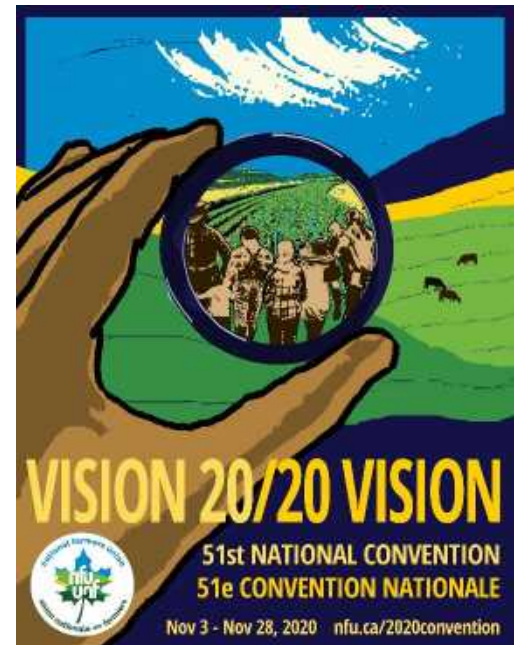


NFU National Convention 2020

In a year unlike any other, the NFU National Convention is on-line – and expanded.

We hope you will join in from
November 3 – 28, 2020

for a month of listening, learning & connecting.



Primary Convention days are November 25 to 28:

We will share the 20/20 Vision of the NFU throughout 2020. To keep the Zoom days bearable, we are moving some of the full-day workshops to earlier in November.

Free workshops from November 3 to November 20:

We will cover topics from agroecology, 2020 impacts on different farm types across the country, livestock issues, seed issues, climate change, farm labour, mental health, Indigenous solidarity and have many opportunities to socialize across thousands of miles. A complete schedule of all free workshops is on the next page.

Convention Rates:

Convention: November 25 to 28 at a reduced rate this year: \$75 for Members (Farm Family, Farm Unit and Associate); \$35 for Youth members; \$100 for Non-members. A sliding scale is available if cost is a barrier to your attendance. The Keynote Speaker is free of charge for all Convention registrants; \$20 for non-registrants.

Why Attend Convention?

If you are a new member or an older one who has never attended Convention before, now is your year! Save on flights & hotels and join in to:

- Hear panel talks from farmers across the country and updates from NFU Leadership
- Learn about the plan for a post-pandemic food system
- Receive international updates
- Debate timely resolutions
- Elect leadership (farm members only)
- Enjoy time meeting new and old friends

Phone it in!

Many of us have limited access to internet. Join by phone! You can listen to all seminars, join in workshops, hear proceedings, nominate, vote, debate, converse, and socialize with old friends and new friends – all on the phone.

Don't let technology be a barrier to connecting during the NFU Convention! Just phone in!

Register for Convention and the free workshops at:

nfu.ca/2020convention

or contact the NFU office at (306) 652-9465 or nfu@nfu.ca

You will receive:

1. Registration for Convention, November 25 – 28.
2. Registration for the Keynote Speaker.
3. A link and/or phone number to access the free workshops and social hours from November 3 to November 20.

November 2020 – Convention and more						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Agroecology Fits! Dr. Martin Entz		Work It! Farm Labour Affects Us All	NFU Social Hour	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		Indigenous Solidarity		Seeding the public interest	NFU Social Hour	Youth Caucus 2-6 pm Pacific
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Women's Caucus 8-10 am & 11-1 pm Pacific	It's Not You Taking action on rural mental health	Tackling Climate Crisis & Agriculture	Youth Social 5 pm Pacific	Mooove over Cargill!	NFU Social Hour & Resolutions Development	Resolutions Due
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
			Convention			
<p><u>FARM MEMBERS:</u></p> <p>Call the NFU Office if you would like to attend the Convention as a voting delegate.</p>		Convention Workshops:	2020 Reflections from farmers across Canada	Vision for Post-COVID Food System	Zooming Out: NFU and global solidarity	From Vision to Action
				Keynote: To Be Confirmed		

Schedule Times:

- **Workshops:** November 3 – November 19 are at 12:00 noon Pacific unless otherwise noted.
- **NFU Social Hours** are at 5 pm Pacific.
- **Convention days start:** Wed: 5 pm Pacific; Thurs & Fri: 9 am Pacific; Sat: 9:45 am Pacific.
- **Keynote Speaker:** 3 pm Pacific on Thursday, November 26.

