

quarterly union farmer

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Seann Dory, NFU Region 8 (BC) Coordinator (*left*) and Stuart Oke, NFU Youth President (*right*) met with BC Agriculture Minister, Hon. Lana Popham, to discuss the future of agriculture. They shared the NFU's recent report, *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems*.

(See article on page 17)



Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

— by Glenn Norman, NFU Vice President of Policy,
on behalf of the Editorial Advisory Committee



Like many of you I have witnessed the crazy panic buying in the supermarkets and listened to the media pundits explain about people's caveman minds and blaming this on consumer greed and irrationality. I disagree. I believe that the blame for this lies firmly at the feet of our corporate food model and lays bare its failings due to corporate thirst for ever more profits using the excuse of efficiency.

Most stores no longer employ stockpeople to restock shelves during the day, nor do they have any quantity of products in a stockroom at the back of the store. In the name of efficiency nearly all of the floor space is for retail. The second thing food corporations have done is created long supply chains, where an order made may go back to a factory across the country or around the world where products are made to fit the order, loaded into a container or truck, and sent on their way to arrive a week later at the store. Efficient yes, but slow to respond to sudden increased demand or a physical disruption like a flood or snowstorm resulting in panic buying and people going hungry in our land of plenty. We have even

lost most local distribution with the corporations opting for regional distribution, extending the line of supply and increasing the risk of interruption. It's a system that works great until it doesn't! When anyone in this country - whether in isolated Northern communities or in downtown Toronto - suffers food insecurity, we need to speak out and we need to make it stop!

From what I have witnessed with the Covid-19 crisis here in Alberta, people are feeling food insecure and that the food system set up to extract dollars from their pockets has failed them. One positive about this insecurity is that a great many more eaters have realized the importance of local food and the farmers that supply it. Suddenly many direct marketing meat producers like me are being overwhelmed with orders.

How do we prevent this interest from dying away again? What can we at the NFU do to promote the eating of local food? What can we do to assure food sovereignty, security and safety work together to promote local food over corporate food? What regulations need to be changed to aid us? How do we solve

the loss of abattoirs and other local processing? How can we work together to promote local food?

Big questions need big ideas - ideas that grow from people thinking and working on them together. To get this done your National Farmers Union has called on you - our members - to populate the newly-formed Livestock Committee. If you have livestock it is vital you join it. I would also like to take this moment to call out to you - our members - to join the direct marketing committee, as the work to be done is pressing. Please, let the office know if you are interested in either of these committees. We need your bright minds.

Finally, I urge everyone to work together and promote local food, especially that produced by our members. One idea is that you identify your fellow direct marketing NFU members and work together to promote each other.

When the panicked eaters finally emerge from the safety of their toilet roll fortresses, they need not return to the same old insecure corporate food system but rather the brave new world of local food. ■

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National Office Mailing Address:
2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

Telephone: 306-652-9465 — E-mail: nfu@nfu.ca — Website: www.nfu.ca



A Message from Katie Ward, NFU National President

In early February the NFU participated in the very successful launch of Farmers For Climate Solutions, and building off of this momentum I spoke at a series of events in Alberta about the NFU's *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis* report. Shortly after I got back from that trip, the world turned upside down at a speed and in ways that many of us could never have anticipated.

This new coronavirus that causes an illness now commonly known as COVID-19 has led to lockdowns across the country and around the world. As farmers, most of us already live with physical distancing as a practical matter, but the upheaval occurring in our society right now is affecting us in critical and inter-connected ways. As a demographic, farmers tend to be older and are more likely to be male (both are characteristic of higher-risk populations) but we also provide an essential service. The federal Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food (AAFC) has begun holding thrice-weekly conference calls with food and agriculture industry stakeholders, and I am participating in those calls on your behalf to advance the needs of farmers. News and information is being shared with NFU members electronically, and AAFC is posting updates regularly on their website. We are working to ensure that efforts by the federal government to secure the steady supply of food to Canadians during this crisis does not

simply result in the extension of more credit to farmers who are already struggling under historic levels of debt. Instead, we need positive solutions that recognize and respect the inherent dignity of farmers and the value farmers create by the work that we perform to grow food, raise healthy animals, and protect our environment. In other words, we need food sovereignty.

We are members of a society, not just participants in an economy. As we work toward this goal, please stay safe and healthy, and remember to reach out if you need assistance.

Début février, l'UNF a participé au lancement très réussi de Fermiers pour la transition climatique, et profiter de cet enthousiasme, j'ai pris la parole lors d'une série d'événements en Alberta au sujet du rapport *Lutter contre la crise agricole et la crise climatique*. Peu de temps après mon retour de ce voyage, le monde a tourné à l'envers à une vitesse et d'une manière que beaucoup d'entre nous n'auraient jamais pu prévoir.

Ce nouveau coronavirus qui provoque une maladie appelée aujourd'hui COVID-19 a provoqué des blocages dans tout le pays et dans le monde entier. En tant que fermiers, la plupart d'entre nous vivent déjà avec la distance physique comme une question pratique, mais le bouleversement qui se produit actuellement dans notre société nous affecte de manière critique et interconnectée. Sur le plan démographique, les fermiers ont tendance à être plus âgés et sont plus souvent des hommes (ces deux

caractéristiques sont liées aux populations à haut risque), mais nous fournissons également un service essentiel. Le ministère fédéral de l'agriculture et de l'agroalimentaire (AAC) a commencé à organiser trois fois par semaine des conférences téléphoniques avec les représentants de l'industrie agroalimentaire et je participe à ces appels en votre nom afin de faire progresser les besoins des fermiers. Les nouvelles et les informations sont partagées avec les membres de l'UNF par voie électronique, et AAC publie régulièrement des mises à jour sur son site web. Nous nous engageons à faire en sorte que les efforts déployés par le gouvernement fédéral pour garantir un accès régulier à la nourriture aux Canadiens pendant cette crise ne se traduisent pas simplement par une augmentation du crédit accordé aux fermiers qui se débattent déjà avec des niveaux d'endettement historiques. Nous avons plutôt besoin de solutions positives qui reconnaissent et respectent la dignité inhérente des fermiers et la valeur que les fermiers créent par le travail que nous effectuons pour cultiver des aliments, élever des animaux sains, et protéger notre environnement. En d'autres termes, nous avons besoin de la souveraineté alimentaire.

Nous sommes des membres d'une société, et pas seulement des participants à une économie. Alors que nous travaillons à cet objectif, veuillez rester en sécurité et en bonne santé, et n'oubliez pas de nous contacter si vous avez besoin d'aide.

—In Solidarity, Katie Ward



A Message from Coral Sproule, NFU Women's President

With sombre greetings to everyone as I write this on March 22, as I know many of us sit with mixed emotions: trepidation, fear and glimmers of hope as we all brace ourselves during the biggest global health crisis of our lifetimes. I want to express our sincere concern for everyone who is affected by this, and especially to our farmers and food producers, many of whom have been busily ramping up for springtime production. Having arrived back to Canada after a recent international delegation to Brazil for the first women's encounter of the Brazil's Landless Rural Worker Movement (MST) in Brazil, I found myself ushered into full self-isolation. It has been a surreal experience of sorts. Although there has been much information on the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic for months, it was not until the days before return, that we all began to grasp the seriousness of this virus and its potential impact on so many across the globe and in Canada.

Hearing the suggestion to isolate upon arrival from any international travel, I quickly began working on how to adjust as I heard news of school postponements and cancellations, and a daily increase in cancellations of in-person gatherings, community events, and many local community

farmers markets to help flatten the curve and the slow the rise of infection of this sometimes deadly disease. One thing that has become clear is that the movement of people and goods is inextricably linked and we are all in this together. As further measures are taken to ensure Canadians are at home and as messages from health officials become more serious, we see an ominous threat of overtaxing an already severely underfunded public healthcare system. What is becoming clear is that this crisis and the flight or fight response we all experience as humans has led to an increasingly anxious population who are lacking in mental and physical health supports.

