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# FARMS

NIAGARA REGION - ONTARIO'S ORCHARD

ISSUE 12 / MARCH 2025



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# NIAGARA FARMS

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### By Luke Edwards

Some arrived out of a sense of duty, and some out of a sense of adventure. Some wanted to help the cause while others simply wanted to get out of class.

But arrive they did, from every corner of Ontario and even as far as Quebec. For a decade beginning in 1941, young women hopped on their bikes or found other ways to get to farms in southwestern Ontario, with many of them coming to Niagara. Their job was to fill the

work boots of the young men who were in Europe fighting Hitler and the Nazis in the Second World War.

Farmerettes, as they would come to be known, were as young as 16 - some who fudged their birth certificates, even younger - and played a vital role in the war effort to defeat fascism and end a devastating global war.

And now, those women are being remembered in a documentary created by Colin Field, Bonnie Sitter, and a small team of supporters.



A small team of filmmakers helped Colin Field and Bonnie Sitter create *We Lend a Hand*, a documentary on the history of the Farmerettes. ~ Colin Field photo

## Farmerettes forgotten no more: Documentary shines light on long forgotten program



What started as a project featuring 10 former Farmerettes quickly ballooned, with Field and his team ultimately interviewing 20, with plans to keep going as they develop a website to go alongside the documentary. ~ Colin Field photo

**FRONT PAGE PHOTO:** Cathryne Horn and June (Curts) Partridge were former Farmerettes who were featured in the documentary *We Lend a Hand*. They were among the supporters who received a private viewing of the film in Grimsby last month. ~ Luke Edwards photo

"It was so long ago and it was completely forgotten," said Field, the filmmaker who teamed up with Sitter to create the 50-minute documentary *We Lend a Hand*.

"Everybody can contribute. You don't have to be Winston Churchill. Service comes in so many ways."

*We Lend a Hand* tells the story of the women who participated in the Farmerette program, which ran from 1941 to 1952 and saw mostly teenaged girls spending a summer on the farm where they picked fruit and vegetables and helped get the crops off the fields. Much of that food was then sent overseas to help feed the soldiers who were on the front lines.

"It's women's history, it's war history, it's food history. And people have never stopped to think that before they fired the bullets and dropped the bombs that it all starts with food. And the girls stepped up and did that," said Sitter, whose interest in Farmerettes began a few years ago when she came across a rather nondescript photo, two inches by two and a half inches.

It had no names, and the only clue was a short inscription on the back that read "Farmerettes, about 1946."

That photo set her off on a journey to learn more about this largely forgotten piece of Canadian history.

"To be quite honest I felt a little indignant that no one had ever taught me about Farmerettes," Sitter said.

In time she would uncover troves of information, largely with the help of Shirleyan English, who was a Farmerette in 1952. Later in life she did some outreach and received loads of letters from fellow former Farmerettes, but then sat on them, at least until Sitter turned up.

That all culminated in *Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz: Memories of Farmerettes*, a self-published book that details the history of the program.

Then came the second chance meeting. Field at the time was learning to play the banjo and was at the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival at the behest of some friends to perform. He'd been staying at their home and wanted to get them a thank-you card.

He came across a vendor table selling cards, and met Sitter. They chatted for a bit and Field learned about the Farmerette program and some of the work Sitter was doing researching it.

A few years later, as Field was venturing into his new hobby of filmmaking, he was once again on the search for some cards. When he reconnected with Sitter he asked about her research project.

**Continued to page A4 →**

→ **Continued from page A3**

Sitter, who will talk to anyone about Farmerettes for as long as they're willing to listen, gave Field the update.

"As she's describing it, in my head I'm thinking that this would make a beautiful documentary," he said.

It turns out, Sitter was thinking the same thing, telling Field what she really wanted was to see the story put on film.

So they set to work developing it. Originally it was to include interviews with 10 former Farmerettes, but that soon doubled to 20.



**Bonnie Sitter found a small photo among her family's belongings with only "Farmerettes around 1946" written on the back. It began a years long passion to learn more about the program. ~ Colin Field photo**

They then realized archival footage would be necessary, even if it can be expensive. Some amateur actors were hired to re-enact life as a Farmerette.

"If we do it, I want to do it right," said Field.