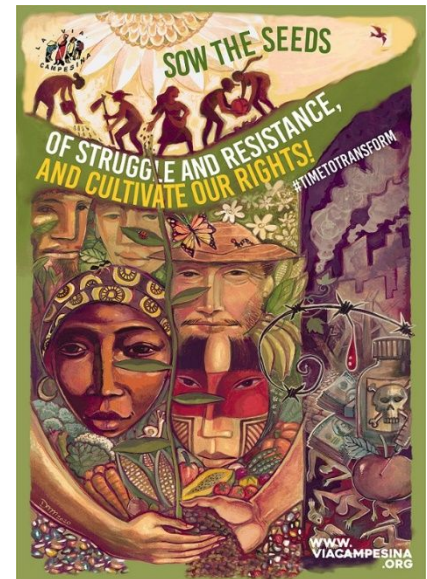
Please adjust for your Local Time: Mtn= +1 hr; Central= +2; Eastern= +3; Atlantic= +4hrs

The winds of change are blowing harder

COVID-19 update on peasants, rural workers and other marginalized groups

We are all suffering from the deepening social, political and economic crisis of the coronavirus pandemic. This pandemic has exposed and intensified the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of a global food system controlled by big companies. The United Nations reported that about 130 million more people would go hungry in 2020.

Lockdown restrictions have been disproportionately enforced, affecting peasants and their communities, poor and the working class the most. Many countries, such as Chile and the Philippines, have militarized the lockdowns. Some countries, such as India, Sri Lanka and Brazil, are using the economic and political fragility caused by the pandemic to reform labour, land, and essential laws related to foreign direct investments to benefit elites and further dispossess Indigenous people and peasants. Cases of domestic violence have drastically increased during the lockdown.



Strengthening Solidarity in COVID times

Globally, peasants, activists, and their allies are engaged in acts of solidarity to resist state and big businesses' repressive actions. They have also joined hands to support each other to strengthen food sovereignty and provide protective materials against COVID-19.

The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) Internationalist Brigades have been instrumental in the fight against COVID-19 in Africa and Latin America. They carried out activities to exchange experiences among peasants on the production of healthy food and also donated food and seed, produced and distributed hygiene and protective materials in countries where they are based, such as Zambia, Venezuela, and Haiti.

The Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) continues to support thousands of families and small-scale farmers in Palestine under its "United against COVID-19 emergency campaign." UAWC has targeted families in remote and marginalized areas where no medical services exist or where government health care is limited.

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) is working with allies and partners to stop the spread of COVID-19 in communities where their members reside.

In Brazil, the Women of the MST launched the campaign "*Women without land: against viruses and violence*", to fight against the intensifying gender-based violence.

In Canada, the National Farmers Union (NFU) has joined calls for regulatory changes so that migrant workers can change jobs without the threat of deportation, have full access to health care and other employee benefits, and be granted permanent resident status.

Various peasant movements and activists are organizing webinars to share and discuss issues affecting them, ways of resisting, and to build strategies and solidarity.

Is there hope?

The pandemic is provoking a response from below, from those most affected. Amid all the suffering, outbreaks of rebellion have sprung up in Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia. In the case of the US, the Black Life Matters (BLM) movement is the most powerful expression of a popular anti-systemic response.

The pandemic has shown the importance of local food systems in feeding people and the urgent need to promote such systems where they exist and rebuild where they have been destroyed by many years of neglect under neo-liberal policies. It is the peasant's food production systems that are feeding the people and preventing widespread hunger during this pandemic.

There is hope now that the wheels of societal change are beginning to turn faster during this pandemic. It is indeed time to transform.

This is an edited excerpt of La Via Campesina's article, originally published August 13, 2020 on their website (viacampesina.org).

Is Gene Editing the End of GMOs?

—by Lucy Sharratt

There is a lot of excitement about *gene editing*, or genome editing, in the media and research community. In the farm press, genome editing techniques are being widely described as precise and, in some cases, non-GMO. Neither is correct.