This brings me to the discussion at our NFU women's caucus meeting in February. We began to formulate some actions on how to bring together women of the NFU for an in-person meeting later this year. We will be pausing this and looking into alternatives to meeting in-person if we are still struggling through this pandemic in 6 months. As this may lead to postponements of many meetings for the foreseeable future, we may begin to look at ways to move our interactions into an online space or to encourage and organize smaller local gatherings that we can weave together through interactions in a virtual platform or gathering. Supports for the

mental health of our members and rural farmers and workers in general is a great concern to many of us. This crisis is directing us to prioritize this work, as mental health struggles will become exacerbated amid fear, uncertainty, loss of income, potential loss of life, and growing concern for our community food sovereignty. We must ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities are supported and protected amid this fear.

The NFU has been for many years a leader in the movement to strengthen our localized food systems and our resilience as farmers, but many of the social and political policies which support a thriving food system and rural and remote communities have been eroded as economic success and profits are prioritized over basic human rights. We can look at this as an opportunity to push for the adoption for programs like a basic minimum income for farmers, more accessible and comprehensive mental and physical health supports, and services and supports for women and children in rural areas who are grappling with violence and other oppressive forces. This has been a great reminder of how we are connected to one another. We remain hopeful that we can connect the silver linings and come through this stronger together.

—In Solidarity, Coral Sproule



A Message from Stuart Oke, NFU Youth President

In late February, I travelled to British Columbia and spent five days driving around and talking with farmers at NFU events across the province. It was an action packed week with a positive reception to our new NFU report *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farms and Food Systems*. It was clear from dozens of different conversations and many questions fielded during our events that farmers are very concerned about how the changing climate is going to impact their farms. They are looking for solutions to the problem and support from the government to help them harness the power of their farm to be part of the solution.

I had a chance to meet with the British Columbia Minister and Deputy Minister for Agriculture while in Victoria. Minister Popham was very receptive to the work the NFU is doing on climate. We were able to have a productive conversation touching on the climate and new farmers issues with connections made at both the administrative and program level. Overall the trip was a great success, which I believe, has greatly increased the credibility and overall positive perception of the NFU in the province. Thanks to all our partners throughout the province

who helped organize events on the ground and to those who offered me a couch to sleep on.

From the time when I started writing this article until finishing it on March 22, it is hard to understate the monumental changes which have gripped Canadian society. As planting and seeding season draws nearer, many farms and farmers across the country are looking at what changes this pandemic is going to bring about on their own farms and our food system as a whole.

As a farmer dependent upon sales at farmers' markets, and directly to customers, I cannot help but feel that my business's future is more at risk than at any time since I started it. Widespread fear in the public coupled with government closures and/or restrictions of public spaces has led many farmers to question whether farmers' markets will be open as we move into the busiest part of the season. The NFU has been actively advocating for protecting farmers' markets as essential services alongside grocery stores, ensuring reliable local food sources in the coming weeks when our larger societal supply chains will no doubt be weakened by the crisis. Many politicians and members of the public look upon farmers' markets as special events, like a concert, instead of an important part of our food system. The NFU will continue to work hard to promote farmers' markets as an essential service which with proper safety

precautions will play a critical role in providing food to Canadians during this difficult time.

This crisis has helped drive home the importance of Food Sovereignty. It has also shed light on the fact that many of the fruit and vegetable crops in this country are harvested by migrant labour and that their exclusion from Canada could have serious effects on our food supply in the coming weeks and months. We must ensure that migrant labour is exempt from any government measures prohibiting entry and that migrant workers rights, health and safety are protected in the process.

Needless to say the NFU is taking the COVID-19 pandemic seriously and is following all recommendations from health officials concerning operations at our national office. Most of our staff is now working remotely but we are committed to maintaining our capacity and member services to the best of our abilities during this crisis.

Hopefully many of the questions and variables will have been resolved by the time our next Quarterly emerges but until then I encourage all members to heed government measures, take care of themselves and when able lend help to those who need it. Farmers have always understood the power of collective action to accomplish big things in times of need. Let us help lead the way.

—In Solidarity, Stuart Oke



Region 1: District 1

Province of Prince Edward Island

—by Byron Petrie, Region 1 Board Member

First and foremost, I would like to thank Reg Phelan for all the hard work he has done over the years to give the Island's perspective to the national board and giving the rest of us reports from national. I have big shoes to fill for sure. I am glad to be a new member on the board after watching such great people do great things in this organization. I am amazed at all the hard work that goes on in behind the scenes.

The NFU in Prince Edward Island has been active over the winter attending land coalition

meetings. We also met with the Minister of Agriculture and the deputy minister to ask them about a certain farm acquisition which happened after last spring's election. This acquisition is bluntly circumventing the Lands Protection Act. At the time they seemed to be unable to give us any straight answers other than they now plan to hold consultations with the public on the Lands Protection Act. At this point the consultations have been postponed, along with everything else thanks to COVID-19.

I think this season we will see all our farms tested by COVID-19,

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climate change, supply shortages, transportation issues and trade issues. But I am oddly optimistic. I think issues such as COVID-19 and climate change will bring consumers and the general public awareness to just how fragile our current neo-liberal economic model is and how important food and agriculture are. Maybe we will all realize there is strength in supporting our local communities while still caring for our global neighbours. I hope everyone is home and safe.

Take care, Byron

Region 1: District 2

Provinces of New Brunswick & Nova Scotia

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING POSTPONED

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick decided to postpone our Annual General Meeting.

We know farmers get extremely busy in the spring and summer months, therefore the meeting will likely be rescheduled for the fall (tentatively end of October), possibly to coincide with the Regional Convention we'll be hosting this year. We will be setting a date soon and keeping members informed as our plans unfold. We look forward to seeing everyone soon.



L'Union nationale des fermiers au Nouveau-Brunswick a de reporter notre assemblée générale annuelle.

Nous savons que les agriculteurs sont extrêmement occupés au printemps et en été, donc la réunion sera probablement reportée à l'automne (provisoirement fin octobre), peut-être pour coïncider avec la Convention régionale que nous organiserons cette année. Nous fixerons bientôt une date et tiendrons les membres informés de l'évolution de nos plans. Nous avons hâte de voir tout le monde bientôt.



Region 3/NFU-O: Province of Ontario

— by Don Ciparis, Coordinator

NFU-Ontario Regional Council and I hope that this issue of the *UFQ* finds you all in good spirits and good health in this very unusual time in Canada's history. Observing the protocols and precautions of your community are of the utmost importance. Please stay safe.

The winter has been a very active time for Regional Council. The Ridgeway Campus of the University of Guelph hosted its annual Southwest Agricultural Conference in early January with a lineup of expert speakers talking about the latest in crop management trends for students, beginning and current farmers. The NFU-O was there as a sponsor and session chairperson, meeting especially with about-to-be and new farmers. Sponsors were rewarded with a sold-out conference for the two days.

The following week provided an opportunity to meet with Ontario's Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Jeff Yurek, and provide him with a copy of our Farm Crisis/Climate Crisis report. It was conveyed to him that there exists an acceptance among all Ontario producers that a climate problem is facing them and measures from government are needed to start addressing the problem. He did not question the premise of the report.

Regional Council continues to compile data and seek allies in the lobbying effort to raise the issue of abattoir shortages in the province, particularly in eastern Ontario. Regulatory concerns, disposal of hides and cross-provincial trade matters continue to impose barriers to a viable abattoir industry on which our smaller producers depend. This continues to be a work in progress.

The mandate of Conservation Authorities (CA's) in the province is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks via stakeholder consultations. Ontario's 36 CA's are facing funding shortfalls, perceived mandate over-reach and restructured priorities. CA's are very important to Ontario's agriculture industry and to the NFU-O, especially in this time of climate uncertainty. A statement in support of Ontario's Conservation Authorities is being drafted as this is being written.

The Region 3 Convention/NFU-O AGM took place in Hamilton on February 25-26, 2020 with a public event on the 25th and the Convention/AGM on the 26th. At the public event speaker Lynda Lukasik of Environment Hamilton gave a powerful presentation on her group's attempts to raise awareness of the environmental/climate crisis facing all of us. Of particular significance were her projections of when Ontario would lose the ability to feed itself, provincial support of

developers that encourage urban sprawl and her study of the striking differences in the carbon footprint of two cities of 5 million people – Atlanta and Barcelona (worth accessing).