Last month they offered a private showing at the Grimsby Museum, inviting supporters and a few Farmerettes to see the nearly-finished product. Throughout the showing there were a few laughs as the women - now in their 80s and 90s - recalled the familiar teenage desire to get away from their parents, or the local farmer boy who caught their eyes and convinced them to return for a second, third or fourth year.

But there were also touching moments. Many of the young women had never been away from home for so long, while others didn't realize what went into farming and struggled. And as they shared their stories, the film provides regular reminders of what's going on in Europe and how fraught things were at the time. Field also called it a rite of passage time for the women where they bonded and learned the importance of teamwork.

As the credits - which include photo tributes to several Farmerettes - rolled, and the lights came on, there were more than a few puffy eyes.



**Lou Schenck, whose family farm hired many Farmerettes during the Second World War, spoke with Sitter for the documentary. ~ Colin Field photo**

"You see what an impact they had on Canada and the war effort," said Field.

June (Curts) Partridge was at the showing, and her experience with the Farmerettes is a reminder of just how tough the job was.

"I enjoyed it, but then I got sunstroke," she recalled. The medical emergency cut her time as a Farmerette short.

"A lot of people don't understand what people did (during the Second World War) so I'm glad they're making this public."

Jean Brett was also at the viewing. She was a Farmerette in St. Catharines in 1941, and remembered the challenging conditions.

"We had tents to sleep in," she said.

**Continued to page A5 →**

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Colin Field and Bonnie Sitter speak to supporters and former Farmerettes during a private viewing of their documentary *We Lend a Hand* in Grimsby last month. ~ Luke Edwards photo

→ **Continued from page A4**

Like the others, Brett was happy to see the documentary created. “Oh yes, it was very nice and interesting,” she said.

Field has entered the documentary into some festivals, including Toronto’s Hot Docs. Rules around some of those entries restrict public viewings. He admitted it’ll be tough to get *We Lend a Hand* into the extremely competitive Toronto festival, but remains hopeful they’ll get some publicity there or in other, smaller film festivals.

However, once those restrictions are lifted, Field and Sitter plan to offer public viewings of the documentary. They’ll also offer up copies to places like the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa or Juno Beach Centre in France.

The team received limited funding for the documentary, and costs escalated as they decided to grow the scope of the film. Sitter’s collecting funds to help offset some of those costs. There’s a GoFundMe page online titled “We Lend a Hand - Farmerette documentary film.” Sitter will also accept e-transfers at [bonnie.sitter@gmail.com](mailto:bonnie.sitter@gmail.com), where she can also be reached to answer questions. Families of Farmerettes can also have them included in the documentary, as Sitter will offer to include a photo and description in the credits for a \$500 donation.

They also have a website, [welendahand.ca](http://welendahand.ca), that they plan to build out with more interviews material and other information that couldn’t be included in the documentary. 🌱



A chance meeting as Colin Field was looking for a thank you card led to him and Bonnie Sitter teaming up to create a documentary on Farmerettes. ~ Colin Field photo



The filmmakers ultimately hired a few actors to add some re-enactments of Farmerette life. ~ Colin Field photo



Former Farmerettes, from left: Jean Brett, Cathryne Horn and June (Curts) Partridge. ~ Luke Edwards photo



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# Yeast or famine: locally isolated strain can feast on acetic acids

**Research at CCOVI suggests *Saccharomyces uvarum* CN1 can help save juices from infected grapes**

**By Luke Edwards**

A locally isolated yeast can drop acid...levels in grapes affected by sour rot and Botrytis.

Debbie Inglis, director at the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute, presented some of the promising findings of research her team at Brock University has conducted on the yeast strain *Saccharomyces uvarum* CN1. Using the strain can help reduce increased acid levels that come about as a result of the infections, and potentially save grapes that otherwise may not make the cut.

Her team had worked with the strain before, having isolated it years ago, but the question here asked "if there is a way we can improve the quality of grapes that are just at the rejection stage?" Inglis told those attending the Cider and Oenology session at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, held in Niagara Falls last month.

Grapes that are infected by sour rot and Botrytis can see the levels of acetic acid rise, potentially beyond acceptable levels for wine makers.

Inglis and her team found that CN1 can reduce those levels, consuming the acid.

"At every single brix level we had lower levels of acetic acid," she said, describing tests that compared the use of CN1 to traditionally used yeasts.

However, questions remain. For instance, Inglis said they aren't sure what is produced when the yeast feasts on acetic acid.