Genome editing techniques can be used to alter the genetic material of plants, animals, and other organisms. They aim to insert, delete, or otherwise change a DNA sequence at a specific, targeted site in the genome. Genome editing techniques are a type of genetic engineering, resulting in the creation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The techniques are powerful and could lead to the development of more genetically modified (GM or genetically engineered) crop plants, and even GM farm animals.

Just as with first-generation genetic engineering, genome editing techniques are moving quickly in the lab to create new GM plants, even while our knowledge about how genomes work remains incomplete. The techniques are powerful and speedy, but can be imprecise and lead to unexpected consequences.

What is Genome Editing?

The **genome** is the entire set of genetic material in an organism, including DNA.

Genome editing most often uses DNA “cutters” that are guided to a location within an organism’s DNA and used to cut the DNA. This cut DNA is then repaired by the cell’s own repair mechanism, which

creates changes or “edits” to the organism. The most frequently used genome editing technique is called CRISPR, but other techniques follow similar principles.

First-generation genetic engineering techniques insert a package of genetic material at random locations. These genes

from other species). The ability to create non-transgenic organisms is often stressed by the biotechnology industry as an advantage to using genome editing but, as discussed below, whether or not a GMO is transgenic is not the chief safety concern about genetic engineering.

How Genome Editing Works

Genome editing is a set of new genetic engineering techniques that alter the genetic material of plants, animals and microbes, most often using DNA cutters that are guided to a location within an organism’s DNA and used to cut the DNA. This cut DNA is then repaired by the cell’s own repair mechanism, which creates “edits” or changes to the organism.

cban.ca/GenomeEditingReport

then permanently become part of the host organism’s genome, creating new DNA sequences. In contrast, new genome editing techniques for plants insert genetic material that is then guided to a specific target site to perform “edits.” This means that, with genome editing, the inserted genetic material makes changes to the genome but does not necessarily have to become incorporated into the resulting GMO and can be bred out.

This also means that, unlike all first-generation GMOs, not all genome-edited GMOs are transgenic (have “foreign” DNA

There is one genome-edited organism on the market in Canada: an herbicide tolerant canola from the company Cibus (Falco brand). This GM canola, like all other GMOs, is prohibited in organic farming and excluded from *Non-GMO Project* verification. However, despite also being regulated as GM in Europe, the company Cibus still sometimes refers to this non-transgenic canola as “non-GMO.” This one example provides a glimpse into how the biotech industry would like to shape the regulation and public perception of genome editing to avoid the GMO controversy.

(continued on page 16...)

Unexpected and Unpredictable Effects

While the biotechnology industry often refers to genome editing as “precision breeding”, the techniques can be imprecise, and cause unexpected and unpredictable effects. Many studies have now shown that genome editing can create genetic errors, such as “off-target” and “on-target” effects:

- Genome editing techniques, such as the CRISPR-Cas9 system, can create unintended changes to genes that were not the target of the editing system. These are called “off-target effects.”
- Genome editing can also result in unintended “on-target effects,” which occur when a technique succeeds in making the intended change at the target location, but also leads to other unexpected outcomes.
- Genome editing can inadvertently cause extensive deletions and complex rearrangements of DNA.
- Unwanted DNA can unexpectedly integrate into the host organism during the genome editing process. For example, foreign DNA was unexpectedly found in genome-edited hornless cows.

Despite these many potential impacts, there are no standard protocols yet to detect off-target and on-target effects of genome editing.

Sometimes the intended changes created by genome editing techniques are described as “mutations” because only very small parts of DNA are altered and no novel genes have been

intentionally introduced. However, even small changes in a DNA sequence can have big effects.

The functioning of genes is coordinated by a complex regulatory network that is still poorly understood. This means that it is not possible to predict the nature and consequences of all the interactions between altered genetic material and other genes within an organism. For example, one small genetic change can impact an organism’s ability to express or suppress other genes.

An End to GMO Regulation?

Despite these risks, companies and many researchers argue that genome editing should face less regulation than first-generation genetic engineering, or not be regulated at all. In fact, Health Canada has just begun a process that could lead towards less regulation.

In response to calls from the biotech and pesticide lobby group CropLife to “clarify” the regulation of genome-edited products,ⁱ Health Canada announced it will update its guidance on risk assessment “to improve transparency and predictability of the requirements for industry stakeholders.”ⁱⁱ This new guidance will be published for public comment in January 2021, and could mean defining less regulation.

