



April Council Update

The 2-day April Council of Leaders meeting began with introductions and an engagement activity of identifying Challenges, Opportunities or a Victory in their commodity or county based on a letter they were given in a round table. Challenges were things like labour access, trade, developing markets, loss of rural infrastructure and member engagement. It was great to hear the opportunities and victories in things like positive partnerships, research, good production and new technology. The positives seems to outweigh the negatives which set a pace for a productive, engaging meeting.

Lynne Godlien, Interim CEO and Director of Marketing and Communications joined the meeting to review and re-introduce Perennia's services. Members were invited to check out the 8 minute online tour of the Innovation Centre: www.perennia.ca/tour. The following were part of the questions and discussion:

- The work in food safety is full cost recovery for Perennia and mostly involves processing.
- They are currently undergoing a pilot for CFIA registration.
- Perennia is working on a Kijiji-like marketplace that is expected to launch in a couple months.
- Perennia also has a goal to move into online learning

There was discussion on a specialist in organic and small scale to replace a previous Perennia specialist. It was reported that there will not be a specialist for organic only, however Perennia has a Small Farm Specialist that will be committed to the needs of this sector. Sarah Wood will fill the position of Small Farm Specialist.

Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association was given an opportunity to highlight challenges in their industry of hive importation and risk of a new pest. Since 2012, NSDA has importation permits available for the purpose of support-

ing wild blueberry pollination. Nova Scotia Beekeepers are concerned with infestation of small hive beetle noting that there are hives available in the province through the Beeline that are available for pollination.

The terms of reference for the Agriculture Land Use Policy Committee was approved. John Eikelenboom offered to put his name forward as the Council of Leaders representative on the committee, he will join Victor Oulton and Chris van den Heuvel from the NSFA Executive and representatives from government and other industry stakeholders to develop a provincial land strategy for agriculture land use in Nova Scotia.

Maxine MacLean provided communication highlights since the previous Council meeting including support of animal activist activities at the Atlantic Stockyards including a handling workshop and factsheets on how to deal with activists. The council had discussion on agriculture awareness and importance of events like Open Farm Day, Agriculture Literacy. These events and the activities such as Dairy Farmers ProAction as well as personal interactions with consumers on best practices, farm safety, bio security, etc. all are part of building the positive outlook of agriculture.

Greg Cox, CEO with Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board joined the meeting and provided a few numbers and points about the crown agency and provided an opportunity to ask questions and have discussion with Council members. It was noted that agreements of sale will gradually disappear. Farm Loan Board will be continuing collateral mortgages and they will require the PIDs to be migrated. There will be extra funding from NSFLB to help cover these costs. There was discussion on rates

(Continued on page 3)



viewpoint

Member Engagement – ‘As it was heard’

There’s an adage that goes something like this...“If you want to know where you’re going, you have to know where you’re at... and if you want to know where you’re at, you have to know where you’ve been...”. I’ve always liked this because I feel it sums up agriculture perfectly. No matter what we as farmers do or plan to do, we always first make comparisons to what is or isn’t currently working or what has worked in the past. It is in that same vein that we undertook a member engagement project and at the April Council of Leaders meeting, we had an opportunity to be presented with what was heard during that winter consultations process facilitated by Simeon Roberts. In the October 2016 News and Views the introduction of the member engagement project was made and since then there have been 40 touch-points with members and stakeholders either in person as one on one, commodity group meetings, focus groups, various annual meetings as well as emails and phone calls. From this feedback, the report has been drafted and initial findings presented and discussed by the Council of Leaders and Executive Committee.

