

MANITOBA Farmers' Voice

WINTER 2018 EDITION

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MEMBER PROFILE

Luc Remillard

Long-time sunflower grower
loyal to the crop



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Luc Remillard

Long-time sunflower grower loyal to the crop

BY RON FRIESEN

LAST YEAR, 2017, was a good year for sunflowers in Manitoba and Luc Remillard is celebrating one of his best crops ever.

Good soil moisture reserves from the fall of 2016, along with a warm dry growing season with just enough timely rains, produced a sunflower crop with high yields and excellent quality.

Remillard averaged 2,600 to 2,800 pounds per acre, one of the five best crops he's ever had in 27 years as a sunflower grower. Bushel weights are heavy and the quality is top-notch. He experienced virtually no disease pressure — no sclerotinia, head rot or stalk rot. He also had no downers (stalks fallen down).

Altogether, it's enough to make Remillard, who farms at St. Joseph in the heart of Manitoba's sunflower country, smile.

"You never get tired of driving by a sunflower field in full bloom," he says.

Across the province, the story is much the same. Heat-loving sunflowers are water scavengers and their long roots were able to tap into enough subsoil moisture to withstand dry conditions last summer.

Although overall results are a little patchy, Remillard says growers report generally good yields. One of his neighbours harvested nearly 2,800 pounds of confection seed per acre.

Now if only the industry were in as good shape as the 2017 crop.

Sunflowers are one of the oldest crops in Manitoba. With unique growing conditions in its southern regions, the province produces over 90 per cent of Canada's total sunflower crop. >>

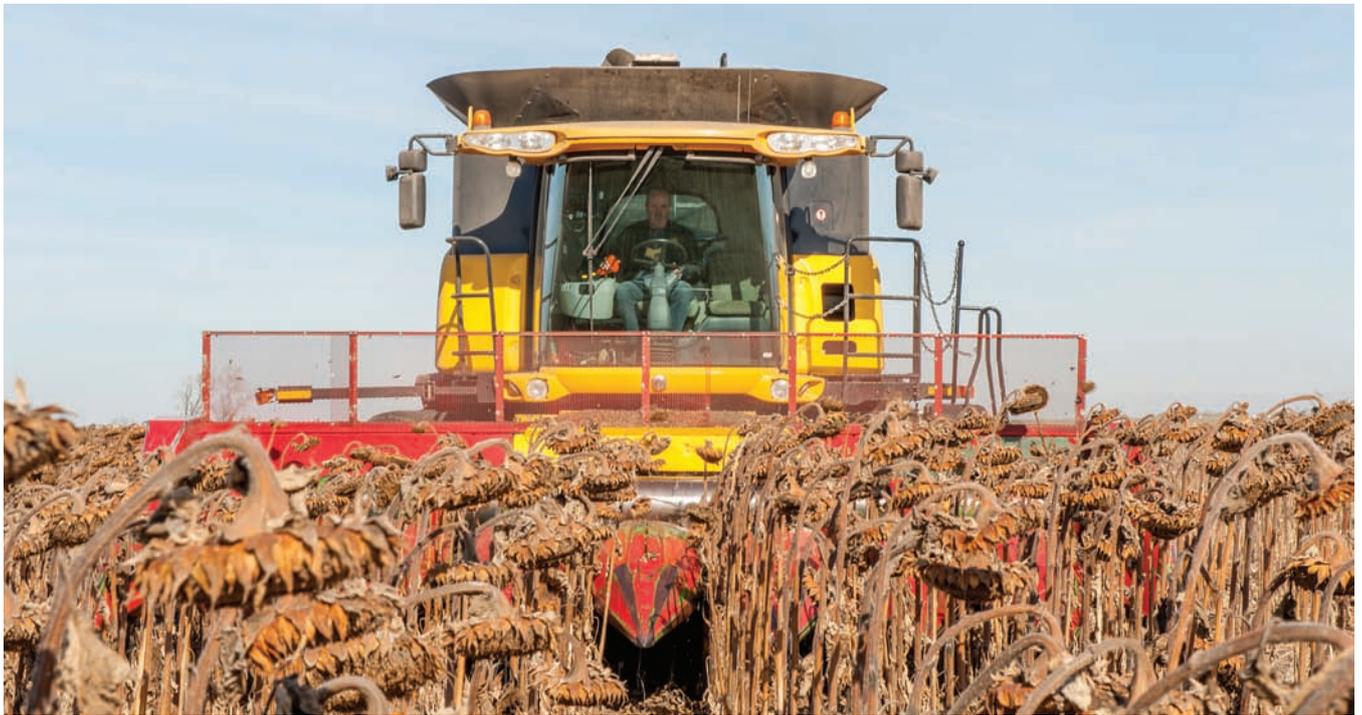




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According to provincial statistics, Manitoba producers planted 150,000 to 200,000 acres of sunflowers a year. A typical harvest averaged 250 million pounds of sunflower seed, including both oil and confectionary-type sunflowers.

But despite their track record, sunflowers today are little more than a niche crop in Manitoba. Acreage is only a shadow of its former self. This year, growers planted a mere 61,629 acres of sunflowers, according to the National Sunflower Association of Canada.

Why the big drop? The causes are many and various but part of the reason is weather.

In 2011, extreme wet conditions caused sunflowers to plummet to 35,000 acres. Plantings were especially hurt in the southwest region, where overland flooding was the worst. Wet conditions again in 2012 and 2013 kept sunflower acreage low.

Sunflowers don't like wet feet and experience problems if waterlogged. Diseases such as sclerotinia and head rot can proliferate in wet soil. Remillard says that's what happened to confection sunflowers, which began experiencing a "series of train wrecks" with poor yields

and low quality from disease.

Manitoba sunflower plantings recovered to 94,000 acres in 2015, only to fall in 2016 and again in 2017.

Another reason for sunflowers' decline is the recent surge in a competing crop: soybeans. Manitoba producers continued their rapid expansion of soybean acres by planting 2.3 million acres in 2017, up 40 per cent from 2016.

"They can't double acreage without taking it from somewhere. So that's contributing to (the drop in sunflower acres)," says Darcelle Graham, executive director of the National Sunflower Association of Canada.

Graham lists another problem: a lack of sunflower breeding programs. Because sunflowers are a small crop compared to others, they tend to get limited attention in the laboratory.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada used to have a breeding program for sunflowers but not any more. There is no breeding activity in the private sector, either. The only breeding research is through NSAC, which funds a variety development project through a producer check-off.

Some seed companies sell hybrid vari-

eties but most of them are developed in North Dakota, which last year planted 43 per cent of the sunflowers in the U.S. Otherwise, the varieties grown in Manitoba are dated. Graham says one confection hybrid, which holds 89 per cent of market share, is over 25 years old. Compare that to corn, soybeans and canola, which see new hybrids released every year.

The lack of genetic improvement is a significant reason why sunflowers in Manitoba are spinning their wheels, says Graham.