"Clearly the yeast was consuming the acetic acid and converting it into something else," she said.

"We're still investigating what that byproduct is."



**Debbie Inglis (second from the left) is the director at CCOVI and last month presented some findings that suggest a locally isolated yeast strain can help save grapes that have been affected by sour rot and Botrytis by consuming the excess acetic acid the diseases cause. ~ Brock University photo**

Inglis said they'll also have to come up with some logistical solutions to make it more commercially viable, since the CN1 strain doesn't dry as well as others.

The bulk of the research involved red wines, though they're now expanding into whites, including recent work on Riesling.

And, at the end of the day, the consumer is the ultimate decider.

"If it doesn't taste and smell good in the glass, then it's rather meaningless," Inglis said.

However, there's another potential benefit, she said. CN1 produces less ethanol, which means it could be used to produce wines with lower alcohol content, which several in the industry are working towards as consumer preferences change.



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# CCOVI gearing up to host Cuvee

**By Niagara Farms Staff**

We may be in a cool climate wine region, but things will be heating up this spring, thanks to the return of a long running annual event.

Cuvee, a celebration of Ontario's grape and wine industry, returns in May. Hosted by Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute, money raised from the event will support grape and wine related scholarships as well as research projects at Brock.

"We are proud to organize a unique and highly anticipated event that showcases true Ontario quality," said CCOVI Director Debbie Inglis. "Ontario wines are among the best in the world, and our winemakers in attendance will unveil their personal favourites for guests to enjoy."

The Grand Tasting headlines the weekend-long event and will see top industry professionals and wine enthusiasts enjoy a curated selection of vintages from some of the province's best winemakers.

It takes place Saturday, May 24 at 7 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Centre in St. Catharines.

Alongside the wine selections will be 10 live cooking stations featuring gourmet food and dessert options.

"We will have nearly 100 of the top wines from Ontario's award-winning winemakers and some of the most delicious food pairings that our celebrated Niagara chefs can dream up. It's a recipe for an unforgettable night," said Barb Tatarnic, who oversees the event. "There is no better time than now to celebrate the Ontario wine and food scene."

An Apres Cuvee party with music and more tastings is available for those who want to keep the celebration going, with craft beer, ciders, sparkling wine and icewine also available.

Throughout the weekend wine lovers can take part in the Cuvee En Route Passport program, tasting exclusive wines as they visit Niagara wineries. The passport is included with a ticket to the Grand Tasting event, or can be purchased separately.

To buy tickets, or for more information, visit [cuvée.ca](http://cuvée.ca).



Cuvee returns later this year, and is once again headlined by the Grand Tasting event. ~ Brock University photo



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# New chair for Ontario research organization announced

**By Niagara Farms Staff**

There's a new head of the organization that helps maintain Ontario research stations like the one in Vineland.

The province announced recently that Nevin McDougall was taking over as chair of Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario (ARIO), a crown corporation that focuses on supporting research in the agricultural and food industry in Ontario, and also owns and maintains 14 research centres across the province.

"I am confident Nevin McDougall will deliver bold and positive leadership to ARIO as its new chair and congratulate him on his appointment," said Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness Rob Flack in a press release.

"I look forward to the work he will do, along with the ARIO board of directors, to strengthen agri-food commercialization for the long-term competitiveness and growth of the sector."

McDougall has been on the ARIO board since 2020, and the release said he brings to the job "30 years of experience in industry-leading, innovative agribusiness organizations."

McDougall said he was excited to get to work.

"Together with fellow board members of ARIO, I look forward to exploring new opportunities for agri-food research, innovation, and commercialization in Ontario," he said.

He takes over for Lorne Hepworth, who had been chair since 2019. Hepworth's tenure included developing a new 10-year strategic plan, helping modernize the Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario Act and supporting the province's Grow Ontario strategy.

"It has been an honour to serve as Chair of ARIO for the last five years. I am immensely proud of the high-impact research and partnerships that have been supported by ARIO. With the incoming new chair, ARIO will be well-positioned to continue to thrive and innovate and be a strong proponent for agri-food research in Ontario," Hepworth said.

ARIO owns 14 agricultural research stations in the province, including Vineland, though the local research station is independently run and is outside the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance. 🌱



Nevin McDougall has been named the new chair of Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario. ~ OMAFA photo

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# Getting ready for spring: Master Gardeners host Seedy Saturday event

Day features seed swap, presentation on native plants

By Luke Edwards

They say variety is the spice of life. And while that may be true, for gardeners it provides another benefit.