As the President of the Federation, I hear about the various issues and challenges within our industry across a variety of sectors and regions which makes setting policy direction very important to ensure we meet the needs of our industry as a whole. What we sometimes neglect to do is talk about NSFA success stories, what suggestions could improve the organization, and why and how we do what we do. The structure of the Federation activities is designed currently through the Federations Act and By-laws complimented by the governance policies and operational structure of the Executive Committee and Council of Leaders. Although the key players at the Executive and Council of Leaders table make up a broad representation

of our membership, it still only accounts for a very small measure of our 2400 farm families that we represent. Going forward, it will need to be the strength of our membership and our united voice that will keep us, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, as a leader in driving policy change, advocating for a competitive and sustainable future for the farming community. The member engagement process is one that I personally see as a vital next step to ensure our longevity and ensuring that we are on the path and direction as desired by our membership.

At the recent Council of Leaders meeting and through the collection of feedback during the member engagement consultations, it became evident that there needs to be a re-connection to our grassroots membership. A quick snapshot of what we heard included re-vitalizing County Federations, having Executive members attend local events and local meetings, providing a refreshed website, working on public awareness and revisiting the Federation’s mission and vision. There was also great discussion on the Council of Leaders and how to make it the most effective including some options for re-structuring. There was a general feeling that the Council members wanted to encourage more opportunity to speak on issues at hand and share county and commodity concerns. One other major discussion during the council’s evening focus group session was improving the process to best communicate with our membership. It was good to see a variety of ideas come forward on improvements to the website, visual communication tools, creating apps and social media presence, welcome wagon to new members and possibility of a member relations staff resource.

There may be more questions still at this point; but I feel the first step in the *(Continued on page 3)*

April Council Update (cont'd)

which range from 2.9% up to 5.35% depending on the loan term. Most recent loans now include a commitment letter which outlines all the terms and conditions and it requires a signature. Farm Loan Board is also moving towards a risk adjustment pricing that they expect to roll out during this fiscal year. It was noted that Farm Loan Board is currently in discussion on microloan financing options that are simplified, with no security required with a personal guarantee. There was also discussion on the threshold limits on lending with Farm Loan Board and the delayed process of Order in Council.

During the afternoon, Council heard updates from the following committees:

Labour and Skills Training Committee - The meeting was held the end of March and included a look at the NSFA Labour Policy, Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program challenges, Workers Compensation for family members, Workplace Education courses, Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive and Farm Apprenticeship.

EFP Advisory Committee – The 2017 Farm Stewardship Award will open for nominations in mid-April. The committee held discussion on participation number; noting that over 1900 farms have gone through the program, estimating that there are 1600 active farms and 400 plans that will need renewed or deemed inactive. It was noted that there is also a review of the BMP's taking place.

Direct to Market / Small Scale Working Group – This group met on March 28th and had discussion on Safe Food for Canadians Act and impact on direct to market group. There was an action from the meeting to write a letter expressing concern of these impacts to CFIA as part of the consultation process. This letter was also shared with Nova Scotia MPs and County Federation Presidents. During the meeting there were also presentations from financial lenders; Scotiabank, FCC and Farm Loan Board on small loan financing options with an action to develop case studies of the needs of small scale, direct to market farmers.

Transportation Committee – The transportation committee met in mid-March with a discussion on the resolutions that have been assigned to the committee. There was an action to send a letter to the Department of Trans-

portation and Infrastructure Renewal suggesting a future meeting with a presentation to clarify the farm use and need for on-road access of UTV's for farmers. With regard to the resolution regarding visibility of roadways, it was reported that contact has been made with Highway Maintenance on scheduling and obstacles. There was also information on farm safety training, tractor courses and endorsement testing provided.

Simeon Roberts provided a presentation on 'What was Heard' through the member engagement consultations. The report will be finalized and provided to Council of Leaders members.

Council will meet again in September.

As it was heard (cont'd)

process has given us a view in to the thoughts of our membership. Our next step is to look at the document and categorize it into suggestions that can be easily undertaken, things perhaps that are already being done, but not communicated in the way that everyone sees it or captures the information. There will be suggestions that are not possible with the resources we have today and are perhaps outside of the realm of the Federation. The things for our focus will be those things we can start doing right now. I speak on behalf of the Executive and Council members that the energy in the focus sessions at the Council of Leaders meeting was positive; I felt a sense of desire to work together and ensure we can bring about positive change to strengthen our organization.