"Our growers aren't seeing new improvements to make it easier to grow sunflowers," she says. "We're starting to see them come but it's a challenge when you don't have a focused breeding program in Canada."

But perhaps the biggest reason why sunflowers are a minor crop in Manitoba is a lack of oil crush capacity here.

That wasn't always the case. In fact, Manitoba used to be a major centre for sunflower oil, thanks to the Co-operative Vegetable Oils Ltd. plant in Altona. Begun in 1943 under the direction of J. J. Siemens, a teacher, farmer and leader of the Rhineland Agricultural Society,

CVO was the first oilseed crushing plant in Canada and the first to process sunflowers commercially.

In 1949 it developed Safflo as its first consumer product.

CVO continued after merging with Manitoba Pool and Saskatchewan Pool in 1975 under the new name CSP Foods. But the plant ceased crushing sunflowers in the 1980s as canola gradually became the oilseed of choice. In 1992, CSP was sold to CanAmera Foods and later to its present owner Bunge Canada.

Today, sunflower seed grown for oil in Manitoba is shipped to North Dakota for crushing. Often, oil from sunflowers grown in Manitoba and crushed in the U.S. ends up back on Canadian grocery store shelves just because it can't be processed here.

The lack of a local sunflower crusher is one reason for a shift by producers away from oilseed to confection, says Graham. Manitoba Trade and Investment estimates 70 per cent of Canadian sunflowers are confection-type, marketed mainly as roasted snack food or de-hulled seeds for the baking industry.

What would it take for a company to locate a sunflower crushing plant in Manitoba? More consistent acres, says Remillard, whose father and grandfather used to deliver sunflower seed to CVO in Altona back in the day. To accomplish that, Manitoba needs more growers committed to growing sunflowers long-term, he adds.

"We need a consistent base of growers. Some years guys are in and some years they're out. That, in my opinion, is why companies have shied away from a crushing facility."

The lack of acres is also a reason why local growers have trouble accessing crop protection products registered for use on sunflowers. Graham says it's not worthwhile for a chemical company to register products for sunflowers in Canada when the acreage is so small.

As a result, NSAC spends a lot of time on behalf of growers asking the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency for minor use permits for products that are registered in the U.S. but not here.

Closer to home, sunflower growers experience other bureaucratic problems with local authorities. Blackbirds are a major pest which can cause substantial yield losses. Remillard says one grower in western Manitoba reported losing nearly half his sunflower crop to blackbirds this year.

Unfortunately, crop insurance does not cover blackbird damage to sunflower crops in Manitoba. Remillard says growers find it galling that grain farmers can get compensation when Canada geese eat wheat in the swath

"We need a consistent base of growers. Some years guys are in and some years they're out. That, in my opinion, is why companies have shied away from a crushing facility."

when they cannot get coverage for blackbird predation in sunflowers.

The reason, according to the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, is that the Wildlife Damage Compensation Regulation under the Wildlife Act spells out species of birds and game for which compensation is available and blackbirds are not on that list.

MASC officials say they recognize sunflower producers have no way to mitigate losses from blackbirds. But compensating producers for those losses would require changing the law. In the meantime, the best MASC can do is advise producers to plant sunflowers away from sloughs, shelterbelts and other places of habitat for blackbirds.

With all these discouragements — no public breeding programs, no local crushing plant, limited access to pesticides, no crop insurance for bird dam-

age — why would anyone grow sunflowers in Manitoba?

Remillard, an NSAC director, has a ready answer: they're a good crop to grow. They fit well into the rotation, they're a cash crop, they're not that hard to raise and they perform well in dry conditions as long as subsoil moisture is adequate.

"I kind of grew up with them," he says. "They've done well. We've had some train wrecks but we've sure hit the home run with them just as much as anything else we're in."

There are signs that things may be improving. Remillard, who operates a pedigreed seed farm for wheat, barley and oats, says the sunflower breeding program funded by NSAC is close to developing a hybrid suitable for Manitoba conditions.

Graham says NSAC is also studying ways to attract a sunflower crusher to Manitoba. The association is currently working with two small private crushers to possibly expand crush capacity.

Agronomically, sunflowers are no longer the late-season crop they used to be. Traditionally, sunflowers needed a killing frost before they could be harvested. Sometimes combines could be seen plowing through the snow in December to get the crop off.

Today, sunflowers are desiccated to dry them down before harvesting. The need to wait until late in the year is largely a thing of the past.

Graham says NSAC would like to spend more time on market development for sunflower products. Currently, 85 per cent of money raised from the producer check-off goes toward research. But if acres increase, so will check-off funding. That could help NSAC devote more attention to market research.

"The opportunity is there to sell sunflowers. We just need to be able to consistently grow them," Graham says.

But there's no sign that sunflowers are going away. They're an integral crop in parts of Manitoba. They are ingrained in local culture. Just ask Altona, which still hosts the Manitoba Sunflower Festival every year. *FV*



Please read this — for you, your family and your workers

BY DAN MAZIER, KAP PRESIDENT

TRAGICALLY, FARMING CONTINUES to be one of the most dangerous occupations in Canada — with 14 farmers losing their lives last year in tractor accidents alone.

Every farmer I know works hard to make their operation a success. Clean fields, good yields, healthy animals and a healthy bottom line — this is how we currently measure a farm's success. But we need to add the health and safety of our families, our workers, and ourselves to that calculation.

I ask you to think about safety each and every day. Many of us start each morning with a meeting over coffee to talk about the jobs that need to get done that day. Or we run over the jobs in our minds.

I ask that you take one minute to talk or think about the riskiest task you have to do, and how you're going to do it safely.

If you need to check bins, think about fall protection, about maintaining three points of contact when you're climbing the ladder — and about how you will NOT get into the grain.

If you need to work alone checking cattle, talk about when you're going to check in at home — and what someone should do if you don't.

For me, safety is personal, since I know of two farmers with family that were killed in farm accidents. And I myself, along with a number of my neighbours, have had 'close calls' — and that's code talk for "just about ended up in the hospital."

As an industry, we have seen so many near misses and full-on tragedies over the years, it's unbelievable we have such a hard time changing our ways. But there is the old saying: there's no time like the present. I hope that you will



take this message to heart and take action now. Put safety first.

KAP has helped create the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, an independent, non-government safety service for farmers.

The staff from the program will come out to your farm and do a safety inspection with you — and for you. It's entirely confidential, and will not be shared with anyone. The information is for you alone, so that you can see what the hazards are on your farm before you, a family member or an employee is injured.

In addition, the program can help you prepare in the event of a government inspection. One of the program's consultants is a former safety inspector, so she knows exactly the kind of things a government inspector will be looking for.

As well, the Farm Safety Program is

offering infrared inspections, which test for hot spots in farm buildings that have electrical systems. Originally offered to the hog sector to prevent barn fires, the inspections have expanded by popular demand to include all farm buildings.

The program also offers first-aid courses, in conjunction with St. John's Ambulance, tailored to specific agriculture sectors — and it will take them anywhere in Manitoba. All you have to do is ask.