“Variety equals resilience,” said Sean James, a gardening, landscaping and design consultant, at last month’s Seedy Saturday event hosted by the Master Gardeners of Niagara. The seed swap once again took place at the Meridian Community Centre in Fonthill, which has allowed organizers to grow the event in recent years.

In addition to the swap, there were 18 gardening related vendors on hand, tables with members of local garden clubs as well as an “ask the master gardener” advice table, and a presentation from James, who discussed native and pollinator friendly plant options.

“You should never have to sacrifice beauty to make the right thing happen in your garden,” he said.

James provided options to add colour early in the season (willows), late in the season (witch hazel)

and everything in between. Some options, like goldenrod, are vital for native species of insects and pollinators. James said 350 species depend on goldenrod, many of them are considered keystone species.

He offered other tips as well, such as matching plants to your soil instead of trying to change the soil composition.

“Don’t fight the soil,” he said.

James also cautioned against overfertilizing, encouraging gardeners to keep everything internal.

“What falls on your property, stays on your property,” he said.

Despite a nagging cold stretch of wintry weather that once again hit on the weekend of Seedy Saturday, master gardener Jane Smale said they were happy with the turnout and noted the general public seemed to be “picking up interest in planning for the garden.”

Given the state of things in the world, Smale said people are not just interested in things that look nice, but plants the provide nutrition as well.

“People are becoming more interested in growing their own food this summer,” she said.



The room was full of gardening experience and expertise last month as the Master Gardeners of Niagara hosted its annual Seedy Saturday. ~ Luke Edwards photos

And it doesn’t have to be either/or, as several of the plants James offered up are also edible.

Money raised from the event will be used to support the Master Gardeners’ scholarship programs that each year support two Niagara Parks Horticulture School students with scholarships and two Niagara College students with bursaries.

Master gardeners are also available throughout the year to provide tips and advice.

Smale said they’re also always accepting new members, which involves some training and education. For more information visit [mgniagara.com](http://mgniagara.com) or the Master Gardeners of Niagara Facebook page.

More information on James’ services can also be found at [sean-james-consulting.ca](http://sean-james-consulting.ca).



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Youth environmental leadership group the Green Herons took part in Seedy Saturday for the first time. Members collected seeds in the fall, and offered up packets of them to visitors.



Seedy Saturday included a large seed swap, where visitors could pick up unique varieties.




Sean James provided gardeners with tips on growing native and pollinator friendly plants while still making their gardens beautiful.



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# West Lincoln to allow backyard chickens in hamlet areas, but not within urban area of Smithville

*Amendment culminates a lengthy process*

**By Luke Edwards**

The township's mayor is hopeful they've found a satisfactory solution to a question that had no perfect answer.

West Lincoln approved changes to its zoning and animal care and control bylaws last month that will ultimately allow residents in residential zones of hamlet settlement areas to keep backyard chickens on their property. The animals will continue to be prohibited within Smithville's urban area.

"It was clear very early on that there was no easy answer when exploring the matter of backyard chickens," said Mayor Cheryl Ganann.

"I am pleased with the comprehensive process we have undertaken and am confident that the regulations we have landed on are appropriate for our community."

It took nearly a year and a half to come up with the new rules. Back in September of 2023 a resident requested that the hens they kept be deemed as household pets.

At the time, township bylaws said livestock was not permitted on residential properties throughout West Lincoln.

Following that request, people came out strong on all sides of the issue.

"We knew that those on all sides of the discussion were very passionate, and we understood the importance of taking our time to hear and consider all input to determine what would be best for West Lincoln," Ganann said.

While allowed in residential areas of hamlet settlements, those who wish to keep some backyard chickens will have to keep some restrictions in mind. Residents are limited to six hens at a time, with roosters being prohibited still. There are also rules surrounding enclosure size and location, animal care, and manure storage and disposal.

Slaughtering or processing backyard chickens on site is also prohibited.

Residents in an area where backyard chickens are allowed won't need to get a licence. The Niagara OSPCA and Humane Society will carry out enforcement



**The Township of West Lincoln has updated its bylaws to allow backyard chickens within hamlet areas, though they remain off limit within the urban area of Smithville. ~ Pixabay photo**

on a complaint basis, with those found to violate the bylaw being subject to a \$250 fine.