I've heard an alternative ending to the quote that I started with, "...you have to know where you've been, and if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong!". While I feel that overall the Federation and its staff have been doing a great job representing the industry I recognize that there is always room for growth and change. Going forward, as the President of the Federation, it will be my pleasure to work together with you and ensure this report and the subsequent findings remain an active part of our commitment to the membership and ensure that the Federation and our industry continue to go and grow in the right direction. Many thanks and wishing everyone a successful spring and harvest season.

Annual EFP Stewardship Award: Open for Applications

The Environmental Farm Plan Team is once again looking for nominations and applications for our annual Stewardship Award. This award has been designed to recognize the outstanding environmental stewardship efforts of NS farms and to elevate public awareness of sustainable farming practices throughout NS. Farmers are providing Nova Scotia with quality food, diverse rural landscapes, wildlife habitat and productive, healthy soils for the generations to come – and we want to show our appreciation!

What's the Prize? The winner receives a \$2000 cash award and a painting of your farm by a local artist. **The deadline for applications is July 7th, 2017.**

Win
\$2000



2016 EFP Stewardship Award Winner: Hillsdale Fur Farm owned by Lindon and Charlene Mullen. Painted by Susan Sweet. The Mullens have strived to make many environmental improvements on their farm. The farm implemented innovative runoff and waste water management technologies and made upgrades to manure management.

So, take a look at what you've done on your farm, how has it benefited the environment, your farm and your neighbours? Have you upgraded your fuel storage, pesticide storage, or the stream crossings on your farm? Do you use cover crops, crop rotation or have started using no-till? These are just some examples of how your farm may have made positive contributions. If you still have areas that need improving, that's alright. Identifying future stewardship goals is part of the application process.

The application process is not complicated. As in past years, farms can apply themselves or be nominated by an individual or group. Need some

help with the application? EFP staff would love to help! Please visit our website: nsfa-fane.ca/efp for more information and to get an application form or talk to an EFP coordinator at (902) 893-2293.



Atlantic Immigration Pilot

Employers in Nova Scotia are now able to use the Atlantic Immigration Pilot to hire foreign workers.

As labour shortages continue, farm businesses, along with other employers, in Nova Scotia will have the opportunity to fill the gap with the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. The program is intended to bring skilled workers to Atlantic Canada to help fill the labour demand.

Farmers looking to fill persistent labour gaps, like those experienced in many agriculture commodities, must be approved for eligibility by being designated and then endorsed by the Province. To become designated, a business must complete the Employer Designation Form demonstrating good operating standing, need for labour and commit to working with a service provider organization on settlement and retention.

Concerns often arise regarding support for new families relocating to any region, and even more so for those moving to rural regions. The Atlantic Immigration Pilot program aims to address this concern. As part of the Endorsement Application process, a Settlement Needs Assessment will be conducted and will result in a Set-

tlement Plan. It is also during the Endorsement Application process that a farmer must demonstrate the efforts to hire locally, recruitment efforts and position description.

The program offers some key benefits such as expedited processing at the Federal level, bypassing the Labour Market Impact Assessment if efforts to hire locally are unsuccessful, and access to permanent intermediate and high-skilled workers.

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot program could be a step to addressing the non-seasonal labour shortage on farms in Nova Scotia. Only time will tell. For more information for Nova Scotia employers on the Atlantic Immigration Pilot can be found at novascotiainmigration.com/help-for-employers/atlantic-immigration-pilot/. Information for potential program participants can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/atlantic/

Have you accessed the Atlantic Immigration Pilot and would like to share your experience? Contact the Federation office - we would love to hear from you!

Workplace Ed



Shown in this photo are the successful participants of the NSFA's most recent Workplace Education course held in Bible Hill, 'Business Skills for Growth and Profitability'.