I urge you to pick up the phone and call the program director, Keith Castonguay, at 204-293-9646, to arrange for these and other services — including safety training for you and your employees, and noise and gas level checks.

The most important thing your farm needs to succeed is you. So please, take every step necessary to make sure you get home safely at the end of every day. **FV**



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Long-time agriculture leader retires

BY JILL WINZOSKI

In June of this year, the Manitoba Corn Growers Association's general manager, Theresa Bergsma, retired after three decades of passion and dedication.

"I think she's just passionate in life," said MCGA president Myron Krahn, who's known and worked with Bergsma for well over a decade. "She just lives that way."

"If she gets focused on something, she just pours her heart and soul into it. You pick up on that when she talks about her family, the ag industry, policy or whatever it is," Krahn explained. If she's on your side, she'll go to bat for you and fight for you til the bitter end."

Krahn commended Bergsma for all she's achieved for the industry, and said he enjoyed working with her immensely.

"It was just fantastic," he said. "Anytime the board would start to lose focus a little bit she'd bring us back in, because she was so sharp and passionate about the industry. She'd remind us what we were there for: the betterment of corn growers and to advance research along the way."

Bergsma said she was often asked how she could stay in the same job for so long, but for her, boredom didn't have a chance to set in.

"I tell them that I didn't have to change jobs, because the job changed so much," said Bergsma. "There was always something new in agriculture, especially when you're working in the policy world. It's been super evolving and super changing."

Theresa and her husband Talbot — who recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary — relocated from southern Ontario to Carman in 1984. Shortly after, she started part-time with the MCGA as secretary-treasurer, and it wasn't long before that grew into the full-time managerial role.

"Often, for some stretches, it was even more



Theresa Bergsma, the former general manager of Manitoba Corn Growers Association, retired after 30 years of advocating for agriculture. At the same time, she retired as a board member of KAP. Pictured with KAP president Dan Mazier.

than full-time," she recalled.

During her career, Bergsma also served on a number of committees to assist farmers, and was appointed by the province to work on one of the flood appeal boards. She's also served on KAP's board of directors for a number of years, which she says is one of her proudest achievements.

"I think often times people don't realize how much they do," she said. "Every producer group works very hard for their own producers, but KAP has to do that overall balancing act to try to achieve what's best for everybody, and I think they do an awesome job of that. It was great to be a part of that."

Bergsma has witnessed many changes to the farming world over the past three decades, but it's the improvements made to corn hybrids she's found most interesting.

"That's taken some huge leaps and bounds," she said. "It's been pretty wonderful to see the improvements."

Another change Bergsma noted are the way crop genetics now allow

farms to run so much more efficiently.

“The size of farms has grown a ton, and the variety of crops has really started to increase in Manitoba,” she explained. “There are just so many other crops available for our growers here and that I think is just amazing in itself. We have a very unique situation here.”

Bergsma is most proud of her achievements in shaping policy — especially in the realm of crop insurance.

“I think the work we did in getting crop insurance improved for corn growers in Manitoba was big and it certainly was a lot of work to get things that far.”

She’s also happy about the trade actions that she and her colleagues completed along the way, “which went a long way to benefit corn producers in the province.”

The transition period between Bergsma’s retirement announcement and establishing her replacement, Pam de Rocquigny, took about a year. During that time MCGA and the Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association had hired a joint researcher, so it seemed natural to take the next step and also hire a general manager jointly because both organizations needed to fill this position.

Bergsma leaves her post confident the association is in good hands. For 16 years, de Rocquigny worked for Manitoba Agriculture — most recently as a provincial crop cereal specialist. She’s also worked with a variety of commodity organizations in the province to help advance research development. In addition, de Rocquigny worked in an advisory role with the board of directors for both the MCGA and MWBGA.

“They’ve got a very good replacement for me,” said Bergsma. “So I’m sure the industry will continue to move forward, and I’m excited to watch what the groups do when they’re working together. To me, that’s a good step.”

Bergsma said de Rocquigny didn’t require much in the way of training because of her extensive background in the industry, and especially in research.

“Because of her research background



“They’ve got a very good replacement for me. So I’m sure the industry will continue to move forward...”

and agronomy knowledge, she’ll be much better than I ever was — especially on those things,” said Bergsma. “It’s exciting because things are going to move with the abilities they have around that table now. It’s great.”

KAP general manager James Battershill has worked with Bergsma since he started with KAP in 2008, and although he acknowledges the fact that she’s formally retired, he isn’t fully prepared to surrender her valuable insight and advice.

“I always tell folks that either retire or move on that we’ll never really let them go,” said Battershill. “She’s always been such a giving person and always willing to help out and support anyone who’s in the ag sector — because she’s clearly so passionate about agriculture.

“So I fully plan on abusing that privilege as much as possible,” he laughed.

Battershill recalls how Bergsma provided him with “exceptional support” when he took over as general manager from policy analyst, and that she was the first person he could call for help with administrative oversight.

“She really was a critical resource for me to bounce ideas off of, and to talk about agricultural organizations and management in general — as opposed to just the topics of the day that we were dealing with,” he said. “During my transition, she taught me how to engage and work with the board, but at the same time how to stay connected to what the grassroots membership wanted.”

Bergsma said it isn’t easy letting go of the job, admitting she would have enjoyed continuing on with some role in policy to help ensure changes don’t slip through under the radar.

“I think we have great people at the helm who will keep their eyes on everything,” said Bergsma. “But as far as crop insurance and things like that go, producer groups have to keep their eye on the ball and make sure they’re on the front end of discussion rather than the back.”

Bergsma said she believes farm groups keeping engaged with policy is now more important than ever.

“Little changes can make a huge difference at the farm gate level. Governments continue to make decisions without consultations the way they should — and often politicians and bureaucrats just aren’t aware of how much these decisions can affect folks. Trying to fix it after the fact is always harder than being at the table along the way. So I do think that’s an area I’m always worried about.”

But having taken a seat on the board of Carman’s Community Health Centre, filling in as a substitute teacher at a local school, and seeing a 15th grandchild recently added to her brood, Bergsma’s not worried about getting bored.

“They know enough to keep me busy and keep me out of trouble,” she laughed. “You don’t have to be bored at any stage of your life because there’s always something to do.” *FV*

Young farmers determined to persevere, despite challenges



Simon Ellis is beginning the process of taking the reins from his parents. He and his wife Amanda will buy the farm, but must do it in a way that allows his parents a reasonable retirement income.

BY JACQUIE NICHOLSON

The day Simon Ellis realized he belonged on the family farm, he was 9,000 miles away from it, across the Pacific Ocean.

Ellis had headed for university straight out of high school but quickly realized it wasn't the path for him. He worked for a couple of years clearing snow and welding, then returned to his hometown of Wawanesa. It was there he got wind that an Australian farmer who had previously worked in the area was hoping to recruit someone to help on his farm back home.

Ellis volunteered, and soon found himself harvesting wheat and lupins in Sea Lake, Victoria, a small town about 350 km northwest of Melbourne.