In getting to this point, the Township worked with relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, as well as a comparison of

other communities within and outside Niagara.

Public consultation included a survey, public consultation meeting, and a statutory public meeting. The clerk also received written comments and an independent public petition. 🌱

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# Peach leaf curl caused by fungus that's living two lives

By Luke Edwards

For scientists, *Taphrina deformans* is a fungus that's fun to study, but for the farmers who must deal with the peach leaf curl it causes, there's no fun in it.

"It's a really fascinating fungus," said Irene Salotti, a researcher in Plant Pathology in the Department of Sustainable Crop Production at Italy's Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Piacenza.

Tender fruit farmers are once again dealing with the disease, though indications are this wave might be less daunting than when it struck 14 years ago.

"It's not as severe as what we saw in 2011," said Wendy McFadden-Smith an integrated pest management specialist who focuses on tender fruit and grapes.

One of the things that makes the fungus unusual, or fascinating in the eyes of someone like Salotti, is that it's dimorphic, with two distinct types of spores.

Blastospores are what cause infection in peach and nectarine trees. When infected, the leaves will curl up - hence the name - and turn a red or yellow colour. Heavy infection can also lead to defoliation and lower crop yields or tree vigour.

Infection of the flowers and fruit is also possible, but is fairly rare, Salotti said. And since so many fall off the tree naturally, it's not always easy to tell when the flowers have been infected.

"It's hard to recognize these types of symptoms," she said.

McFadden-Smith cautioned against the traditional approach of focusing on bud break, suggesting there's a month or more long window during that time frame when the fungus can be problematic.

"We have to start thinking of protection during that time, and not just focus on bud break," she said.

Ascospores are also part of the life cycle for the fungus, and they present their own challenges even though they don't directly infect the trees. The blastospores are dispersed by rain, but the ascospores are dispersed by air, giving them increased range.

"They can travel pretty long distances," said Salotti, adding estimates have it up to a couple of kilometres.

Fungicides can prove effective, though McFadden-Smith cautioned against overuse of Group 7 and 11 fungicides, since that can lead to brown rot resistance. 🌱



Peach leaf curl is caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans* and can lead to a loss of yield and tree vigour among infected orchards. ~ Giancarlo Dessi photo

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# Safety's a year round thing: Ag safety week returns

By Luke Edwards

March marks the biggest week on the calendar for the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, but while the country's ag safety week is a great chance to offer reminders of being safe on the farm, it's something farmers and farmworkers alike should think about each and every day.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week runs from March 16 to 22. Using the hashtag #FarmSafeEveryday, the organization is offering tips and advice for people to think about throughout the year.

"Every year, far too many lives are lost or irreparably changed due to preventable farming accidents," said Sandy Miller, CASA's executive director. "That's why CASA is committed to providing Canadian producers with the information and resources they need to protect the well-being of everyone on their farms and ranches. Safer farms benefit everyone and Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is a reminder for all of us to do our part to prioritize farm safety every day."

Throughout the week CASA will be sharing daily themes, covering health hazards on the farm, emergency preparedness, grain safety, mental health, road and rail safety, and women in agriculture.

Here are a few PSAs CASA is offering up to get farmers and farm workers thinking about safety:

## Prioritize Farm Safety

It's that time of year again! Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is here, reminding everyone about the importance of farm health and safety measures to keep operations safe, sustainable, and successful.

But farm safety is about more than being aware of hazards – it also involves actively discussing safety and making lasting changes that benefit everyone on Canadian farms, whether they live, work, or visit there.

Farm safety is a year-round commitment. By making farm safety a part of our daily routine, we can work together to keep our farms safe and healthy. Because safer farms benefit everyone.

## Investing in Farm Safety

It's no secret that health and safety practices are crucial for safeguarding everyone on the farm.

But did you know that they're also good for business? Effective and proactive health and safety measures are integral to having a thriving farming operation.

Develop a detailed safety plan that aligns with your farm. Be sure to address all health and safety considerations, including identifying potential new stressors.

Not only will having a safety plan unique to your farm help keep everyone safe during everyday work, but it is also essential for emergency preparedness so that you have a plan in place if disaster strikes.

Remember that when you invest in health and safety, you invest in your farm's future.