Participants completed the 40 hour course focusing on enhancing skills to develop and implement strategies to grow their farm business, including marketing, pricing for profit, human resources and succession planning. Led by instructor, Lorna MacIsaac, shown in the photo on the far right, these participants join the other nearly 600 participants taking part in the Federation's course delivery since 2012. Congratulations to participants, in the photo from left to right are Rick Parker, West River Greenhouses; Stephanie Lake, Selma Green Farm; Kelsey Morehouse, Simply Elegant Farm; Melanie MacFarlane, Sweet Spot Farm and Jacqui Cole, Wallace Ridge Farm.

Workplace Education courses are possible through the funding support of the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the coordination of the NSFA. Please contact NSFA office if there is courses of interest to you in your area.

The Consulting Continues

NSFA expresses concerns over regulatory changes

At the National level, there are many changes that are coming down the line that will have an impact on farm businesses and even more so the farm businesses that move product out of province.

Safe Food for Canadians Act Proposed Regulations

Over the last couple of News and Views Issues, the consultation that was underway for the proposed Regulations for the Safe Food for Canadians Act was highlighted. As a refresher, the proposed regulations for the Safe Food for Canadians Act will consolidate 13 CFIA commodity regulations into one set of regulations.

During the regulatory updates, CFIA took the opportunity to propose regulations for fresh produce crossing provincial borders. While many fruit and vegetable farmers sell their produce either in the province where it was grown, therefore not subject to CFIA regulations, or through a retail chain that already requires standards that meet or exceed the proposed regulations, it will be the farms that sell direct to market that will be hardest hit. We've heard from members in Cumberland County that access to their primary market will be costly with the implementation of a Preventive Control Plan required by the CFIA regulations.

In response to the proposed regulations, the recently established Direct to Market Small Scale Working Group identified key concerns for inclusion in a letter to CFIA expressing concern around the proposed regulations. A larger concern for the working group is that the proposed regulations result in a "new normal" for food safety and will in-turn provoke provinces to implement food safety regulations in line with the regulations proposed by CFIA. In the letter, NSFA recommended that the SFCA Regulations would be to exempt all direct-to-market interprovincial sales from the federal regulations and be regulated as per the legislation in the sold-in province.

CFIA Cost Recovery Initiative

CFIA just finished Phase One of their Cost Recovery Initiative. For the most part, these fees are commodity/farm specific. During this Phase, CFIA was looking for input on:

- the proposed list of services that allows fees to be charged consistently for similar CFIA services
- proposed service standards for CFIA services
- the appropriate level of cost sharing between regulated parties and taxpayers
- impacts of potential fee increases on businesses

The second phase, which is expected to take place late fall 2017, will be a consultation on the specific fees. The fees in the next round will be both the updated fees from the review process and the additional fees that will be implemented as a result of the Safe Food for Canadians Act.

The proposed changes and the rationale driving the changes are concerning. CFIA has identified the following as the reasons to update the fees:

- Inconsistent and based on different criteria: weight, number of products and inspection time results in some regulated parties being charged more than others for similar services (eg: inspection for Commodity A costs more than an inspection for Commodity B even though the same amount of resources and time were consumed);
- Formal service standards do not exist for many CFIA services. An example of this would be the turn-around time for lab testing;
- Most fees have not changed in twenty years.

Upon review and with input from commodities, NSFA has identified the following concerns:

- The per cent benefit to regulated parties appears to be skewed away from tax payers. For example:
 - The Safe Food for Canadians Act (SFCA) is "to protect Canadian families from potentially unsafe food"; and
 - The fees associated with the SFCA compliance (Licencing, Certificates, and Preventive Con-

Consultations continued

trols) are what will be implemented as a result of this initiative; and,

- The consultation documents state that of the compliance verification and surveillance activities, regulated parties benefit at 75%;
- Therefore, stating that only 25% of the benefit goes to the consumer on compliance and surveillance is inaccurate.
- The fees haven't been updated since 1997. Since then, inflation has gone up 40%. To increase pricing of service by 40% would be a shock to many farms' and processors' bottom line. Additionally, the rate will vary by farm and commodity.
- If future fees are to be increased, increases should be made incrementally and at a rate that is manageable for a regulated party to absorb.