The Convention/AGM was a lively and spirited event with its reports, business presentations and regional resolutions. NFU Vice President, Stewart Wells, spoke on the Farm Crisis/Climate Crisis Report. Brian Gilvesy spoke about the country's ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) program, including its 27,183 acres of projects. Pam Charlton of the Ontario Soil and Crop Association gave an update of the Environmental Farm Plan and its priorities. Interestingly, Sally Miller of the Fair Finance Fund gave a presentation on mobilizing equity/accessible capital for Ontario's food and farm enterprises for market development. Described as similar to a CSA, they invest in community bonds for the food system. This initiative has potential for beginning farmers. Thanks to all of our presenters.

The next day, Membership Co-ordinator Aric McBay, General Manager Sarah Bakker and I travelled to Niagara to meet with local members to help organize a Niagara local. We were met by a very enthusiastic committee and will be working closely with them to help develop their local. Congratulations to our members in Niagara as they start organizing their own local.

With that, Regional Council sends along its best wishes to members in all other regions for a safe resolution of the challenge facing you and your families.

—Don Ciparis



Region 5: Province of Manitoba

— by Ian Robson, Coordinator

NFU Region 5 (Manitoba) enjoyed hosting the 50th National Farmers Union Annual Convention in Winnipeg this past November. Many good comments on our work were made.

Brian Pallister's Manitoba Government has said it wished to consult with all Manitobans about legislation. The National Farmers Union contributed many ideas and made a recommendation to not pass changes to the Agricultural Crown Land Lease (ACLL) system, but we were ignored. This government's zeal to reduce red tape has increased ACLL red tape and cost while likely reducing the number of people using the ACLL. The cuts to health and education are hurting people but the promise was not to cut necessary services. Our roads budget is cut again. It is not too difficult to figure why these cuts happen, since the Provincial Sales Tax will be cut from 8% to 6%. Each \$1000 of goods bought under PST now saves \$20 in tax compared with two years ago. This is barely a meal out for one person per \$1000 spent, yet road potholes abound. We have the example of Alberta, which had great wealth only to squander it on 80 years of private profits and low taxes, yet goods cost around the same.

Farmers have experienced a delay from the CPR and CNR not

investing in proper rail, locomotive or labour capacity which has affected farmers over the years. Remember also the delays caused by fertilizer companies which sold product elsewhere and shorted Canada or jacked up the price when they felt like it. Or the importation of products (beef or pork or fruit) already available here. Or very high interest rates that were not needed. All count as delays.

Fall harvest 2019 counts as delay from difficult weather, making spring 2020 a challenge. Each day farmers deal with a challenge. Present low market prices add to stress, but this is something caused by humans and can be fixed. There is no need for such low prices. Over-production is a result of low prices. What happens is each individual farmer seeks to avoid poverty by working for maximum yield to offset low price. This has been the demand of the government and industrial policy so that there is assured cheap food. This can and should be fixed. Other countries do deal with this problem, as has Canada in other times. Recent so-called

free trade deals are not doing as advertised. The WTO and the UN are the place for countries to make deals.

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was the beginning of many good things for workers and for farmers. Farmers organized wheat pools and then the Canadian Wheat Board, but these were taken from farmers by silly excuses, and farmers let these be taken from them. Dairy farmers organized, but now their efforts are being eroded by trade deals and weaknesses in our governments. These policies helped raise the standard of living for farmers, but sadly there are fewer farmers. There are more people who wish to start farms. They need access to land and to paying markets.

NFU-Manitoba set up trade booths with information and for discussion at the Direct Farm Manitoba Conference and at the Prairie Organic Conference. Many contacts and connections were made with farmers. The number of enthusiastic young farmers is very encouraging. Many are shocked by what lawyers wish to do with our natural right to grow our own cleaned crop seeds. NFU-Manitoba has reached out to students at University of Manitoba with some good results.

All the best for 2020 crops and stay healthy.

—Ian Robson

REGION 5 (MANITOBA) CONVENTION SCHEDULED FOR APRIL HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

We will send out details once a new date has been confirmed.



Region 6: Province of Saskatchewan

— by Glenn Tait, Coordinator

Hello region 6, I hope this finds you all hale and hearty, and the odds are it will, but we have all sure had an eventful (and 'eventless') few weeks.

Board meetings and seminars, schools and offices, and all sorts of celebrations have been shut down left and right. We NFU'ers are more than smart enough to wash our hands and keep our distance, but even so, the Region 6 directors felt we should also postpone our annual general meeting. Our venue then closed its doors for a few weeks.

Still, not much will slow the great works of the NFU. On the national front, Saskatchewan members Terry Boehm, Cam Goff, and Stewart Wells, along with Glenn Norman from Region 7, and staff members Cathy Holtslander and Mara Shaw feverishly hammered together an insightful brief to warn parliament about the pitfalls of Bill C-4, the act to adopt the new CUSMA deal. After much research, analysis, and communication, parliament jumped ahead and passed the act anyway so they could get home while they still felt it was safe. Our members and staff should know that the work of the NFU was noticed and appreciated by at least some other farm leaders.

I have made a couple of small efforts on my own too. The two new 'Value Creation' funding

systems for varietal research are the unwanted plans that just will not die. Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Dave Marit indicated that he was in favour of the schemes at an agricultural assembly, so I wrote him a letter. In it I pointed out the economic inefficiencies of the royalty systems, the loss of control of research, and the resolute negativity expressed by most farmers on the subject. He wrote back that they had actually asked the feds for more discussion and analysis and blamed them for not following up. He said that they have not decided anything yet but his department, "encourage(s) all stakeholders....to develop and promote alternative models." In other words I suppose

they are not saying they want it changed, but please would somebody change it?

I also wrote the chair of the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame when I heard Gerry Ritz was to be inducted. I mentioned Ian Robson's good letter of protest about Gerry's nomination to the national Hall of Fame and added a few more points. In the chair's reply to me, I was told that he was sorry that I did not feel the same way as the majority of the board did, and, though Canada was a great and democratic country and the process was very transparent, I could not see any of the reasons he was nominated.

Oh well, chin up and carry on. Even if the rest of the industry is trying to leverage out our last nickel, it seems with the national economy grinding to a halt the government might just consider farming 'essential.'

—Glenn Tait

We Remember...

JOSEPHINE "JOYCE" (DRACEK) NEUFELD, age 84, passed away peacefully on February 8, 2020 at the Cypress Regional Hospital, Swift Current, SK.

Joyce was born on February 5, 1936 in the Eastend, SK area. She moved to the Cantuar, SK area with her family shortly after. She attended school at Belvedere, SK and Cantuar. In 1949, the family moved to Virden, MB where she completed her education. In 1955, she began working for the Bank of Montreal in Reston, MB and a year later she went to the Bank of Montreal in Swift Current. There, she met and married Henry Neufeld and later moved to Gull Lake, SK where the family lived for over twenty years. In 1980, they moved to the farm at Waldeck, SK where they lived until 2000. Upon retirement they moved to the Village of Waldeck.

Joyce was very active in the National Farmers Union and enjoyed the many friends she met through the organization as well as the many farm debates. She was an active member of the Waldeck Golden Age Club and loved playing cards with the group until it disbanded. Thereafter, she enjoyed playing cards thrice weekly in Swift Current.

Joyce is lovingly survived by her son, Robert; daughter, Shirley (Sim); and her grandchildren, Samuel and Scott.

A Memorial Service will be held at a later date.



Region 7: Province of Alberta

— by Doug Scott, Coordinator

Well I never thought I would be writing a regional report during the time of a world wide pandemic. Issues such as food security take on renewed meaning at a time like this when people begin to realize how interconnected the chains of our food system have become. In Alberta, I must say that I am impressed with the swift action taken by our health professionals and governments at all levels. A quick look to the south reminds us how fortunate we are to have a universal healthcare system that does not discriminate.

At the same time it is important not to lose sight of other issues of importance. In Alberta the collapse in oil prices will have a significant impact on our provincial budget for years to come. Not surprisingly Jason Kenny's government has chosen to press ahead with passing a budget which does not reflect the realities of the time. They continue to move forward with budget cuts to healthcare and education and, of course, tax cuts for business. Interestingly if Alberta were to tax Albertans at a rate even close to the next closest province, which is Ontario, we would have an eight billion dollar budget surplus. So much for the Alberta Advantage.

Our new Agriculture Minister Dreeshan has proven to be a light weight newbie who for the most

part has been silent while 60 research positions were cut in his department. Nary a word of explanation. He certainly is not the farmer he claimed to be.