## Prioritize Your Mental Health

Life on a farm can be incredibly rewarding, but it's far from easy.

Farmers face a long and ever-changing list of challenges. Those challenges, combined with the long hours that come with farming, can place significant strain on a person's mental health, potentially leading to high stress, anxiety, or depression.

Taking care of your mental well-being is essential to farm health and safety. Incorporating healthy behaviours into your routine can go a long way towards protecting your mental well-being. That includes practicing self-care regularly, reaching out to friends to avoid isolation, setting realistic expectations, and limiting negative thoughts.

Remember, there's never any shame in asking for help.

## Be Proactive About Health on the Farm

When it comes to farm hazards, many people first think of tractors and other large machinery. And while it's crucial to be aware of the safety risks associated with machinery, they are only part of the picture.

Farming presents numerous health risks, including working in extreme temperatures, areas with respiratory hazards, and loud noise. In fact, did you know that farm workers have one of the highest rates of hearing loss among all occupations?

That's why it's essential to thoroughly assess your farm operation to identify and address potential health hazards. Every farm health and safety plan should outline how to mitigate health risks. Investing time and resources in healthy practices protects the well-being of everyone on your farm and helps ensure a successful and sustainable operation.

## Women on the Farm

There's no question that women are vital to the strength and success of Canadian farms.

But despite their indispensable role on family farms, particularly with wellness and safety, women's contributions are often undervalued. Women are often responsible for "invisible work" around the farm and home, balancing childcare, family responsibilities, and household management, along with tasks on the farm.

This workload and the unique challenges that women in agriculture face can lead to burnout and isolation.

To create a healthy balance between farm duties, family needs, and personal wellbeing, establish routines and responsibilities and encourage open communication within the family. Building connections and a support network can provide reassurance that you're not alone in your experiences.

By collectively supporting women in agriculture, we can expand agricultural opportunities for future generations. This Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, let's commit to prioritizing farm safety every day. For more information, please visit [agsafetyweek.ca](https://agsafetyweek.ca)

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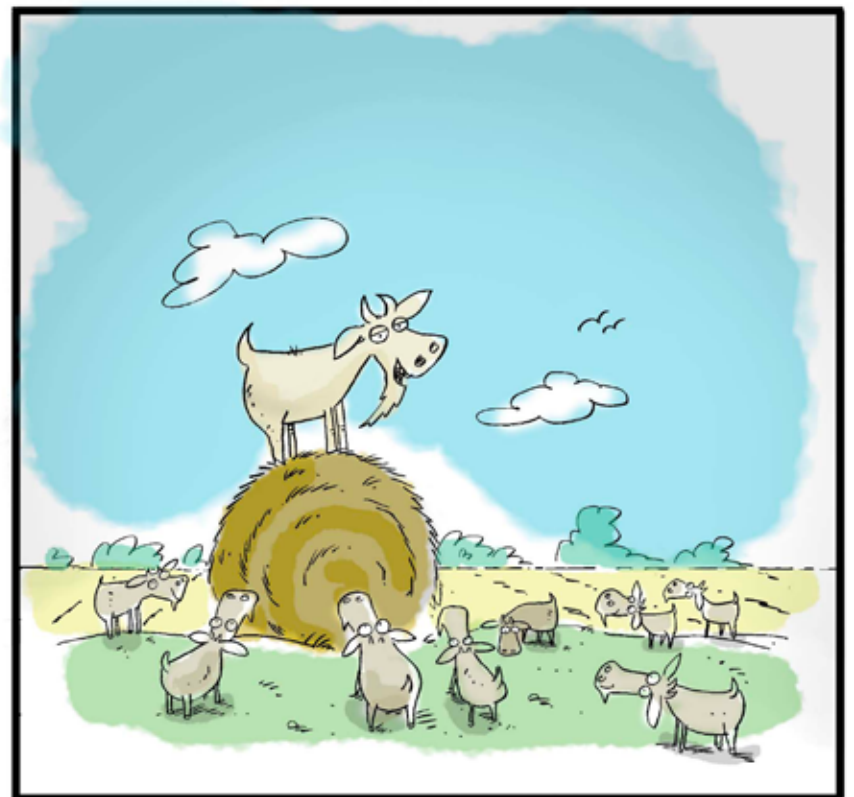
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**the barnders**

by gord.coulthart



"On our farm, even the littlest kids know that farm safety is the key to a barn-load of fun – no kidding around with safety, kiddos."