“That’s where I learned that farming was what I really wanted to do,” Ellis says. “I realized that wherever you are in the world, we are all connected in this industry, and doing important and rewarding work.”

With a new sense of purpose, Ellis returned to school, this time in the agri-business program at Assiniboine Community College. After graduating in 2013, he went to work for the family business: a 1,500-acre farm and seed dealership north of Wawanesa.

Now 30 years old, Ellis is beginning the process of taking the reins from his parents. He and his wife Amanda are the fourth generation to run Black Creek

Farm, and perhaps one day their two children, Lincoln and Hailey, will be the fifth.

Not every young farmer travels half-way across the world to find their passion, but certainly they all have stories to tell about what brought them to farming, and what keeps them in it even in the face of significant challenges.

Their experiences are the focus of a research project called *Becoming a young farmer: young people's pathways into agriculture in four countries*. The research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Manitoba component is led by Dr. Annette Desmarais of the University of Manitoba — herself a former mixed and organic farmer.

The project includes young farmers from Canada, China, India and Indonesia.

“It’s responding to an international idea that young people are no longer willing or able to enter into agriculture,” says Meghan Entz, the research assistant who handled the project’s interviews with Manitoba producers. “It’s finding out who the young people are who are farming, what motivates young people to farm, what kind of farming are they are engaging in, and what opportunities and challenges that they see.”

From April to July of 2017, Entz interviewed 48 Manitoba farmers between the ages of 18 and 40. She says the research team strived for the broadest possible cross-section of participants, and made sure they talked to a wide variety of people: large-scale crop producers, small direct-market and organic farmers, and producers of supply-managed commodities.

They spoke with both women and men, and with newcomers to farming as well as those taking over family operations. They spoke with people farming in remote areas of the province as well as those situated just outside Winnipeg or Brandon.

“We wanted to get as representative a sample as we could,” Entz says. “I spent one week based in Dauphin doing interviews around St. Rose and Swan River, and I also ended up going to one farm

where I was so close to the American border that I had to pay roaming charges.”

A critical piece of the project was trying to understand more about the obstacles that young farmers face. As Entz and the research team analyzed the content of their interviews, they identified five key challenges that came up again and again.

Access to land was the most frequently mentioned barrier for young farmers, with 39 out of the 48 interviewees mentioning it as a challenge. Ellis, who was among the young farmers interviewed for the research, told *Manitoba Farmers' Voice* this doesn't surprise him a bit.

“That’s something that we’re battling with right now with our farm,” he says. “There isn’t much land changing hands in our area and what there is, it’s very expensive.”

Access to credit and financing was the second most frequently cited obstacle, followed by difficulty finding and keeping reliable labour. The high cost of inputs, machinery, land, and labour creates stress and frustration for many young people in the industry, Entz says, and this was a recurring theme in her interviews.

“These are people in their early twenties entering into their professional careers, taking on immense amounts of debt in ways you just don’t see in other industries,” she says.

Tied closely to credit and debt was a barrier the researchers termed “risk.” Young farmers reported that another significant stress for them was planning for a bad year — almost always sure to come about due to circumstances beyond their control.

Ellis points out the ways in which the level of risk in farming can complicate not only day-to-day operations but also succession planning as well.

“Amanda and I have to buy the farm from my parents, and we need to do that in a way that allows them a reasonable living in retirement,” he explains.

“But we also want to buy land and expand the farm, so that’s a tricky balance, because if you have a crop failure >>

Access to land was the most frequently mentioned barrier for young farmers, followed by access to credit and financing



Meghan Entz, a research associate for an international study on young farmers, conducted interviews in Manitoba to find out what motivates young people to farm, what kind of farming are they are engaging in, and what opportunities and challenges that they see.

one year, all of a sudden you screw up your chances to expand and compromise the older generation's standard of living too. Crop insurance can help, but it's certainly not a windfall."

Public perception of the industry was the final factor analyzed by the researchers, with some participants concerned about how negative views of agriculture could harm them — for example, by driving government policies that aren't in farmers' best interest.

High property taxes and the prospect of a carbon tax are examples of public policy that many interviewees felt stacked the odds against them.

Entz remembers one producer she interviewed stating, "It's almost like we need a PR firm for agriculture."

Ellis points out that Manitoba farmers do have one, in a way. As the District 7 director and chair of two KAP policy

Entz says that while she heard a lot from young farmers about the challenges they face, she heard just as much about what motivates them to keep at it

committees, he believes in the power of membership organizations to act as the voice that young farmers need.

"KAP represents 7,000-plus farm families," he says. "That gives us a strong, unified voice that carries a lot of weight with government."

He also adds that young people in particular are finding unique ways to advocate for themselves and their industry.

"A lot of young farmers also have a job off the farm that limits their ability to be on a board with KAP or another group," he says. "Those with young families also have no time because they're running around to hockey."

"But even if they can't attend meetings, they may still be involved — writing a letter to an MP, using social media to raise awareness about an issue. These are all valid ways of communi-

cating with government, industry, and the public.”

Entz says that while she heard a lot from young farmers about the challenges they face, she heard just as much about what motivates them to keep at it.

Participants talked about the advantages of rural living, the freedom of being their own boss, the pride they took in their role as food producers, and the intergenerational nature of agriculture — the ability to work alongside their children, parents and grandparents.

“My son is two and a half and I’m already seeing a lot of interest from him about the farm,” Ellis says. “He wants to be involved, drive the combine, learn about everything. That’s one of the biggest reasons I do this. You get to spend more time with your family and you get to teach them about why this type of work is so exciting and fulfilling.”

While Entz is looking forward to presenting some of the team’s findings at the Manitoba Young Farmers conference in January, this research project is far from over. She says the team is excited to look deeper into questions of land ownership, access to capital, and how changing government policies affect young farmers.

They will also, of course, be comparing the accounts of young farmers in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada with the experiences of their peers in Indonesia, India, and China.

The findings will be published in academic journals but also circulated more broadly through radio and print media. The team will make recommendations for how the provincial and federal governments can adapt their policies to better support young farmers, and farm organizations like KAP can use this information in their own lobby efforts.

The question of whether agricul-

ture is still a viable industry for young people today is perhaps too vast and too complicated for any research to answer for sure, but Entz says the young farmers she interviewed were determined to persevere despite the difficulties.

“Again and again, both with people who grew up on farms and with people who were new to the industry, this idea came up that it takes a special person to farm and if you really love it and it’s really what you want to do, you’ll do it.”

Ellis agrees, putting it even more succinctly: “It’s a lot of challenge and heartache. But the rewards are huge.” ^{FV}

Meghan Entz’s presentation at the Manitoba Young Farmers’ Conference will take place on Friday, January 26. The conference runs January 25 and 26 at the Delta Winnipeg, and is free to all young farmers. See the KAP website — kap.ca — for information.