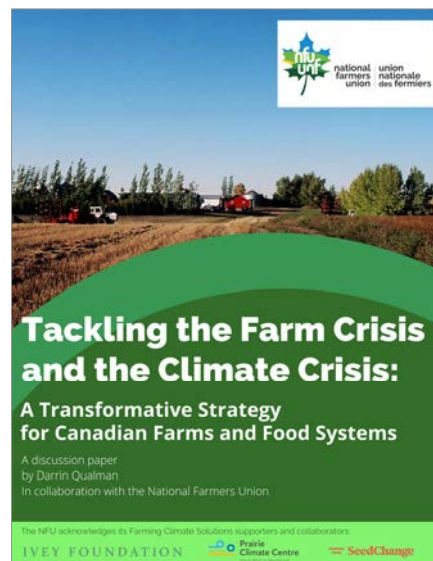
The coming spring will be challenging for area farmers. Presently truckers are not allowed out of their trucks when delivering grain. Elevator staff handle all the unloading and paperwork is done through the truck window. Input suppliers are announcing what things will look like at their facilities this spring. Call before you show up. All loading will be done by staff. Do not leave your truck. They will make on-farm chemical deliveries. And, of course, no more hotdogs, popcorn or free coffee. Does not sound like much fun. There is still a lot of crop to be harvested out

here which will only add to the challenges.

On a somewhat brighter note diesel prices are down, waay down, and commodity prices are starting to show some improvement. Hard Red Spring wheat prices are in the \$7.00 per bushel range and Canada Prairie Spring wheat is not far behind. We have not seen wheat prices like that since the last years of the CWB. Some fellows have locked in reasonable fall oat prices. As well, some of our direct meat marketers are reporting strong demand for their products.

Due to the ongoing pandemic we have postponed our regional annual AGM and convention. Best of luck in the upcoming growing season as I know it will toss a few curve balls our way. Also, I want to thank our staff and members for everything we have taken a stand on in the past while. Our plate has been full.

—Doug Scott



The National Farmers Union's new report, ***Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems***, by Darrin Qualman, is an in-depth examination of the impacts of climate change on agriculture in Canada, as well as the opportunities for agriculture to be part of the solution.

This report is available to download from the NFU website at:

www.nfu.ca/publications/tackling-the-farm-crisis-and-the-climate-crisis/

If you would like a printed copy, please contact the NFU national office.

We would be happy to send you a copy.

AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH.



Region 8: Province of British Columbia

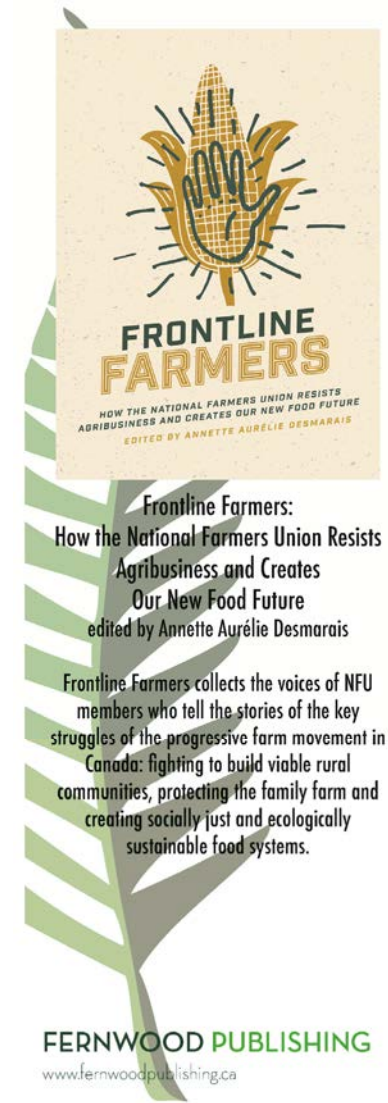
— by Seann Dory, Coordinator

COVID-19 is making many of the direct market producers in British Columbia a little nervous about the coming season. The reaction to shut down restaurants and not consider Farmers' Markets as an essential service will place increasing stress on the farmers in the province which have the highest per capita sales of organic produce. Many local farmers' markets and restaurants which feature BC products have already shut down, some permanently. Many BC municipalities have taken steps to declare states of emergency so they can increase their authority and impose closures by pulling permits for events and businesses. At the time of this writing in mid-March, some closures and limits at BC border crossings are in place but trucks and trade rumble on. As people in BC hoard food, the shelves of many food banks remain empty causing the situation to most effect our low income communities. We are looking forward to how this will change food distribution in the future. We must be diligent and reasonable when we look at events like this to make sure our rights and humanity are not

thrown out under the guise of crisis, real or perceived.

The ALR's new rules are now in place in British Columbia. This limits applications to remove land from the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) to local governments, First Nations, and other prescribed bodies. Farmers will still be able to make requests for removal but will have to do so through their municipalities. New allowances for extra dwellings are also in place.

The National Farmers Union was busy in BC this winter conference season when NFU Youth President, Stuart Oke, toured British Columbia as part of the *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis* Report release. Stuart toured the Lower Mainland, Southern Vancouver Island, and the Fraser Valley doing numerous speaking events. We also met with the BC Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Lana Popham, to discuss the report and were able to steal a few moments to discuss the parallels of new farmer issues across the country. Stuart capped his tour with an overwhelmingly well received presentation at the Certified Organic Association of BC (COABC) Conference in Richmond. The report and tour helped develop new working relationships between the National Farmers



Frontline Farmers:
How the National Farmers Union Resists
Agribusiness and Creates
Our New Food Future
edited by Annette Aurélie Desmarais

Frontline Farmers collects the voices of NFU members who tell the stories of the key struggles of the progressive farm movement in Canada: fighting to build viable rural communities, protecting the family farm and creating socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems.

Union, BC farmers and BC farm organizations.

As many farmers in our province wait for the snow to melt, south coast farmers are starting to till ground, spray the berries and plant early potatoes and vegetable crops. It seems farmers have not forgotten to be hopeful in all this uncertainty.

—Seann Dory

NEW MEMBERSHIP TYPE:



What the Farming Unit means and why it was adopted

A **Constitutional Amendment** was approved at the National Convention in November that created **a new membership type: the Farming Unit**. This decision was not made lightly. This FAQ is intended to explain exactly what the amendment does and what it means for the NFU. Please call the office if you have any questions regarding this new membership category.

Constitutional Amendment passed November 2019 - Farming Unit as membership category

7. The following **natural** persons shall be eligible for membership in the Union:
 - a) Any person, including the resident spouse or children of that person, engaged in farming in Canada.
 - b) Any retired or displaced farmer until such person has been employed for two years in any other industry. 01/88
 - c) Any non-farming family unit or person may become an associate member with all the rights and responsibilities of any other member except the right to vote or hold an elected position. 01/91
 - d) Any non-farm youth may become an associate member with all the rights and responsibilities of any other member except the right to vote or hold an elected position. 01/91
 - e) **Up to four individuals comprising a farming unit are eligible for a Farming Unit membership.** 11/19

8. Membership in the Union shall be based on a family unit **or farming unit**.
 - a) **A family unit is deemed to be an individual and spouse, if applicable.** Dependent children of each family unit between ages of 14 and 21 shall be regarded as members of the union. 12/73
 - b) **A farming unit is deemed to be a co-operative, collective or partnership where the majority of the farm's labour and management is provided by individuals actively involved in operating the farm.** 11/19

Q. What is a Farming Unit?

A Farming Unit is a group of farmers farming collectively, cooperatively or in a partnership as a joint enterprise. For the NFU's purposes, this can be up to 4 individuals per membership, each of whom must be actively engaged on the farm.

Q. Why create a new category of membership?

The NFU was founded on a spirit of collective action and collective voice. Individuals who farm are harnessing that same power, increasingly by forming partnerships, co-ops or collectives in non-family based long-term farming relationships. These

farmers often did not see themselves reflected in the NFU's membership structure, did not sign up for membership. If they did, only one person on the farm would receive information from the NFU. Other farmers on the farm missed the opportunity to forge a relationship with the NFU through membership.

Q. Does this reduce the number of paying members in the NFU?

The impact on NFU membership to date has been minimal. The new membership category creates an opportunity for the NFU to recruit more farmers, and we envision this will help us increase membership over the long-term.