~ Canadian Agricultural Safety Association image

# Red Trac fundraiser supports Terry Fox Foundation



Red Trac International's Craig Parker helped run a fundraiser for the Terry Fox Foundation, where they raffled off a limited edition pink Bushhog mower. The raffle raised around \$9,000 for Team Pillsy. ~ Luke Edwards photo

## By Luke Edwards

Business competition fades away when it comes to the fight against cancer.

With Joe Pillitteri of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Lakeview Vineyard Equipment nearing the rarefied air of raising \$1 million for the Terry Fox Foundation through Team Pillsy, they got a little closer to that total with the help of a nearby business that on most days would be considered the competition.

"Craig and the Parkers absolutely stepped up when it comes to Terry Fox," said Pillitteri. "It's a pretty selfless thing to do."

For several months the team at Red Trac International in Vineland has been selling tickets for a special raffle. The prize was a limited edition pink Bushhog mower, one of only 50 made. Similar raffles have been held south of the border to support breast cancer research, and when sales consultant Craig Parker was able to get his hands on one, he knew what he wanted to do with it. Parker recalls driving out west and stopping in Thunder Bay to see the Terry Fox monument. It was then, tired from a long drive that Parker realized just what it was Fox was able to accomplish during his Marathon of Hope when he ran a marathon a day on one leg across half the country.

"It gives you a deep appreciation for what he did," said Parker.

The Red Trac team wrapped up the raffle at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention held last month, selling tickets on the trade show floor before drawing the winner's name on the final day. NOTL's

Dan Lambert won, and will be mowing his grass in style for the foreseeable future.

Parker said they raised \$4,000 in ticket sales last year, which was graciously matched by an anonymous donor. With the added sales at the convention, they were looking at a rough total of \$9,000 raised for the foundation.

"We just wanted to raise as much as we could to help Joe out," said Parker.

The expectation is for Team Pillsy to pass the \$1 million mark this year, with Pillitteri saying it looks like it'll happen at the annual comedy fundraiser that will once again be held in September. He said he was "thrilled and feel very fortunate" to have received such support from the community to get to this mark.

"To see him do it will be incredible, and it feels good that we can contribute a little bit," said Parker. 🍀



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# Experts tell farmers cybersecurity is important

By Jeff Helsdon

Cyber security isn't likely at the top of many farmers' minds. But it should be.

Take a look around the modern farm, and it's easy to see the many different points where farmers are vulnerable to hackers. Tractors and combines are a good place to start with GPS systems and computer-aided operation. For dairy farmers, computers are at the heart of robotic milking systems, and electronics operate feeders and fans in many livestock barns and silos.

Dr. Ali Dehghantanha, a professor of cybersecurity at the University of Guelph, has a background in battling cyber threats in the military and finance worlds. On Jan. 30, he presented some interesting stories

of his past involvement in cyberattacks against farms at the annual meeting of the Norfolk Soil and Crop Improvement Association.

Becoming infected with malware may be as simple as clicking on an attachment in an email.

He gave the example of a dairy farm that was attacked twice and paid the ransom. When the fee went up a third time, he was called. Dehghantanha's team went through a containment, eradication, and reorganization of the system but turned down an offer for ongoing service, preferring to use their IT people. Then, 15 days later, the milk and food system wasn't working.

"This time, the attackers came with the best ransomware," Dehghantanha said. "It was something

we didn't have an encryption key for."

The ransomware was beaten eventually.

Although farmers wonder why hackers would come after them, Dehghantanha said some hacker groups specialize in agriculture.

"They want to optimize their profit of gain," he said. "If they find a target easy to attack, they will come after you."

Groups targeting agriculture are working from China, Russia, Iran and domestically. Many of the domestic hackers are animal rights activists whose goal is not money, but shutting down the operation. Dehghantanha said up to 60 per cent of businesses that are attacked by ransomware end up shutting down.

Andrew Burns, agriculture manager for McFarland Rowlands Insurance, spoke after Dehghantanha and said it's suspected foreign countries could be after farmers to shut down the food supply if a war erupted.

## In case of an attack

If a ransomware message pops up on the screen, Dehghantanha said backdoors were likely created on the system, and valuable information was already stolen.

"If you see ransomware messages on the screen, it's been there for months, if not years," he said.