For example, CropLife argues that there should be tiered regulation where some products, such as those produced through genome editing, could be pre-determined as low risk and therefore require a less rigorous government risk assessment.

However, new genome editing techniques will challenge regulators with new traits and processes, with increasing complexity and ongoing uncertainty. Therefore, these new technologies need to be met with increased independent scrutiny, not less.

More fundamentally, risk assessments must also evaluate utility and social worth. Without consulting Canadian farmers, for example, companies can commercialize new GM products (such as glyphosate-tolerant alfalfa) that have few benefits but can, on the contrary, pose serious risks to markets, farming systems and the environment.

New Report

For references and for more information and discussion about genome editing, read CBAN’s new report, “Genome Editing in Food and Farming: Risks and Unexpected Consequences.” The report and an introductory factsheet are available online at: cban.ca/GenomeEditingReport The French report will be available in October.

For updates or to find out more, visit: cban.ca/genome-editing or subscribe to CBAN’s newsletter cban.ca/#subscribe

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) brings together 16 groups (cban.ca/about-us/members/) to research, monitor and raise awareness about issues relating to genetic engineering in food and farming. CBAN members include the NFU and other farmer associations, environmental and social justice organizations, and regional coalitions of grassroots groups. CBAN is a project on MakeWay’s shared platform. ■

ⁱ www.producer.com/2019/11/croplife-calls-for-clarity-on-gene-editing-regulations/

ⁱⁱ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/public-involvement-partnerships/notice-guidance-novel-food-regulations-plant-breeding.html>

NFU and Farmers for Climate Solutions release report on COVID Recovery and Climate Responses

The National Farmers Union is a founding member of Farmers for Climate Solutions (FCS), a first-of-its-kind farmer-led coalition to make agriculture part of a Canadian climate solution. Together, we will work to create policy change to enhance climate resilience, reduce agricultural emissions, and improve farmers' livelihoods.

The coalition launched in February 2020, and then COVID-19 hit, layering additional and unexpected challenges on farmers. Agriculture needs a COVID-19 recovery plan. FCS coalition members believe that this plan should also address climate change, reduce emissions, and support farmers' livelihoods.

On August 19, 2020, Farmers for Climate Solutions released a report with five recommendations for the federal government to help farmers cope with the twin challenges of COVID-19 and accelerating climate change.



The recommendations are:

1. Help farms become green-energy power-houses.
2. Provide incentives for climate-friendly farming.
3. Help innovative farmers act as mentors.
4. Reward farmers who reduce their climate risk.
5. Support new and young farmers.

The report is aligned with the NFU's recent policy work envisioning a climate friendly, post-pandemic food system (see links to two reports by the NFU below). FCS recommendations are vital in offering solutions to both the climate crisis and farm income problems, while shifting our food system towards a model of sustainability based on ecological health, social justice, and eco-nomic viability. FCS representatives have started discussing these recommendations with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, as well as with Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Heritage, and Infrastructure Canada — the ministries responsible for the green recovery to COVID-19 in Canada.

As part of the FCS coalition, in the coming months the NFU will continue to meet with decision-makers and engage with farmers and advocates to ensure agriculture is seen as fundamental in Canada's recovery from COVID-19, and that all recovery measures improve climate resilience. ■

You can find the full FCS report at:

www.farmersforclimatesolutions.ca

You can also read NFU reports and articles on COVID-19 recovery:

- Envisioning a Post-Pandemic Agriculture and Food System: <https://www.nfu.ca/policy/envisioning-a-post-pandemic-agriculture-and-food-system/>
- Pandemic Spotlights Food System Reforms Needed to Prepare for Climate Change: <https://www.nfu.ca/9381-2/>

Regulations, Labour and Inspectors

National Farmers Union – Ontario Surveys Provincially and Federally-Licensed Abattoirs

This past summer, the NFU-Ontario livestock committee investigated causes for the capacity shortage in provincially licensed abattoirs across Ontario. The number of provincially licenced abattoirs in Ontario has dropped from 300 in 1995 to 110 currently. This decline has had a dramatic impact on small and medium scale livestock farmers and the general health of the agricultural fabric of Ontario. Since the COVID pandemic started, an increased demand for locally raised meats has exacerbated the issue, resulting in some businesses booking animals into the fall of 2021 already.