Youth President Stuart Oke says, *"The NFU's farm family model was progressive to recognize that all members of the family add to the success of farm.*

This is the next step: a new mechanism, but a continued progressive approach to include farmers in the next generation."

(continued on page 13...)

"Coming back to the family farm, I never wanted, or thought I would have the capacity, to farm the way my dad did. When he started, there was a co-operative approach, but that ended about 30 years ago, so he's been farming alone. I came back to the farm with the hope that I could convince some people to partake in this collaborative farm project with me. While I had the privilege of access to resources because of my farming family, other interested people faced huge limitations with access to land, access to tools, start-up. Our collective farm gives those people the opportunity to farm, increases the diversity of products produced on the farm, moves toward deeper agroecology, and provides a larger diversity of products to our community."

— NFU-NB farmer Rebeka Frazer-Chiasson

Q. What opportunities does this open up for the NFU?

This membership type ensures that the NFU continues to be at the forefront of the changing nature of agriculture. It creates a place for new farmers who have less experience and less exposure to knowledge in whatever form: technical, farm practices, advo-

cacy. It allows more people to join the NFU community, which is the source of the NFU's energy and power.

Q. Will each member have a vote?

Yes, at Local and Regional meetings, a Farming Unit will hold up to 4 votes per membership. There will be no change at

National Convention (to which delegates are sent). Farm Unit membership was limited to 4 people to prevent co-optation from people who join without the spirit of the NFU. The Board will follow this closely over the next years. Amendments can be brought forward if this is seen to affect the direction of the NFU in ways that are not acceptable.

Q. Why should I be hopeful about this membership category?

This change makes the NFU more relevant, especially to young people who are looking to change the world via agriculture. The NFU needs to include, engage and represent them so we ensure our next 50 years are as successful as last.

"This will resonate with people. I am proud that we are reaching more diverse farmers."

— Stuart Oke

Farming has always been hard; it is today. Collaborative/cooperative farming is seeing a resurgence to address the challenges of modern farming. The NFU welcomes these new collaborative farmers with this new membership option.

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NOUVEAU TYPE D'ADHÉSION:



L'unité agricole : définition et motifs de l'adoption

Une **modification à la Constitution de l'UNF** a été approuvée lors du congrès national de novembre dernier, afin de créer un **nouveau type d'adhésion : l'unité agricole**. Cette décision n'a pas été prise à la légère. Le présent document de foire aux questions vise à expliquer à quoi sert cette modification précisément, et ce qu'elle signifie pour l'UNF. Si vous avez des questions au sujet de cette nouvelle catégorie d'adhésion, n'hésitez pas à communiquer avec nous.

Modification à la Constitution adoptée en novembre 2019 : l'unité agricole comme catégorie d'adhésion

7. Les **personnes physiques** suivantes sont admissibles à devenir membres de l'UNF :
 1. Toute personne pratiquant l'agriculture au Canada, ainsi que sa conjointe résidente, son conjoint résident ou ses enfants. 01/88
 2. Toute agricultrice ou tout agriculteur retraités ou déplacés, jusqu'à ce que cette personne ait été employée pendant deux ans dans toute autre industrie. 01/91
 3. Toute unité familiale ou toute personne ne pratiquant pas l'agriculture peut devenir membre associé et se voir octroyer les mêmes droits et responsabilités que tout autre membre, à l'exception du droit de voter ou d'occuper un poste électif. 01/91
 4. Tout jeune ne pratiquant pas l'agriculture peut devenir membre associé et se voir octroyer les mêmes droits et responsabilités que tout autre membre, à l'exception du droit de voter ou d'occuper un poste électif. 01/91
 5. **Un maximum de quatre (4) personnes composant une unité agricole est admissible à devenir membre de l'UNF en tant qu'unité agricole.** 11/19

8. L'adhésion à l'UNF est basée sur une unité familiale ou une **unité agricole**.
 - a) **Une unité familiale comprend une personne et sa conjointe résidente ou son conjoint résident, le cas échéant.** Les enfants à la charge de chaque unité familiale âgés de 14 à 21 ans sont considérés comme membres de l'UNF. 12/73
 - b) **Une unité agricole désigne un groupe de fermiers pratiquant l'agriculture de façon collective, coopérative ou en partenariat, en tant qu'entreprise commune, et où la majorité du travail agricole et de la gestion de la ferme sont assurés par des personnes participant activement à l'exploitation de la ferme.** 11/19

Q. Qu'est-ce qu'une unité agricole?

Une unité agricole désigne un groupe d'agriculteurs pratiquant l'agriculture de façon collective, coopérative ou en partenariat, en tant qu'entreprise commune. En ce qui concerne l'UNF, une unité agricole peut comporter jusqu'à quatre personnes par adhésion, chacune devant jouer un rôle actif dans la ferme.

Q. Pourquoi avoir créé une nouvelle catégorie d'adhésion?

L'UNF a été fondée dans un esprit d'action et de voix collectives. Les

fermiers misent eux aussi sur ce potentiel, notamment en formant des partenariats, des coopératives ou des collectifs dans le cadre de relations agricoles à long terme en dehors du cadre familial. Ne se sentant pas adéquatement représentés dans la structure d'adhésion de l'UNF, les fermiers travaillant de manière collaborative ont parfois omis de devenir membres de l'organisme. S'ils le faisaient, une seule personne parmi eux recevait de l'information de la part de l'organisme, ce qui ne permettait pas aux autres membres de la ferme de bâtir une relation solide avec notre communauté.

Stuart Oke, président du Comité consultatif jeunesse, a dit à ce sujet : « Dans le cas du modèle de ferme familiale, l'UNF a rapidement reconnu le fait que tous les membres d'une famille contribuent au succès d'une ferme. La modification que nous avons apportée à la Constitution était la prochaine étape logique : il s'agit d'un nouveau mécanisme, certes, mais qui mise toujours sur la même approche progressive pour inclure les fermiers de la prochaine génération. »

(continued on page 15...)

« Quand je suis revenue à la ferme familiale, je ne voulais pas cultiver comme mon père le faisait. Je ne pensais pas en avoir la capacité. Lui, quand il a commencé, les fermiers avaient recours à l'approche coopérative. Mais tout ça a pris fin il y a une trentaine d'années, et il cultive seul depuis. Je suis revenue à la ferme avec l'espoir de convaincre des gens de se joindre à moi dans le cadre d'un projet de ferme collaborative. J'ai eu le privilège d'avoir accès à des ressources grâce à ma famille, mais ce n'est pas le cas de tout le monde. D'autres se heurtent à des obstacles importants en ce qui concerne l'accès à la terre, à la machinerie, aux outils et au démarrage d'entreprise. Notre projet de ferme collective donne la chance à ces personnes de cultiver, en plus de nous permettre d'augmenter la diversité des produits cultivés à la ferme, de nous rapprocher encore davantage de l'agroécologie et d'offrir une plus grande diversité de produits à notre communauté. »

– Rebeka Frazer-Chiasson, agricultrice de UNF-NB

Q. Ce changement va-t-il réduire le nombre de membres cotisants à l'UNF?

Jusqu'à présent, les répercussions sur le nombre de membres de l'UNF ont été minimales. Cette nouvelle catégorie de membre crée une occasion pour l'UNF de recruter plus de fermiers, et nous estimons que cette mesure contribuera à augmenter le nombre de membres à long terme.

Q. Quels seront les avantages de cette modification pour l'UNF?

Ce nouveau type d'adhésion garantit que l'UNF puisse continuer d'être à l'avant-garde de la nature changeante de l'agriculture. Il crée un espace pour les nouveaux

agriculteurs qui ont moins d'expérience ou qui ont moins accès aux connaissances en tout genre : connaissances techniques, pratiques agricoles, défense des droits, etc. Il permet à davantage de personnes de se joindre à la communauté de l'UNF, qui constitue la source du pouvoir de l'organisme et lui insuffle son dynamisme.

Q. Est-ce que chaque membre de l'unité agricole obtiendra un droit de vote?

Oui, lors des réunions locales et régionales. Les unités agricoles se verront octroyer jusqu'à quatre votes chacune. Cette modification ne concerne pas le congrès national annuel, auquel des délégués sont envoyés. Le nombre de membres d'une unité agricole

est limité à quatre personnes. Cette mesure vise à empêcher que des gens adhèrent à l'UNF sans adhérer à ses valeurs. Le Conseil d'administration suivra de près l'adhésion des nouvelles unités agricoles au cours des prochaines années. D'autres modifications pourraient être proposées si l'on juge que ce nouveau type d'adhésion nuit à l'orientation de l'UNF.

