remarkable capabilities? I contain one quarter of the planet's biodiversity and one tablespoon of healthy soil has more organisms in it than there are people on Earth (10 Incredible Facts About Dirt, 2010). I help combat climate change by storing 10% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions (10 Incredible Facts About Dirt, 2010). I am priceless and indispensable ...

but I am under increasing pressure. Worldwide I am threatened by deforestation, human population growth, urban expansion, pollution, waste disposal, climate change and poor soil management practices. It is estimated that 52% of the world's agricultural

(continued on page 22...)



(Beingessner Awards, from page 21)

land has been moderately to severely damaged (The Value of Land, 2015). This fact is even more alarming considering that I am a non-renewable resource, meaning any loss or degradation is not recoverable within your lifespan. Are you aware that it takes a minimum of 500 years to form one inch of topsoil (10 Incredible Facts About Dirt, 2010)?

Centuries of neglect have resulted in biodiversity loss, salinization, nutrient imbalance, erosion, loss of organic material, acidification, compaction and desertification. The demands of our growing global population for food, fuel, medicinal products and fibre are estimated to increase 60% by the year 2050 (International Year of Soils, 2015). How will we meet these demands when our planet is faced with water scarcity, food and nutrient insecurity, poverty, migration and ecosystem reduction? It is estimated that 50 million people may be forced to seek new homes and livelihoods within 10 years due to the degradation of their land (The Value of the Land, 2015). The time for change is now!

For some of you, it will not be the first time that you have been made aware of these startling realities. Perhaps you are a farmer. Did you know that many of your fellow citizens believe that you are responsible for this grim situation? *The State of Canadian Agriculture Survey*, a 2014 study conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, recently sought to address the notion that farming is unsustainable and potentially environmentally harmful. A surprising and encouraging finding, the survey revealed that 95% of Canadian farmers are taking action to protect the environment (Realities of Agriculture in Canada, 2014). Are you committed to reducing the impact of your agricultural practices or are you part of the 5% who is not?

Intensive farming and the over-application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides lead to the leaching of essential nutrients. Excessive amounts of salt or heavy metals in the soil can reduce or prevent plant growth. Sustainable management involves making the conscious decision to improve

my health and conservation. This involves restoring degraded soils through scientific analysis, increasing organic matter content, planting cover crops, utilizing minimum tillage, implementing crop rotation, reducing erosion, ensuring appropriate waste disposal and proper land use planning. These, unfortunately, are added expenses for farmers and society in general. The true cost of unhealthy soil is far greater, however, as the value of ecosystem functions provided by soil resources such as food, nutrient cycling, poverty reduction, clean water, and climate and disease regulation that is lost due to land degradation is estimated between 6.3 and 10.6 trillion US dollars (The Value of Land, 2015). Government funding needs to be implemented in order to recoup the additional costs associated with new technology, equipment and inputs related to these best management practices. Also, it will be crucial to develop an international policy as well as economic, legislative and regulatory guidelines as soon as possible.

Most importantly, soil management involves awareness, education and advocacy. As stewards of the land, you should be concerned not only with what is occurring on your own farm, but also about the condition of your fellow farmers' property. They may be your next-door neighbor or they may be practicing 'slash and burn' agriculture on the other side of the world. Producers, as well as consumers, all share the responsibility to care for me and the biodiversity that I support for generations to come. Remember these words, taken from a First Nations Proverb:

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.

(Famous Quotes, 2013)

We are partners; if I am not healthy and productive, your farms will not be sustainable. I am depending on you to not leave your land as it was given to you – make it better.

Sincerely,
Your Soil, a.k.a. "Dirt"



Deeper than the Soil:

An open letter on stewardship of the land and our relationship to it.

—by Stuart Oke, age 25, Kingston, Ontario

For many, the soil has no more meaning than the thing on which we put our feet. Of course everyone knows that plants and by extension our food comes from the soil but for farmers it has a much more essential meaning...It goes beyond the nutrient profiles and geologic classifications, although these factors are as important as any when it comes to growing food. It's meaning goes beyond our ability to derive monetary value from it (from fields to pastures to pens) as much as this ability allows us to continue as farmers.

For farmers the soil is not just the medium in which we work, it provides us with one of the most fundamental blocks of life...food. A simple concept which seems ridiculous to underscore but with arable land decreasing by the year and most peoples daily interaction with their food less secure then ever it remains an idea as important to me now as when I started farming.

With that said, I admit that even for me my appreciation of the soil is not always present. When my day-to-day tasks and experience in growing serve to lessen my appreciation of the awesome power that it can hold. Yet in my more reflective moments the act of putting seeds into the ground and with a little care, watching as life springs forth seems to sometimes transcend my scientific mind into the realm of magic.

For farmers, I have come to believe, the soil represents a much more tangible connection to the world then many people come to be aware. We feed and build and work and sow and from this effort we feed ourselves and our families and our



communities and this co-existence transcends the politics and disagreements and everyday noise in which we live. The inescapably true fact is that, we all must eat, and from statement there comes a truly common ground for us to stand upon; As we protect and care for our soil, so does it return the favour to us.

Certainly as a farmer the soil holds an important place within my life. It has allowed me an income to survive, a community to love and a lifestyle to live. While many farmers are in disagreement about the way to care for our soil and even the degree to which it should be, no one can disagree that the soil is the block on which our community, domestically and abroad, has been built upon.

For me personally I've come to realize that to protect the things most important to me involves protecting the soil as well. I work everyday farming in a way that emulates the stewardship and care of the land shown to me by my mentors and I hope that others will look at me and do the same, little by little leading through example. It is in this way that I believe as a community united in our belief that those things most important to our survival need be protected more fervently and passionately then all else need work one person at a time to effect change in the way we need desperately to see. Be it through farming in your fields, purchases with your money, food on your table or votes in our ballot boxes. Together we cannot just sustain our soil but can build it along with our society into as resilient and nurturing a thing that can be hoped for into the future.

Look in upcoming issues of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* for award criteria and details for essay submissions.



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