This past month our summer intern, Ashlee Redmond, diligently attempted to contact all provincially and federally licenced abattoirs in Ontario to survey what the major issues are for their businesses. Questions were asked around regulations, expanding capacity, and labour. We heard back from a third of the businesses. From the data collected, it would appear that smaller abattoirs, killing at most 30-60 animals per week of a given species, find some of the regulations to be burdensome to their business, while the larger businesses, killing 300+ animals per week, per species did not express concern. All respondents isolated an overload of paperwork as well as inconsistencies and abrasiveness of inspectors to have a major impact on productivity as well as staff morale.



There are some regulations which add costs, and slow the production of abattoirs. For the smaller facilities, these factors make staying in business a challenge. Farmers see half the cost of their product being spent on processing while the processors themselves cannot afford upgrades or to offer higher wages to more skilled employees. Retiring business owners find it difficult to sell their businesses when their children are not interested in taking over because the profit margin does not outweigh the costs of required upgrades which are generally associated with taking over the business.

When asked about expanding capacity, just over 50% of respondents expressed a desire to expand but cited cost and labour as two barriers. Despite there being some grants available for upgrades, the process of finding out about them and filing an application is not widely accessible.

Available, qualified labour was a primary issue raised by all respondents. A number of employers expressed difficulty holding onto employees, despite offering on-site

training. For abattoirs who are located in more remote areas, this is even more difficult.

Taking the results from this information, the NFU-Ontario livestock committee is narrowing down the recommendations which we would like to offer to the provincial government. We are currently discussing what a two-tier regulation system may look like, as well as possibilities for improving access to qualified labour. We would also like to propose an inspection model that encourages inspectors to work with business owners to make improvements as they are needed.

The pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to re-examine how we do things. It is time that we look at the systems and requirements that provincially licenced abattoirs must follow and see what can be improved upon. It is absolutely necessary if we wish to encourage healthy and resilient regional food systems in Ontario. We look forward to working on this important issue and keeping NFU members up to date on the process. ■

A TRIBUTE TO CORY OLLIKKA

1970 - 2020

Kindness, Public Service, Wise Democracy, that's how he will be remembered



(reprinted from the Smoky Lake Signal)

Cory Ollikka was born in 1970, the first of two sons of Reynard and Joyce Ollikka. He was interested in piano lessons, gymnastics, volleyball, skating, hockey, and skiing. With his brother Todd he worked on the farm as they attended Waskatenau School, and he studied Finnish and Ukrainian as well. His mother, Joyce, is from Abee. She attended the University of Alberta, worked at the Edmonton Public Library, helped in the Waskatenau Public Library, and taught kindergarten in both Waskatenau and Smoky Lake. His father, Reynard, was in his early 20s when he went to work on the oil rigs in Drayton Valley, Swan Hills, and Peace River, as a tool push; he also worked on service rigs at Redwater and drove cats building roads and brushing for farmers. Reynard farmed his father's farm, and Cory later became the fourth generation to farm the family farm in the Hollow Lake area, north of Waskatenau.

From Waskatenau School, Cory attended H.A. Kostash in Smoky Lake. He was a work-experience student at the Smoky Lake Signal. Over the years, he submitted many an article in support of National Farmers Union (NFU) issues.

His mentor Ruth Veiner said, "It was a privilege to attend with Cory his first NFU convention. Cory was in the youth age category at that time, and with strong

encouragement, Cory [joined] the youth group and activities. He was, from that first morning of the convention, involved with the youth delegation and their activities. To watch Cory grow and advance in the National Farmers Union, a national organization encompassing all areas of food production in Canada, was truly a privilege. Cory moved very capably through the youth ranks and into the senior ranks, serving as board member, vice president and president of the National Farmers Union which he served well. From NFU to community, Cory had an innate ability to listen to and interact with people from all walks of life. He was a caring, understanding, intelligent and capable person, who became involved in community and

what was correct and equal. Being an activist became his life. A discussion with Cory was an enlightenment in every way and rewarding [for] the community in which Cory lived and worked. His community, and indeed Canada, will feel a huge void."

In 1999, as president of the NFU, Cory spoke at the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on the present state and future of agriculture in Canada.