Q. Pourquoi devrait-on se montrer optimiste face à cette nouvelle catégorie d'adhésion?

Ce changement rend l'UNF plus pertinente, en particulier pour les jeunes qui cherchent à changer l'état actuel du monde par l'entremise de l'agriculture. L'UNF se doit de les inclure, de leur permettre de contribuer aux efforts et de les représenter, afin de faire en sorte que les 50 prochaines années soient aussi prospères que les 50 dernières.

« Ce changement va résonner dans notre communauté. Je suis fier que nous puissions rejoindre encore plus de fermiers grâce à cette modification. »

– Stuart Oke

L'agriculture a toujours été synonyme de dur labeur, et c'est toujours le cas aujourd'hui. Dernièrement, les modèles collaboratifs et coopératifs connaissent un regain de popularité et se présentent comme une solution pour relever les défis de l'agriculture moderne. Grâce à la modification apportée à sa constitution, l'UNF peut désormais accueillir ces nouveaux fermiers travaillant en collaboration parmi ses membres.

Knowing the borders of Canada's Food System

—by Migrant Worker Subcommittee members Bryan Dale, Carla Fehr, and Jennifer Pfenning

The COVID-19 crisis has made Canadians vividly aware of our food system's potential vulnerabilities. The just-in-time approach to managing the mainstream food supply chain means that a complete shutdown of the nation's borders would have grocery store shelves bare within a matter of days. As of the time of writing, this has not happened, nor is it likely to. The Prime Minister has assured Canadians that border restrictions will be affecting people, but not the flow of commodities. This may set the average consumer's mind at ease, however, many farmers who rely on the contributions of migrant workers are unsure how and when the workers will be able to come to their farms this season.

The government has recognised this and as of late-March was working on a plan to allow seasonal migrant workers to come, but the details were still unclear. It will be critical for the rights and needs of the workers to be prioritised. We hope that the federal government will consider providing the financial support required to help cover the extra costs associated with meeting these priorities.

As Syed Hussan of the Migrant Rights Network reminded those of us who attended the NFU's Annual Convention this past November, migrant workers actually make up 10 percent of agricultural workers in Canada. The potential for these workers to be prevented entry to the country, therefore, raises questions about

how a significant amount of food will be grown and harvested this year. There are also migrants' concerns about lost wages if they are compelled to remain in their home countries, such as, Jamaica, Guatemala and Mexico.

Indeed, migrant workers' current worries point to deeper problems in the system which has enabled them to seasonally enter the country to perform such important work for over 50 years. For one, their access to health care rests on shaky ground. There have been many examples of employers terminating their relationships with workers who become injured or developed other health issues. In these cases, workers are sent home since their participation in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program is tied to a specific employer. This is a severe problem in its own right, but what will happen to migrant workers if they contract COVID-19, and an unscrupulous employer has them sent home?

These workers cannot access Employment Insurance (EI) benefits if they become sick here, and they may be compelled to self-quarantine in highly questionable circumstances. Migrant rights activists have long deplored the housing conditions that can be found on some farms. Some bunkhouses where migrant workers live are crowded and equipped with

minimal bathroom facilities. Under the Federal standard for housing, employers must provide one toilet and sink per seven workers and one shower per ten workers. Most workers share large, dormitory-style rooms with six to eight workers meeting the minimum cubic volume of space required per worker. The chances for a virus to spread in such conditions are very high.

Of course, there are many employers who would not tolerate such circumstances and abuses on their farms, including one of the authors of this article – Jennifer – who has hired migrant workers for 15 years. However, the long-standing problems in the seasonal worker program will not be resolved by the actions of good-willed employers in the context of their own farms. Systemic change is needed, and the COVID-19 crisis only underscores how vulnerable migrant workers are, and how crucial they are to the functioning of our agricultural system. These workers deserve full access to EI, and a path to permanent residency. As things stand, they know the borders of Canada's food system far too well, because their crossing of those borders is always conditional, and because they do it so frequently. ▀

For more information see:

- *The Migrant Rights Network:* www.MigrantRights.ca
- *Min Sook Lee's excellent documentary, Migrant Dreams:* www.MigrantDreams.ca

To contact or get involved with the NFU's Migrant Workers Subcommittee, please contact the Chair, Jennifer Pfenning: jenn@pfenningsfarms.ca

NFU Leadership tours Canada

The leadership of the NFU toured the country in late February to talk with Canadian farmers, policy-makers, politicians and the general public about the NFU report, *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farms and Food Systems*. Along the way, they met wonderful NFU members and built new membership.

NFU President Katie Ward toured **Alberta**. The Council of Canadians hosted a public event in **Calgary**. The **Red Deer** Rotarians gave her a warm reception as did those who heard her at the Red Deer Public Library. In **Edmonton** she met with the NDP's Agriculture Critic. NFU members gave Katie a tour around **Red Water** and set up local media interviews. Vice-President (Policy) Glenn Norman arranged Katie's stop at **Olds College** and more media.

Youth President Stuart Oke toured the lower mainland of **British Columbia**. A trip to **Victoria** included a public talk, a lecture at University of Victoria, an interview with CBC Radio, and a meeting, together with Region 8 Coordinator Seann Dory, with the BC Agriculture Minister, MLA Lana Popham. His tour of **Vancouver** included talks at University of British Columbia and to the Certified Organic Associations of B.C. (COABC) conference. Stewart's public talks in the fertile agricultural communities of **Armstrong** and **Chilliwack** were warmly received.

That same week **Vice-President Operations Stewart Wells** was a keynote speaker at the NFU Region 3/NFU-Ontario AGM in **Hamilton, Ontario**. This year's

convention focused on the importance of building resilient communities and farms as we work together to address climate change. It was a convention filled with information, positive energy and solidarity.

On February 26 and 27, former Board Member **Cam Goff** and NFU Executive Director **Mara Shaw** joined **Stewart Wells** in meetings on **Parliament Hill in Ottawa**. They met with MPs and their staff, discussing the *Tackling* report, farm incomes and climate change, the Canadian Grain Commission, and the need for a continued governmental role in finishing seed varieties. They also met with staff and leaders from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Western Economic Diversification and Finance. In two days, they met with 12 separate offices across the political spectrum, including dinner with former NFU President, now MP for



NFU President Katie Ward at the Red Deer Rotarians in Alberta.

Malpeque (PEI) and Chair of the Finance Committee, Wayne Easter.

Travel plans for **Women's President Coral Sproule** to tour **the Maritimes** have been put on hold. She looks forward to sharing the *Tackling* report and hosting discussions with farmers across the Eastern Provinces when travel is again safe. ■



Stewart Wells (left), Mara Shaw, MP Niki Ashton, and Cam Goff (right).

OP-ED:

Will Canada's grain farmers be collateral damage in the rush to pass Bill C-4?

—by Cam Goff



Canada is confronting an unprecedented crisis as we deal with the global COVID 19 pandemic. On March 12 Prime Minister Trudeau and at least two other MPs had to self-isolate after being exposed to the virus. The following day, Parliament decided not to carry on business as usual, and moved to recess until April 20. The same day, Bill C-4, the legislation to implement the Canada–US–Mexico trade agreement (CUSMA) was deemed to have passed Third Reading in both the House of Commons and the Senate even though debate in the House was still in progress and debate in the Senate had not even begun.

Included in Bill C-4 was a series of omnibus style amendments to the *Canada Grain Act* (CGA) that affect the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) which were not negotiated in CUSMA and have nothing to do with implementing the trade deal. Because all attention was focused on the CUSMA deal itself, these amendments tucked into Bill C-4 evaded proper scrutiny by the House of Commons.

Canada's CUSMA negotiators agreed to treat wheat grown in the USA the same as Canadian wheat and not identify its country of origin on inspection documents.

However Bill C-4 makes it so Canada must treat all American-grown grain - not just wheat – as if it were Canadian-grown. It also enables regulations that would allow inspectors to assign Canadian grades to grain grown outside of Canada or USA, and it both weakens the CGC's authority in areas that affect grain transportation and quality control, and increases elevator company power over farmers.