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KAP at work

What KAP is doing on behalf of all Manitoba farmers **BY VAL OMINSKI**

ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT ON CARBON TAX

► KAP stressed agriculture's concerns when the provincial Climate and Green Plan was being developed — and the government listened. When the plan was unveiled in late October, it stipulated there will be no carbon tax on marked fuels used on farms, and agricultural emissions will be exempt from the tax. In addition, agricultural operations will be able to contribute to carbon sequestration and offset trading systems that will be established in Manitoba and other provinces. KAP will continue to engage with the province about more specifics in the plan, including carbon tax exemptions on heating fuels for farm buildings and grain dryers. (See more on carbon tax in sidebar on page 17)

LOBBYING TO PREVENT CHANGES TO CAPITAL GAINS EXEMPTIONS

► The federal government recently proposed tax changes for private corporations that would put limits on capital gains exemptions — something that would make it financially difficult to pass the farm to the next generation. KAP, along with individual farmers, the CFA and farm groups across the country, vigorously opposed this proposal. KAP also wrote an editorial that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Shortly after, Finance Minister Morneau amended these limitation changes. We spoke with united voices, and we did it!

MEETING WITH MANITOBA'S FINANCE MINISTER

► KAP met with Finance Minister Cameron Friesen recently on development of the 2018 provincial budget, stressing the absolute need to fix

problems with municipal and education property taxes. With across-the-province assessments increasing an average of 45 per cent in 2016 and an additional 22 per cent for 2018, the province must take action. KAP also made a case for increased investment in water management infrastructure maintenance, as well as for an increase in the Department of Agriculture's innovation and economic development budget.

WORKING TO STREAMLINE MEMBERSHIP COLLECTION

► KAP lobbied for Bill 35 and the Manitoba government passed it in early November. The bill amends the Agricultural Producers Organization Funding Act, the legislation that governs KAP's membership collection, in order to reduce administrative challenges the previous legislation created. The changes will allow KAP to modernize its membership system, reduce instances of membership over-deductions, and allow for better communication with members. It will also reduce KAP's administrative burden, to allow for additional focus and resources on member services. These include member benefits, human resources support services, the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, the Environmental Farm Plan program, and the KAP Young Farmers committee.

SUPPORTING RED TAPE REDUCTION

► KAP made a presentation at the government committee hearing on The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act (Bill 24). The act was passed and will mean, among a long list of other actions, the removal of legislation preventing new hog barn

construction — including the requirement for anaerobic digesters. KAP stressed that hog production in Manitoba makes a very large contribution to the provincial economy, and provides market opportunities for Manitoba's crop producers. Also stressed is the environmental actions that hog farmers are undertaking.

PROVIDING INPUT ON PROVINCIAL WATER MANAGEMENT

► KAP submitted a comprehensive document to the provincial consultation on drainage, water resource management, modernization of conservation districts and red tape reduction for routine drainage. The government then introduced the Sustainable Watersheds Act, and indicated it wants to work with producers to protect wetlands while still promoting land use and development. The legislation is also the foundation for an ALUS-like program, and KAP is anticipating funding from this program will help farmers provide flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, nutrient capture and habitat protection.

ASSISTING WITH DAIRY LABOUR SHORTAGE

► KAP is offering a pilot program to dairy producers that will train job seekers to become dairy workers. Upon completion of an initial screening process, selected workers will participate in a comprehensive 10-week pre-employment training program, where they will upgrade essential skills and learn about industry-specific requirements such as health and safety regulations, and farm operations. The training is free. Contact Janice Goldsborough, KAP HR and training coordinator at 204-471-6530.

LOBBYING FOR DEFERRED GRAIN TICKETS

► After floating the idea of removal, the federal government recently announced it will maintain the current tax treatment of cash purchase tickets for deliveries of listed grains. KAP, the CFA and all western farm groups united their voices to oppose this.

WORKING WITH THE MFS TO PREVENT BUILDING FIRES

► The Manitoba Farm Safety Program is now offering a free infrared inspection to any farmer or agribusiness with a building that has an electrical system. The inspection will focus on electrical wiring, motor and fan bearings, and anything else that may

be a potential source for fire ignition. Anyone receiving an inspection will be provided with a detailed report that remains completely confidential. For questions, or to set up an appointment, call Keith at the safety program — 204-293-9646.

Farmers are part a big part of greenhouse gas solution

Dan Mazier's article in the Winnipeg Free Press

On October 27 the provincial government's long-awaited climate and green plan was unveiled, and it indicates that farmers will be given some exemptions from the provincial carbon tax.

Some may ask why there should be an exemption for agriculture and not for other industries, but let me explain by quoting JFK from 1960: "The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways."

A lot has changed in agriculture since the 60s, not least of which is that we recognize the thousands of women involved in the industry now. What hasn't changed, though, is the underlying structure of the agricultural economy.

Grain and livestock prices given to farmers are set globally, based on world market demand, so Manitoba prices cannot be altered to pass on additional production costs and taxes to customers.

However, many of the industries we rely on for our inputs are not as captive to world prices as farmers, and we are going to see them pass on their carbon tax to us. This is already happening in provinces that have implemented a price on carbon.

For example, one trucking company implemented a one per cent carbon tax surcharge at the start of 2017 in Alberta, where there is already a price on carbon. It will increase to 1.5 per cent in 2018 as the Alberta carbon tax increases.

Another example: one railway currently charges a carbon tax surcharge of four cents per mile on all shipments from, to, or within British Columbia — and similar amounts in other provinces that already have a carbon price.

It's clear that certain other industries can pass on carbon costs, but farmers can't.

What has changed since 1960 is nearly everything about how we manage land and livestock. Today's agriculture industry is attuned to the effects of greenhouse gases on climate changes. It has evolved in a dramatic way in order to control its emissions — and it will continue to do so despite some exemptions from the price on carbon.

For example, over half of Manitoba's 11 million acres of crop land is grown in minimal or zero-tillage systems. This means little disturbance of the soil, a practice that sequesters large amounts of carbon dioxide. It is estimated that Manitoba farmers sequester up to 1.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year through these cropping systems.

In addition, these systems greatly reduce the number of field passes farmers must make with their farm equipment, with the result that less carbon-based fuel is burned.

Fertilizer, an important part of agriculture, is needed for most crop production. However, Manitoba farmers have

adopted soybeans, a crop that requires no carbon-sourced nitrogen fertilizer.

Soybean production has increased dramatically — from 18,000 acres in 2000 to a current 2.3 million acres. In 2016 alone, this resulted in savings of 245,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions — the equivalent of taking 52,000 cars off the road. This is all thanks to new varieties that have been bred for prairie climate conditions.

Here's another fact. Livestock production has become more efficient. Animal breeding advances and increases in feed efficiency have reduced methane emissions from Canadian dairy and beef cattle by 15 per cent per litre of milk and kilogram of beef over the last 30 years. In addition, the forages (pasture plants) that cattle consume sequester significant amounts of carbon in their roots.

In the hog industry, Manitoba farms emit 35 per cent fewer greenhouse gases than they did 50 years ago. And now, farmers are moving toward manure storage under their barns, instead of ground-level lagoon storage. This will profoundly reduce methane gas production.