That November, he was an official delegate at the WTO meeting in Seattle. The NFU had applied for and received non-governmental organization (NGO) status. He said in an article in the Signal that year, "Our purpose was to be in direct contact with our government delegates. Our job,"

Cory Ollikka was a promising youth leader in the National Farmers Union when I first encountered him. He lived up to that billing with panache, becoming the Youth President and then, a few years later, the NFU Vice President. While we were logging countless hours of meetings, demonstrations, lobbying and advocacy, Cory demonstrated an unwavering commitment to democratic process, social and economic justice and the protection of family farming. He was energetic, keen, confident and witty (even verging on cheeky occasionally). When he succeeded me to become the President of the National Farmers Union in 1998, at the tender age of 28, I was confident that he was ready for that challenge. And he certainly was.

The too-early departure of this gifted, one-of-a-kind fellow traveller is an unspeakably profound loss. I extend my deepest condolences to Cory's nearest and dearest and to his community. All of us who worked with, loved, laughed and sang with Cory Ollikka over his many years in the NFU share your grief and loss.

Nettie Wiebe, NFU President – 1995-98

(continued on page 20...)

There was a man from Smoky Lake, who...

Any tribute to Cory Ollikka should start with the words “There once was a man from Smoky Lake, who...”. Always quick off the mark with a limerick, or Dr. Seuss recitation, or a rendition of Barrett’s Privateers or the Last Saskatchewan Pirate, Cory could match wits and lyrics with the finest. I met Cory in the last half of the 1990s, through his involvement with the National Farmers Union. I served on the NFU Board while Cory was President, and then followed Cory as President when Cory decided not to run again in 2001. After 2001 Cory served as chair-person at subsequent NFU conventions over the years and we would talk about issues on the phone in between conventions. The stories that Cory would tell, however humorous, were always steeped in a basic respect for other people. Cory was dedicated to the fight for a just society that included the ability for farmers and rural communities to thrive.

The NFU has always been a family—a coming together of farm families from all across Canada—and now the NFU family has been called together to reflect on Cory’s passing but also his contributions to our Canadian society. Personally, I was the recipient of many lessons from Cory on the topic of how to correctly say the word “sauna”. I think it was supposed to be “saw—oon—na”, but... There were many other lessons that I did pay much more attention to, and I thank Cory for his commitment to a better Canada. A great ambassador for Smoky Lake, Alberta, and the NFU, Cory will be deeply missed.

Yours truly, Stewart Wells

said Mr. Ollikka, "was to liaise with government delegates and try to represent the people of Canada in a different sort of way, as interest groups or groups that work with citizen groups, to try to tell our delegates what the Canadian farmers, in our case, need from world trade. That's our job. It's no different than the job we do every day, when we go to Ottawa or provincial capitals to try to move government in directions they may not want to go." He met with groups from all ends of the political and economic spectrum.

After Cory finished high school, he went to work in the Arctic. Using his savings, he took his post-secondary education at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, studying political science and history. When he moved to the University of Alberta, he transferred majors to a Bachelor of Education degree. He graduated from the University of Alberta in 1998.

Cory did some substitute teaching and contract teaching, but ultimately came back to the family grain and cattle farm, and to politics.

Zia, his older child was born in 1993 and lives in Saskatchewan.

Cory married Darcy Hiar in Redwater in 2001. Together they had one son, Corbyn, who is 15, and

living at home on the farm. Darcy passed away in 2009, three years after a tragic car accident.

In 2001, Cory won a seat representing Division 5 on Smoky Lake County Council. Re-elected in 2005 his fellow councillors chose him as reeve. He served as chair of the Smoky Lake Agricultural Service Board, chair of the Joint Municipal Economic Development and Tourism Committee, Vice Chair of REACH Corporation (Community Futures) and member of the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-Ops Zone 3 Resolution Committee.

In the 2006 federal election, he ran as a Liberal candidate in the Weststock-St. Paul Riding. He lost to Conservative Brian Storseth. Being a Liberal candidate in this riding has never been a pathway to Ottawa.

Cory was very effective in improving the political debate,

asking the tough questions and gently guiding people to understand that their voice matters and that each Canadian has a voice in setting the direction of the governance of our country.

Cory ran again for Smoky Lake County Division 5 councillor in 2009. An interview in the Signal, when asked what he could bring to the table, he said, “I have 6 years’ worth of experience as a councillor and reeve for the County, as well as years of involvement in the farming community. I’ve worked extensively with the farming community right across Canada and internationally. Municipal government is fascinating, but there is a learning curve, and you never stop learning. I know how to



(continued on page 21...)