The National Farmers Union informed a number of Senators of our concerns, and on March 11 during the Senate International Trade Committee's pre-study of Bill C-4, Senator Massicotte asked the Chief Agriculture Negotiator and Director General from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, whether the NFU's understanding of the bill was correct. The reply was that we were correct in our analysis of the changes being unnecessary, including the change from US wheat, agreed to in CUSMA, to US grain.

By allowing US-grown grain of all types (barley, corn, soy, oats, etc.) into our grain handling and export system, we can also expect impacts on our grain transportation system. One can imagine that American shippers would take advantage of Canada's rail system instead of using more

expensive US transport, making capacity issues and bottlenecks worse. Railways would no doubt suggest "solving" the problem by ending the revenue cap (MRE) and allowing them to raise freight rates to whatever the market could bear.

When Bill C-4 received Royal Assent on March 12, it ended the possibility of amending Bill C-4 to remove the unnecessary clauses affecting the CGA. All of this was done after the government had given notice of consultations on the CGA, to begin in March (now delayed). It is hard to see Bill C-4's unnecessary amendments as anything other than an end-run designed to avoid public debate.

Now, farmers need to work together. It is imperative to get these harmful parts of the bill removed before the CUSMA goes into effect on June 11. Allowing Bill C-4's amendments to the Canada Grain Act to stand would be an affront to the decades of work done by farmers and our public institutions and agencies to establish premium markets and customer loyalty based on the quality of Canadian grain. ■

—Cam Goff operates a grain farm with his brothers near Hanley, SK, and is a member of the National Farmers Union.

NFU's efforts to get last minute amendments to Bill C-4

—by Cathy Holtlander, NFU Director of Research and Policy

On February 28 we discovered that Bill C-4, the Canada-US-Mexico trade (CUSMA) Implementation Act, makes far-reaching amendments to the *Canada Grain Act* that were not negotiated and are not required by CUSMA. After putting out our media release, **Unwarranted changes to Canada Grain Act must be removed from CUSMA Implementation Act**, on Friday March 6 we contacted about 15 Cabinet ministers and relevant MPs from other parties via email, and did follow up calls with several of them. We had hoped to get one of them to introduce an amendment to the Bill during debate on Third Reading, but later found out that was not possible because the deadline for notice had already passed.

We then turned our attention to the Senate. We sent messages to all members of the Senate International Trade Committee as well as Senators who were on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. We followed up with phone calls to several of them and made a formal request to appear as a witness when the Senate did its study of Bill C-4. The Senate Trade Committee had already started a pre-study of Bill C-4. On March 11, two Senators raised our issues, and in answering them the representative from Agriculture and Agrifood Canada's negotiating team admitted that the NFU's analysis was right: Bill C-4 goes beyond what was required for CUSMA by extending access to all grains, not just wheat.

We were looking forward to making the case for amendments to Bill C-4 at the Senate, but these hopes were dashed when, on March 12, Parliament decided to pass the Bill without amendment before taking an extended recess due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The Bill has received Royal Assent and will come into force on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council (i.e. Cabinet). We assume that date will be June 11, 2020 which will be the date CUSMA goes into effect.

We are continuing to raise awareness, particularly with other farm groups and the crop development commissions, encouraging them to work with us to prevent these harmful changes to the Canada Grain Act from going into effect. ■

For more detailed information about the impacts of the unnecessary amendments to the *Canada Grain Act*, please see the brief **Bill C-4 makes unnecessary and harmful amendments to Canada Grain Act** posted on the NFU website at <https://www.nfu.ca/policy/canada-grain-act-amended-by-stealth/>.

Do you raise livestock?

We are getting our new **NFU Livestock Policy and Action Committee** started so we can get together and talk about livestock issues — including regulations, programs, policy and laws — to develop and promote NFU positions on livestock and to lead public awareness and engagement work.

If you are a livestock farmer, we want to hear from you!

- Let us know what kinds of animals you raise.
- What are the issues most affecting your livestock operation?
- Would you like to get updates about this committee's work?
- Are interested in being part of this committee?



Please **send a message to nfu@nfu.ca** or write a letter to the NFU National Office with your ideas, challenges, concerns and information to help the committee better understand NFU members' priorities regarding raising livestock. Thanks!

— **Glenn Norman**, NFU VP Policy and Alberta-based direct marketer of beef, and **Hilary Moore**, NFU Region 3 Board member and Ontario-based pastured pork producer

Challenging the Power and Control by a Few

The *Emerging Issues Panel* at the NFU 50th Annual Convention last November in Winnipeg featured three speakers – former NFU president **Terry Boehm**; York University Faculty of Environmental Studies adjunct professor **Bruce Campbell**, and **Syed Hussan**, Executive Director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.

With his parents, **Terry Boehm** grows wheat, durum, barley, yellow mustard, flax, canola, peas and lentils on 4,000 acres south-east of Saskatoon. Through his involvement with the NFU, Terry has analyzed legislation, trade agreements, government reports and academic journals and developed expertise in topics like international trade, intellectual property rights and seed legislation. Recently, Terry has started to look at the issue of *Big Data* – data collection, who holds data, what is data, and what is happening with data. Part of his interest arose out of the data protection clauses which have become common in trade agreements.

The NFU has always believed that information or data – especially accurate information and broad information – is required for policy makers to make good decisions. But the key is who owns and controls the data, who has access, and how is it used. Terry said, "the way it is shaping up right now, it is not in the public interest." Rather, it is about maximizing power and maximizing profit. Terry suggested that farmers who are paying a lot for technologies such as GPS and precision technology should actually be paid for utilizing those new technologies. The information provided through these technologies is broad and useful for those selling products, futures trading, market analysis and so on.

The NFU has always believed that information or data – especially accurate information and broad information – is required for policy makers to make good decisions.

In terms of the right-to-repair movement, Terry noted that John Deere is at the front end of corporate efforts to make it impossible for farmers to repair their own equipment, saying that essentially all farmers own is the metal that surrounds the company's proprietary software.

Bruce Campbell was the Executive Director for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives from 1994 until 2015. He is the author of *The Lac-Mégantic Rail Disaster: Public Betrayal Justice Denied*. In his presentation he used the example of the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster to talk about regulatory capture.

Through regulatory capture there is an asymmetrical power relationship between industry and government, such that government is no longer a countervailing force. Powerful industries, including the interlocked rail and petroleum industries are able to block, delay, dilute and reverse regulations and laws that adversely affect their profits. The result is that industry effectively regulates itself. The

corollary of regulatory capture is a weak and dysfunctional regulator. Bruce said that regulatory capture gets worse with austerity, as privatization, deregulation and budget cuts all work together to weaken government capacity and give more power and control to private industries.

Stephen Harper's government framed "red tape" and regulations as job and investment killers. He set up a red tape reduction commission which recommended a one-for-one rule. Under the one-for-one rule, when an agency proposes a new regulation it has to remove at least one existing regulation, claiming regulations are always a cost to business. Through the removal of regulations and a shift in the burden of proof, Bruce said that a delinquent company, Montréal Marine Atlantic Railway, gained permission from Transport Canada to operate trains with only one engineer. In the end no one was held responsible for the Lac Mégantic disaster. And Bruce said nothing has really changed. We still have the one-for-one rule in Canada. The new NAFTA (CUSMA) strengthens regulatory capture, as the Trump administration fast-tracks deregulation, placing a lot of pressure on Canada to follow suit.

Bruce closed his presentation by saying that citizens, workers, farmers, and environmental advocacy groups need to become educated about regulatory capture to challenge it and roll it back.

(continued on page 21...)

Executive Director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC), **Syed Hussan** opened his presentation by acknowledging that Winnipeg is the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Dakota, Dene, Métis, and Ojibwe Nations and that the convention was taking place on Treaty 1 territory. In addition, he noted the significance of holding the NFU Annual Convention in Winnipeg in 2019 – the hundredth anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.

According to Hussan, at this moment in time most of us are anxious about our own and our children's futures. A CBC poll showed that 72% of respondents were anxious or highly anxious about the future. This is a shared reality. A reason for this is that almost all of us are getting poorer. Average hourly and minimum wages, when adjusted for inflation, have not changed since 1975. This lowering of wages is not being experienced by everyone at the same level. Women earn 36% less than men for the same job. About 43% of non-permanent residents are low-income. Over 80% of reserves have a median income below the poverty line. Hussan said that poverty is differentiated depending on where we live and the kind of work we do. In 2018, 71% of migrants or over 700,000¹ people in Canada were issued temporary resident rights, according to Hussan, which means they do not have full rights and are without universal healthcare, without families and without full labour rights. For many of these workers, speaking out against a bad boss could result in deportation.