And it doesn't stop there. There are recent innovations that will create even more emission reductions. For example, precision agriculture is a new frontier that uses field data to adjust the amount of fertilizer applied to individual field conditions — thus reducing the amount of fertilizer used.

More research is needed into methods of production that will further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration. This could include alternate fuels, new crop varieties, new ways of reducing animal-produced greenhouse gases, improved forage production, improved grazing management — and the list goes on.

I am hoping the new climate and green plan will facilitate research funding, and also include programming to speed up the adoption of new technologies while offsetting financial risk for farmers. Farmers can be a bigger part of the climate change solution than they already are, and in the long run can offset emissions from the rest of society.

Current economic modelling by the province indicates that a carbon tax reduction of more than \$200 per tonne would be required to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets — if the tax was the only tool used.

We don't believe that this is the right path for Manitoba. Instead, we want to work with the government and other stakeholders to develop a plan that helps achieve our environmental goals, while at the same time growing the provincial economy through investments in agriculture.

NAFTA: to be or not to be?

BY RON FRIESEN

An air of tension hangs over Canada's agricultural industry as it awaits the outcome of attempts to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Trade-dependent sectors such as grains, special crops and red meat worry failed talks could mean a return to tariffs, quotas and non-trade barriers restricting access to the essential U.S. market.

Supply-managed sectors (dairy, eggs and poultry) fear a new NAFTA, if it occurs, will throw their protected markets open to imports and ultimately destroy their industries.

Wherever you look, Canada's farmers — whether free trade or supply managed — are nervous about NAFTA's future and the possible effect on agriculture should it fall.

"Any time you bring in another variable or instability to the marketplace, it has an impact on you," says Dan Mazier, KAP president. "Business gets a little more antsy or jittery. That is the impact and I think that's what everybody is trying to figure out: how to deal with the U.S. now. This is a whole new dynamic."

The move to renegotiate NAFTA stems from U.S. President Donald Trump's demands to either rejig the trade deal to America's advantage or scrap it altogether, repeatedly calling it "the worst trade agreement in history."

That attitude has been evident throughout the negotiations as U.S. negotiators put forward aggressive demands that Canada and Mexico both reject as unreasonable and unacceptable.

Negotiations between the three countries, begun in late summer, have repeatedly bogged down over sticking



points resulting from those demands. Covering a broad range of areas, they include:

- Requiring all automobiles to contain mainly U.S. content.
- Eliminating or neutering dispute-settling panels.
- "Buy American" requirements limiting other countries' access to public works contracts.
- A sunset clause ending NAFTA after five years unless all countries agree to continue it.

Agriculture is a relatively minor factor in the negotiations. But one demand stands out: that Canada open up its dairy, egg and poultry markets to U.S. imports and agree to eventually end supply management altogether. Both producers and the federal government call that demand a total non-starter.

"They're asking for things that any self-respecting nation certainly couldn't accept," says David Wiens, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba chairman.

As it is, Canada has been opening its borders gradually to dairy imports, notably cheese, under the recent Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). So far, the industry seems able to adapt to increased market access. But analysts say there's a tipping point. They warn if access rises past a certain point, the value of quota will plummet and the system could implode.

Supply management is not the only agricultural sector on tenterhooks. Grains, oilseeds and red meat sectors all worry that, without NAFTA, the U.S. could arbitrarily restore long-abandoned tariffs and other trade barriers on Canadian imports, making them uncompetitive.

Just look at India, which unexpectedly slapped tariffs of 50 per cent on pea imports and 20 per cent on wheat in early November. That could be the situation with the U.S. without NAFTA's trade discipline, says Cam Dahl, president of Cereals Canada.

Continues on page 20 >>

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“Whenever you have the potential for trade disruption or new trade barriers coming up in your number one market, that’s cause for significant concern,” Dahl says. “If the framework of NAFTA is gone, then we are at risk.”

A lot depends on whether NAFTA, if it goes, would go suddenly or be phased out gradually. A sudden elimination would be the worst-case scenario because it would give Canadian exporters no time to develop a Plan B.

That was the case in 2003 when BSE suddenly closed international borders to Canadian cattle and beef, seriously damaging the industry, notes Al Mussell, lead researcher with Agri-Food Economic Systems, an independent economic research organization in Guelph, Ontario.

“If we were to get into a position in which we lost access suddenly and we hadn’t anticipated it and could plan for it in any way, then obviously this would be a very serious situation for Canadian agriculture,” says Mussell.

Others are less pessimistic, saying the loss of NAFTA, although it could damage Canadian agriculture, would not be fatal.

Donald Buckingham, president of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute in Ottawa, says losing NAFTA would motivate Canada to find alternative markets through international trade agreements such as CETA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). With CETA almost in place and TPP in the final stages of negotiation, Canada has a strong incentive to keep looking for new opportunities.

But Buckingham acknowledges losing NAFTA would still be a shock.

“There’s no question that, in the short term, if the border suddenly became less penetrable for Canadian products, we’d take a hit.”

All of which assumes Trump would be able to make good on his threat to rip up NAFTA if he doesn’t get the kind of deal he wants. But could he actually do so? Opinion on this point is divided.

In an analysis for the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics, senior fellow Gary

Clyde Hufbauer poses the question: “Can the president withdraw the United States from the agreement and rewrite U.S. commercial relations with Mexico without the assent of Congress and the courts?” His answer: “Very likely yes.”

However, Hufbauer adds this caveat: “But the Congress does not lack tools to stay Trump’s hand, or at least create fresh obstacles, if enough members act on the unhappiness of businesses in their states and districts dependent on exports to and imports from Canada and Mexico.”

“Whenever you have the potential for trade disruption or new trade barriers coming up in your number one market, that’s cause for significant concern.”

That, according to Mussell, is Canada’s ace in the hole. He and colleague Doug Hedley argue that agri-food trade is critical to the U.S. economy. Some states’ economies depend heavily on exports to Canada. Mussell and Hedley calculate U.S. agri-food exports to Canada in 2016 totaled \$38 billion (U.S.) in consumer-oriented food products, involving over 121,000 American jobs.

Already, strong voices are being raised in the U.S. about the possible loss of NAFTA and the damage it could do to American interests.

“We’re starting to see a pretty significant backlash within the U.S. from a number of industries — agriculture and food are the most vocal — saying to trade negotiators, ‘do not screw this up,’” Mussell says.

Another wild card is the 1989 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CUSTA), which was dovetailed into NAFTA. But it still exists and some,

including Hufbauer, believe it would “spring back to life and ensure continuation of free trade between the United States and Canada unless separately terminated.”

Others add ending CUSTA would be difficult for Trump to accomplish.

“Everyone says if he rips up one, he’s going to rip up the other,” says Buckingham. “But that’s not exactly a fait accompli. Whatever challenges he has to face in getting rid of NAFTA, he’ll also have to face getting rid of CUSTA.”

So what now?