“Carry on”

Carry on was often the sign off of Cory’s texts or emails and this was how Cory helped people push forward. He would ask questions to make sure we had the tools we needed and if we didn’t he would help us gauge them. Cory had a way of feeling the pulse of any room, the community, the province and the country. What were people thinking, where were they and when to push and when not to push. Respecting where people were at and working at a pace that people could be comfortable with. Cory built an equipment co-op in our area with the farmers union and was so proud of that. Cory was an avid supporter of the cooperative structure and believed strongly that they had their place in the future of the rural economy. Cory represented rural Alberta and was a proud member of the Board of the Parkland Institute. Cory looked at every possibility as an opportunity and whole heartedly believed people could work together for solutions if they could sit down together and talk. He believed that the people presenting possible solutions could work with governments to assist in the solutions rather than governments providing all the solutions.

Mandy Melnyk

differentiate between the actionable items that come before us and issues where we can have influence on other bodies. I look forward to the challenge and haven’t yet lost my passion. The more that you do, the more you see what needs to be done.”

their views. At the end of the day, whatever decision is made, it becomes your decision as well. I have a good deal of passion for this work. I never grow tired of discussing the issues, and I have the time and ability to put to this work. I’ve been involved

in politics my whole adult life, in addition to farming. I also have a good deal of experience in many different domains, such as the oil patch, construction, operating heavy equipment and running a shovel on a construction site. I think that these things tend to make me a good candidate, and for two terms the residents in my division have agreed.” He was re-elected for a third term.

Cory Ollikka was reeve in 2009 when Cary Smigerowsky resigned as County CAO after 28 years on the job. Cory Ollikka applied for the position of CAO, and his fellow councillors hired him.

For the last 12 years, Cory’s partner has been Maureen Parker. She said that what Cory was about was uplifting and upholding the work of the County and the public good. “Cory’s true self was gentle and wise. He woke up every morning with a gentleness and loving kindness, that is his true nature. He had lots of other attributes on top of that. That tenderness was full of sensitivity. Cory was about loving kindness, public service, wise democracy.”

Cory Ollikka died on July 2, 2020 on the eve of his 50th birthday. ■



When asked how he expected to work with the others to get through the issues and deal with conflicts, he said he doesn’t focus on conflicts. “Everyone is expected to come to the meeting with their ideas and opinions. Conflict is the result of differences that haven’t been dealt with. As a democratically elected person, it’s your job to bring all these views together, and let them be heard. Then you build consensus and make the necessary decisions. There is no personal animosity. As Reeve, you serve as catalyst for all sides to voice

Cory Ollikka was an exceptional guy - once you met him you never forgot him and he was a friend for life. Cory first showed up as a youth at a National Farmers Union Convention and immediately entered the debate never shy to express his opinion. Before long he became involved in several leadership positions and was driven by a willingness to learn about Canada and its farmers from coast to coast, and of course to express his opinion.

Eventually he served as National President and represented farmers aggressively before Senate and House Committees in Ottawa, made an appearance before a US Congressional Committee and spoke up for primary producers across Canada. He was inspired by the knowledge he gained as a participant in the Canadian International Grains Institute Farm Leaders Program and combined that with the knowledge he gained from men and women in the farm movement to constantly push for better farm, economic and social policies. He carried those ideals with him in his work for Alberta municipalities and wasn’t shy about carrying that message to government policy makers to improve the lives of rural Albertans.

Canada has lost one of its activists for a better and stronger rural Canada in the passing of Cory. We will miss you my friend.

Wayne Easter M.P.



REMEMBERING PETER DOWLING

NFU Leader, Mentor and Friend

I worked with Peter extensively on the accreditation of the NFU in Ontario. For years, we would be in touch almost daily, sometimes several times a day. While I will remember Peter for our NFU work, it was the time we spent shooting the breeze about farming and farm yard machinery repairs that I have the fondest memories of.

- Don Mills, previous NFU Region 3 Coordinator & NFU Board member

I had the pleasure of conspiring (in the good sense of the term) with Peter on several occasions. I got to know him in the early days of the Food Security Policy Group, where he represented the NFU on this coalition made up mostly of international development organizations. I remember him commenting to the coalition members during a meeting, "We are all speaking about agriculture, but I seem to be the only farmer in the room." He helped keep things real. He had the courage to say what had to be said but always with tact and a twist of irony that made one smile, pause, and think.