NSFA made the following recommendations in a letter to CFIA:

- Review the percent benefit to regulated parties.

- On rates charged for services that require a site visit, there should be a limit on how much is billed for travel time.
- For issues of technical review, if it is being done for CFIA's interest and not the request of the inspected party, there should be no charge for the "service".
- Charge extra for expedited service delivery. Conversely, if standard service time is not being met, then there should be an automatic reduction in the base rate that is being charged.

More consultations are expected to take place over the coming months. Health Canada will be consulting on front of package labelling and the Cost Recovery Initiative will undergo phase two. Keep watching the News and Views for information on these and other consultations.

Activists go beyond the livestock sales

In recent months, activist organizations have been targeting livestock facilities. Initially, the group protested at larger, regular venues like the Atlantic Stockyard outside of Truro. During their time protesting at Atlantic Stockyard, the group captured footage, photos and launched media releases in protest of perceived livestock abuse.

Until recently, only public venues, such as sales, were targeted. Mid-April, the activist group posted photos from a trip they've made over Easter weekend. The post included a visit to a dairy farm in the Annapolis Valley region. According to the social media post, the group indicated to the farmer that they were from out of town and curious. Unbeknownst to the farmer, the group of girls were activists from the Nova Scotia Farm Animal Save group.

What to do when activist show up on your farm...

Activism isn't new to agriculture, but it seems as though each province or region gets targeted for different reasons. A few years ago, PEI farmers were targeted for using crop inputs, and before that a video of a BC dairy farm surfaced following a public tour. In Nova Scotia, this group seems to be targeting the cattle industry – both beef and dairy. If someone or a group of activists shows

up unexpectedly on your farm:

- Do not engage them;
- Do not confront them;
- Ask them to leave;
- Call police;
- Do not use force to remove them – leave that to the police.

It is upsetting when the people we feed attack our industry. Keep in mind that the number of these activists is few and dealing with them is much different from educating the general public. Generally, people are willing to learn and ask questions. According to Farm and Food Care Canada, Farmers rank in the top three of the most trusted sources when it comes to animal welfare and the environment. This goes to show how important it is that we reach out to the public whenever possible to share our story and talk about the science behind what we do on our farm.

Moving forward on the issue, NSFA continues to work with our Affiliated Commodity Groups and other stakeholders to ensure that progress is being made to support the industry.

Upcoming Events

May 29, Debert

WBPANS Twilight Meetings

May 30, East River Saint Mary's

WBPANS Twilight Meetings

June 1, Parrsboro

WBPANS Twilight Meetings

July 15, TBD

WBPANS Field Day

November 17 & 18, Truro

WBPANS Annual Meeting

November 1 & December 1, Truro

NSFA Annual Meeting

Election Possibly Coming?

A provincial election will take place in the relatively near future. To stay ahead of the game, NSFA is preparing materials for you, our members, to connect with candidates in your riding.

Depending on when the election is called, a News and Views may not be issued timely enough to inform our members of happenings on the election trails. We will be relying on our website, enews and facebook to get the message out and provide update on activities.

Open Farm Day

Are you interested in being a Host Farm for Open Farm Day 2017?

Forms can be found
on the NSFA Website
at
nsfa-fane.ca/openfarmday

Questions?
Contact Maxine MacLean
mmaclean@nsfa-fane.ca

News & Views

NSFA News & Views is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the United, Strong & Caring Farm Organization representing the best interest of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Industry.

News & Views is provided free of charge to its members. We value comments and concerns from our members, please direct them to Executive members or the Office Staff.

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