Mussell believes something will have to happen by April because American political clocks are ticking. Mid-term congressional elections occur in November 2018 and Republicans will want some resolution to the major issues Trump has taken on before then.

Also, congressional fast-track authority to approve or reject a NAFTA deal expires in July 2018. The rules require Trump to send a text of the agreement to Congress for review 90 days in advance of that.

Meanwhile, Mexico is slated for its own general election July 1, 2018. It’s expected Mexican officials will want NAFTA settled one way or another before then.

But Mussell says Trump could dig in his heels on NAFTA because the political stakes for him are high.

“This is such a big deal to save the president’s face,” Mussell says. “He’s had so few other victories that I think he feels he’s got to do something on this. He kind of desperately needs a victory.”

There remains one other possibility. Trump might be able to secure some low-hanging fruit which he could parlay into a victory and save face with his supporters that way. Meanwhile, NAFTA would continue more or less as usual.

“My own sense is, that’s kind of where things are going to go,” Buckingham says. “We’re going to have a hard time getting a new agreement but it’ll become unpalatable to rip up the NAFTA.”

In the meantime, stay tuned. **FV**

Boundary Trail Railway Company illustrates the importance of shortlines



Boundary Trails Railway Company is a farmer-owned railway; its train is pictured at the Manitou loading facility.

BY ANGELA LOVELL

There are 53 shortline railways in Canada, making up 20 per cent of Canada's rail network. Some are privately owned and serve a specific company — for example a mining operation. Some are public carriers that can carry passengers and freight.

There are five shortlines in Manitoba, and two are farmer-owned — Boundary Trail Railway Company (BTRC) based in Manitou and Lake Line Railroad which serves the Interlake.

BTRC is a common carrier, which means it's obligated to provide haulage to any customers that request rail service, regardless of what the commodity is. Shareholders in a shortline have no

preference over non-shareholders, and anyone can order a producer car and have it delivered to one of the shortline's stations.

In reality though, as a producer-owned railway, it's generally local-area farmers that ship grain in producer cars through BTRC, which moves an average of 400 cars a year for around 50 different farmers.

A core group of area farmers formed BTRC in 2008 and purchased 23 miles of abandoned CP track in south-central Manitoba that runs from Morden to Binney Corner, serving stations at Thornhill, Darlingford and Manitou.>

The railway also has an agreement with CP to provide haulage to CP customers from Morden to Rosenfeld.

BTRC raised most of the seven-figure purchase price from local investors, mainly farmers, and also received \$615,000 in provincial support, and \$1 million from the federal government to help establish the railway.

Farmers ship wheat and oats in producer cars on the line, although oats have become the main commodity thanks to a partnership with Quaker Oats and The Andersons Grain Group that offers advance contracts to oat growers in the area at competitive prices. A number of local producers have also invested in four private loading facilities on the line.

Although BTRC is grateful for the support it received from both levels of government in the early days, it does feel that provincial and federal governments could do more to assist shortline railways.

“Each province has jurisdiction over the shortlines in their province and each province approaches that responsibility differently,” says Travis Long, general manager of BTRC. “Saskatchewan wrote its own railway legislation and out of that they created a funding model and a support structure, and that’s the reason why there are so many more shortlines in Saskatchewan.

“Manitoba and Alberta lack provincial legislation and they play just a regulatory role, not an industry support role. There is no concerted effort to take charge of what’s going on in the railways in those provinces and consequently there are only a handful of shortlines in each province.”

The 2015 *Review of Canadian Shortline Funding Needs and Opportunities* report

“It’s a huge time saving to be able to haul our grain four miles instead of 40. That means more time we can spend on other aspects of the business.”

for the Railway Association of Canada made a number of recommendations around increased federal support for shortlines. They include adding a dedicated shortline rail grant component into Transport Canada’s existing capital funding program to assist shortlines to meet new federal regulations, improving existing infrastructure and supporting network expansions.

The report also urged Canada to establish a tax credit program for pri-

vate capital investment in shortlines. Unfortunately, to date, there has been little progress on any of the recommendations.

Harmonizing provincial and federal standards and requirements would be an immediate help for shortlines.

“As an example, because we’re a provincially regulated railway, when we do our annual inspections we have to do one for the province and another for the federal government, which means we are hiring an engineering firm and duplicating the effort and expense,” says Kevin Friesen, BTRC shareholder and vice-president of finance.

It also frustrates shortlines that they receive no recognition for the benefits they bring in terms of reducing the costs associated with maintaining roads and the environmental impact of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

“While millions of dollars continue to be spent on road maintenance, there doesn’t seem to be any acknowledgment that what we are doing at BTRC is helping to preserve that infrastructure, and we feel there should be some recognition of that at the provincial level,” says Friesen.

According to the Railway Association report, the annual social benefits of shortlines relative to truck transport is estimated at close to \$680 million, broken down as \$95 million in savings from

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air pollution, \$110 in greenhouse gas emissions, \$135 in road accidents and \$340 million in road maintenance.

There are also enormous benefits to farmers who ship their grain through shortlines. Manitou area grain farmer Geoffrey Young is both a BTRC shareholder and customer who ships wheat and oats on the line.

“It’s a huge time saving to be able to haul our grain four miles instead of 40,” he says. “That means more time we can spend on other aspects of the business like planning or marketing.

“The other thing that is beneficial is creating relationships outside of our local area. It gives us a lot more options and has made us more astute marketers because we understand the grain business from grower to end user much better.”

Manitou area grain farmer and KAP member Don McLean ships oats and wheat with BTRC, and is also part owner with eight other local farmers, of a loading facility on the line at Darlingford, about eight miles east of Manitou.

While the biggest benefit of BTRC is time and freight savings, he says without the railway and its relationship with Quaker and Andersons, he’d have to ship his oats a lot further to even come close to the price he is getting from them.

“There is definitely a competitive advantage to BTRC,” says McLean. “Instead of going six miles to ship our oats, we would have to do a 200 mile round trip to Emerson to get the same price we are getting here. As well, dockage is quite a bit less when you use pro-



BTRC’s general manager Travis Long (left), Kevin Friesen, VP of finance and shareholder, and Geoffrey Young, director and shareholder: grateful for initial government support but more is needed to assist shortlines.

ducer cars than it would be through a line company, so there are savings there too.”

In addition to farmer benefits, there are also perks for the local economy. Farmers who have more money in their bank accounts spend more, which benefits local businesses, community organizations and events.

During the rail crisis of 2013-14, the BTRC was able to prove it’s mettle. A bumper harvest, full elevators and grain terminals, and slower rail service by the two national railways meant grain movement all but ceased.

BTRC had more farmers phoning than they ever had.

“Farmers who hadn’t shipped with us before were suddenly looking for a way to get their grain moving,” says Long. “We actually shipped grain from Red-

vers, Saskatchewan through here that year. In the end, our car volume wasn’t much higher than any other year, but we were exposed to a much wider audience.”