At the same time, Hussan said the rich are getting incredibly richer.

Their strategy is to divide us, to get us to fight among each other so that we will not turn on them and will not focus on who is actually responsible for our anxiety. They encourage an urban-rural divide, the Wexit east-west divide, and an us versus them divide when it comes to immigration. The divisiveness is working. We see it with anti-immigrant and yellow-vest protests. Hate crimes in Canada rose by 47% in 2017, and by over 200% since 2015. These are a radical fringe, but we know in our own communities that these divisive messages are working. Hussan said if we do not stop this divisiveness, if we do not stop the rise of racism, if we do not stop turning upon each other, then the rich and super-rich will continue to have power.

We need to respond with solidarity and with a vision that says we are all on the same side.

We must speak to our communities. We need to listen, acknowledge this shared anxiety, and provide new facts and new stories which are about solidarity. Hussan said, "racism is something we must fight in our own self-interest as workers, as the working class." We need to counter the message of scarcity – not enough money, not enough resources – with our truth of abundance, if the rich pay their fair share. Forty-five billionaires in Canada own 153.1 billion dollars. To help grasp the size of a billion, Hussan noted that one billion seconds is 31 1/2 years. A Canada Revenue Agency report found that Canadian corporations dodge up to \$11 billion in taxes a year.

The erroneous negative messages about refugees, immigrants and Muslims must be countered with our truth: that we know who is responsible for our anxiety. Hussan said up to \$18.3 billion in public money went to oil and gas executives and projects in 2018. In addition, 80% of their GHG emissions are exempted from the carbon tax, but they want us to think that it is migrants who are abusing the system. The message that Canada and Canadian corporations are a force of good around the world needs to be countered with, yes we as individuals are ethical beings, but what the Canadian super-rich are doing is not ethical. For example, Canada has been one of the top 15 arms exporters around the world for the last 15 years.

We are told to "lock our doors", to "be afraid of our neighbours" and to fear Muslim terrorists, when what really keeps us up at night is not knowing whether we will be able to keep working our land or what the future holds for our children. Hussan said that those responsible are not Muslims, are not immigrants and are not racialized people, but rather it is the super-rich. We need to respond with solidarity and with a vision that says we are all on the same side. We need a common platform based on economic, racial, climate and gender justice.

In closing, Hussan said that one in ten agriculture workers in Canada are migrant workers. Everyone who works the land has a common interest. He told us that as the NFU we need to bring migrant farm workers into the centre and through our shared interest in justice build bridges with them. ■

¹ 255,235 under the International Mobility Program; 55,388 Refugee claimants (only 1 out of 4 were accepted); 357,230 International Students; 84,265 Temporary Foreign Workers. From *Building anti-racist & migrant justice movements in Canada*, presented by Syed Hussan to the NFU Annual Convention, November 26, 2019.

Sisters in Struggle:

International Solidarity with Women of the MST

—by Coral Sproule, NFU Women's Vice President

*!Solidaridad Internacional!
!Solidaridad Internacional!*

*Les femmes unies en
lutte por la terre!*

*Mujeres unida luchando
por la tierra!*

*Landless Women United
in the Struggle!*



International Women's Delegation at the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF).

This chant was sung loudly, and in unison by an international delegation of women who joined in solidarity with the 1st National Encounter of Women of Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST- Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra), humbly joined by the NFU's Women's president Coral Sproule. It was a very transformative experience and one that was meaningful in many ways by all of the participants of this incredible show of solidarity with the dynamic group of women representing rural communities from across Brazil. The women in this international delegation were from social and political organizations involved in many aspects of feminist empowerment from issues of peasant and migrant rights, community organizing, women's reproductive rights, agroecology, popular education and international solidarity with Latin American movements.

Women from countries including Puerto Rico, U.S., Spain, France, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Switzerland and South Africa joined nearly 1000 women members of the MST in Brazil. The women of the MST traveled from their communities and settlements to the country's capital, Brasilia from March 5-9, 2020. We were also joined March 8th by women's organizations and individuals from in and around the capital city for a larger Women's March to recognize International Women's Day. This growing group of approximately 3500 women, LGBTQ2S+ and male allies stomped down the street to music, joy, banners, flags, and tears to declare the power of women amid intense pressure from the city's military armed police. This was an intense and powerful time, the energy of

this group was palpable and heartfelt, with many supporters gathering along the route of the march to add their voices, honks and cheers to the voices of the women in the march.

Women in the MST attended this encounter from agrarian communities based around the re-occupation and reclamation of public lands for the intended social purpose to become productive in food for people. This movement has been a result of agrarian reform within the Brazilian constitution, and the struggle of the large workers movements that have ensured that these lands are used and distributed among peasants and landless workers through militant actions, popular education and agroecology. We

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began to realize the awesome power of women in feminist movements as we gathered in Brazil's capital for this historic gathering of great significance with truly revolutionary grassroots leaders from Brazil's rural communities.

We camped and ate together, shared in song, dance, mysticas and other cultural traditions of one another. We heard many testimonies of women's experience in the struggle for land, life, water, political, social and food sovereignty which were moving and heart-wrenching at times. Workshop topics ranged from Agroecology in Social Movements, to How We Include Male Allies in Feminism. The evening of March 7th was a great celebration; we were joined by women leaders of organizations from throughout Brazil, including Dilma Vana Rousseff, who served as Brazil's President from 2011-2016. She met with a smaller group of delegates for an intimate discussion, and spoke to the

charged and passionate crowd later that evening. For many of us this is the greatest gathering of our lives so far. With so much feminist and political and social power, it was, at times, overwhelming.

Upon arrival in Brazil, the international delegates joined with our comrades of the MST at the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF) – the national political school of the MST, named after one of Brazil's great political and social leaders of the 20th century. The school is located just a short drive from Sao Paulo on the outskirts of a relatively small rural village. Here, we spent several days of intensive training on the history of the MST, and the political and social context in Brazil throughout the MST's 35 years in struggle and today. It was critical for the delegation to understand the incredible power and also violent oppression of the workers movements of Brazil throughout the MST's history, which followed a lengthy period of a country under dictatorship. The Brazilian

people have faced many violent struggles through their history, including the massacres of groups and individuals involved in the MST. Today in the current struggle under the oppressive government of President Jair Bolsonaro, women and LGBTQ persons are experiencing a dramatic rise in femicide and violence and we all are calling for an end to this.

During this relatively short time in Brazil, it brought me closer to the realization that we must stand with and build similar social movements to change our culture if we are to survive. The struggle of the many is so intensified during the climate and health crises we face at this very moment. As we always say in La Via Campesina meetings, we must now more than ever: GLOBALIZE THE STRUGGLE! GLOBALIZE THE HOPE! ▀

For further information on the MST and ways we can all support this movement, please visit the U.S. Friends of the MST page at www.mstbrazil.org



NFU NATIONAL CONVENTION

November 26 to 28, 2020

Hilton Garden Inn Downtown

Saskatoon, SK

Convention Theme: Diversity and Resilience

Please Note: The date and location for the 2020 National Convention have been scheduled for November 26 to 28, 2020. Given current travel and public gathering restrictions, we will be monitoring the situation and updating our members regularly.

NFU BOARD / ADVISORY MEMBERS and OFFICES

National / Regional Offices:

National: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465 Email: nfu@nfu.ca

Region 1: NB Regional Office:

Rébéka Frazer-Chiasson, NFU-NB President, 1312 Pleasant Ridge, Rogersville NB E4Y 1C8
Ph: (506) 260-0087 Email: info@nfunb.org

NB Member Tax Service: Judy Barr, 559 Route 390, Rowena, NB E7H 4N2 Ph: (506) 273-4328

Region 3: Sarah Bakker, NFU-O General Manager, 5420 Hwy 6 N, RR 5, Guelph, ON N1H 6J2

Ph: in ON 1-888-832-9638 / Ph: outside ON (705)738-3993 Email: office@nfuontario.ca

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