- Eric Chaurrette, Inter Pares

As a farm organization with a long history, it is inevitable that sometimes we have to say goodbye to beloved leaders. Many of you have already heard that Peter Dowling passed away on Sunday, September 6. Peter was the Regional Coordinator for the NFU in Ontario for many years, as well as serving on the NFU Board of Directors and as a director in Local 316 in Kingston. He worked on campaigns that had wide-ranging impact from the local to international, such as Kingston's Food Down the Road, supply management, the Save Our Prison Farm movement, and opposing recombinant bovine growth hormone in Canada's dairy cattle.

Peter and Dianne were second generation dairy farmers on Howe Island, taking over the farm from Peter's parents John and Joyce, founding members of the NFU.

John and Joyce were important mentors when I joined the NFU. Peter and Dianne were just as instrumental in forming my appreciation for the values of the NFU.

-Jim Earl, Local 318 Leeds Grenville

Their children Tim (Tracey) and Emily (Aric) are now the third-generation farmers on the land. In recent years, there was much enthusiasm when Region 3 Conventions were held close enough for side trips to visit grandchildren, Rowan and Nora, and their parents Patrick and Katelyn in Kitchener.

Peter Dowling was not just a farmer; he wasn't just a subject in this farm [photography] project. Peter was a friend to so many. He was soft-spoken. He was passionate about farming. If you asked Peter what he was most proud of, he would say "my family."

Andrée Thorpe,
Associate member

Photo by:

Andrée Thorpe Photography



As in any grassroots organization which brings together farmers from across the country and pushes back against well-monied monoliths, things could sometimes be contentious.

Various situations arose while Peter and I were both on Regional Council between 2003 and 2013, when Peter's emails started to end with "in onion" - meaning we were once again dealing with layers of NFU smelly, slimy stuff. Like many other Region 3 NFU members, I did not grow up in an NFU family and was not steeped in how the NFU's governance model allows the NFU to be the forward-thinking, social justice-oriented farm organization it is. As he did so many others, Peter patiently taught me about the NFU and about how to work strategically, constructively, and with deep commitment. I think it is fair to say the NFU would not be the same today if not for Peter and his supportive family. Whenever I came back from NFU Board meetings Peter would wonder whether we discussed anything other than "grains and trains." I always wondered if Peter's cows milked themselves.

- Ann Slater, previous Region 3 Coordinator and NFU Board member

Finally, perhaps Peter's greatest legacy is the next generation of farmers he influenced and inspired.

I am extremely grateful for all the time I was privileged to spend with Peter, whether in his barn milking cows, eating and drinking coffee in his kitchen or at the many NFU meetings we sat in together. It's no secret to many people that I had a bit of a farmer crush on Peter and would always try and find a reason to talk to him, mostly with my endless questions about tractors and how to fix them.

- Josh Suppan, Local 316 President



Photo: 1997 NFU Executive

(back row) Peter Dowling, Cory Ollikka, Randall Affleck
 (middle row) Michelle Melnyk, Yvonne Sinkevich
 (front row) Nettie Wiebe, Chris Tait

Over local board meetings, personal interactions, and at public events I came to know Peter as a humble, thoughtful, and passionate person and always looked forward to the few minutes of conversation I might be able to steal from him. He always had a quiet wry observation for me, and in recent years as I transitioned into my current role, offered calm and wise advice in sometimes passionate and volatile situations. In my experience, Peter had a way of thoughtful speaking which could quiet a room and cause reflection from its occupants. When Peter spoke I always listened and so did those around me. I was by no means a close friend of Peter and perhaps for that reason I feel compelled to speak aloud for those people that Peter inspired with his wisdom, nature and passion without him realizing it. For me, Peter Dowling was an inspiration and a man of principle, one which I admired. There aren't enough people of Peter Dowling's calibre in the world and I'm deeply saddened at his passing.

- Stuart Oke, NFU Youth President

Dianne, Patrick, Katelyn, Emily, Aric, Tim, Tracey, Rowan and Nora
 - Thank you for sharing Peter with us.
 We send our heartfelt condolences to all of you.

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