During the crisis, Andersons was getting virtually no oat supplies from its shortline supplier in Saskatchewan. BTRC, by virtue of the fact that it’s located closer to Winnipeg, was still receiving a few cars, and was able to move some oats to the company. That helped cement the relationship with Andersons, who realized they needed to diversify their supply locations.

In 2017, with another good crop, BTRC had already shipped two-thirds of its usual 400 cars in the fall. As the 2017 crop continues to ship, the company is optimistic that grain volumes will be up this winter. **FV**

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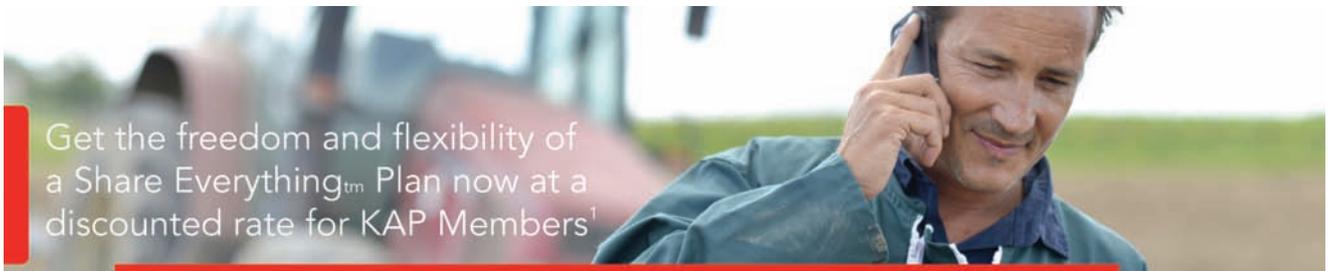
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Bill 24 has breathed new life into Manitoba's pork industry

BY CASSANDRA CARDY



Marg Rempel, a hog farmer and member of the Manitoba Pork board, says the previous requirement for new and expanding farms to use anaerobic digesters, with a cost of \$1 million each, stifled any future or optimism for the pork industry. Now it's back.

Marg Rempel, a hog farmer in southeast Manitoba, says Bill 24 — The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act — is a “beautiful piece of democracy.”

Passed in early November, Bill 24 repeals legislation enacted by the previous government in 2011 that required new hog barns or barn expansions to include anaerobic digesters. This is a pricey system that removes most of the water from manure and in the process creates a by-product, methane, which can be collected and used as an energy source.

The problem, says Manitoba Pork, is that energy created this way costs three or four times as much as what you can buy from Manitoba Hydro, so it is very uneconomical.

“The million-dollar price (of the anaerobic digester) stifled any future or optimism for our farm sector,” says

Rempel, a director on Manitoba Pork’s board.

Mike Teillet, manager of sustainable development for Manitoba Pork, notes that Manitoba hog farmers already faced the strictest manure regulations in North America — and still do.

It all started with studies of Lake Winnipeg that showed phosphorus was entering the lake in numerous ways, including natural sources, farming and urban sewage systems, he says.

The indications were that phosphorous levels would promote algae growth, which in turn could reach levels that could put some forms of marine life at risk. As well, some forms of algae can be dangerous to human health.

“Government thought the anaerobic digester would put out less phosphate (from hog manure) onto the land,” says George Matheson, Manitoba Pork chair

and a hog farmer near Stonewall. “In fact, it doesn’t change the level of phosphorus, it just lessens the volume of manure.”

“It made us look like the culprits,” he says. “It’s not a very nice thing to be wrongfully blamed for something of this nature. It’s not a good feeling.”

But things have changed. At the hearings prior to the bill being passed, there were 65 presenters, 35 of whom were in favour of the new legislation.

Rempel has attended legislative hearings where committee members weren’t engaged with the subject matter, but Bill 24’s hearings were different, she says. An all-party committee of MLAs was attentive throughout, and the five-minute question period allotted to each presenter was put to good use.

“I appreciated the respect the committee showed to presenters,” Rempel says. >>

People from all over the province and across the entire hog industry spoke in favour of the bill, including soil science and manure-handling experts, processing-plant employees, and barn managers. Two academics from the University of Manitoba gave presentations on the science around manure and phosphorus, which worked in favour of the bill.

“Having the agronomists there was very important,” says Matheson. “It helped people realize the value of manure as a fertilizer. It’s a safe source of fertilizer.”

Committee members were impressed by the presentations of two HyLife processing plant employees.

“They gave an emotional, heartfelt thanks to the industry for allowing them to come to this country and make good lives for them and their families,” says Teillet.

Removing the requirement for anaerobic digesters will not harm the environment, he stresses.

“What happened in 2011 was just bad legislation,” Teillet says. “It was a bad law done for political reasons. There was never any science behind it.”

Matheson says everyone has to do their part to clean up Lake Winnipeg, and he hopes Bill 24 changes society’s opinion about the hog industry.

“We are a safe and responsible industry,” he says. “Hog farming is just a small piece of the (Lake Winnipeg) puzzle.”

Rempel doesn’t become frustrated with misconceptions. She attended the hearing for Bill 24 as both a hog farmer and as a citizen just listening to other citizens. She says it’s important to keep these conversations going.

“Understanding where they’re coming from and why is important,” says Rempel. “We have to listen to everyone’s perspectives to move forward. It has to be a little healthier than a bunch of negative tweets.”

The effect of the previous legislation, in part, is that some of Manitoba’s processing plants aren’t even running at full capacity because they are short of pigs. Teillet says the hog industry was somewhat in a decline since 2008, when there



George Matheson, Manitoba Pork chair and a hog farmer near Stonewall, is hopeful new barns will go up, so the pork industry can increase its output and satisfy Maple Leaf’s processing capacity.

was a downturn in pig prices and feed prices. The American dollar went up and so did feed prices, and then there was the 2011 legislation.

With the new legislation, Matheson would like to see 10 barns go up every year over the next 10 years, each with around 10,000 hogs per barn.

“That would be a wonderful thing for the industry,” he says. “Over a million more hogs would satisfy Maple Leaf’s processing plants.”

Manitoba Pork is prepared for this industry expansion, and is providing the industry with support and resources for building and expansion on its website.

But Matheson and Rempel don’t plan on expanding their operations.

“I’m 60 years old,” says Matheson. “I plan on keeping things the way they are.”

Meanwhile, Rempel says there’s at least an option to move forward now.

“Old barns eventually have to be rebuilt sometime,” says Rempel. “It will be tiny bit, by tiny bit. At least now we can consider the possibility of an upgrade.”

Teillet says there are still plenty of regulations to follow and the process of expansion is still a lengthy and challenging one, and can take several months. **FV**

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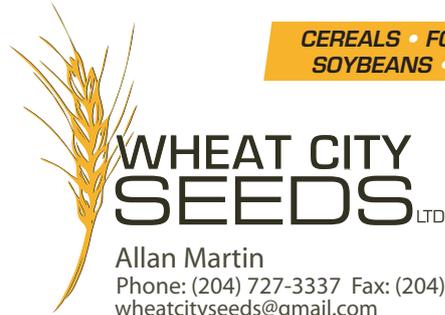


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