At that point, he said the best thing to do is to call an expert.

## Prevention

Dehghantanha suggested many simple things farmers can do to prevent an attack. These include:

- Having a complex, unique password
- Conducting regular vulnerability assessments
- Subscribing to a cyber security monitoring service
- Finding the right expert
- Attending cybersecurity workshops

## Insurance

Burns said the issues associated with a cyberattack can be more widespread than shutting down computers on one farm. Hackers can access contact lists, and viruses can spread quickly. This opens the infected farmer to lawsuits from those to whom the virus was spread.

Cyber insurance protects from such lawsuits and also assists with paying the costs of fixing infected computers. Burns said cyber insurance is still reasonably priced.



Dr. Ali Dehghantanha wowed the crowd at the Norfolk Soil and Crop Improvement Association with stories of how scary cyberattacks can be for farmers. ~ Jeff Helsdon photo



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# Right to Repair: Farmers influential in prying open ‘digital locks’ on electronics

**By Diane Baltaz**

Two federal bills that recently received Royal Assent restore Canadians’ “right to repair” their own equipment, including tractors and combines, along with greater interoperability.

On Nov. 7, Bills C-244 and C-294 – the two bills intended to amend Canada’s Copyright Act – received Royal Assent. These changes to the act allow circumvention of technological protection measures (TPMs) or “digital locks” in order to allow faster diagnosis, maintenance, repair and interoperability of Canadians’ technological tools, including the right to obtain parts from other companies.

Various lobby groups from across Canada, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), laud these bills as a critical step towards Canadian agriculture’s innovation and sustainability.

Bill C-244, introduced in 2022 by Wilson Miao, the Liberal MP for Richmond Centre in BC, allows consumers and businesses to bypass TPMs such as encryption and password locks to access electronic components without having to travel to a dealership for repairs.

Bill C-294, introduced by Jeremy Patzer, Conservative MP for Saskatchewan’s Cypress Hills-Grasslands, focuses on the interoperability of different computer programs or devices in which they are embedded, including the right to purchase parts from other brands without violating copyright laws.

Simply put, this means that farmers can repair their equipment more easily without being forced to pay authorized dealers to diagnose and repair equipment, often at the additional cost of long waits. Equipment breakdowns became particularly detrimental during harvest periods, resulting in lost productivity.

“This is great,” exclaimed Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk OFA director Larry Davis of Burford. “We (OFA) have been asking the government for legislation that lets people make their own repairs and run diagnostics without having to travel to a dealership. We want to fix things on our own farms ourselves right now, compared with waiting a week or two for a dealership to fix equipment, especially in the middle of harvest.”

“With interoperability, instead of taking my equipment to one colour machine dealer, I can now take it to another colour. We really need to try to work on repairs ourselves, on our own farms,” added Davis.

Proponents such as Western University’s assistant professor Alissa Centivany lauds the new laws’ benefits, including better longevity and care of equipment, minimized waste,

improved farm productivity and Canadian food security.

Centivany has researched technology and copyright issues for decades. She co-founded the Canadian Repair Coalition (CanRepair) and testified on copyright’s impact on right-to-repair at parliamentary committees. She uses what she calls the “Three Cousins” to address systematic issues around consumer products: reparability, interoperability and durability.

While Bills C-244 and C-294 deal with copyright’s impact upon digital encryption on multiple products, Centivany’s advocacy focused on the misuse of copyright to stop repairs that can be done by equipment owners or local mechanics. She stated that she entered her work “through the farmer portal.”

“Farmers kicked it off – they need credit as they pushed this issue forward,” she said. “It began with the USA farm movement. It went before state and federal legislatures and resulted in memorandums of understanding, and eventually legislation in a few states.”

Centivany explained these initial gains occurred in the United States because that is where the major farm equipment companies are headquartered. Because these companies are multinational in operation, Canadian farmers’ own advocacy gained momentum after the initial U.S. success. This occurred around 2016, she added.

“One must ask, what has copyright to do with farming?” said Centivany. “Computer codes get treated similarly to copyright on books, resulting in a ‘lock’, which farmers are not allowed to break even if the repair has nothing to do with the code.”

“Farmers are really sophisticated about their equipment and modifying it. We should let them keep doing what they’ve always done well,” she added.

Although critics call these bills a good step, some advocates say that stand alone legislation is still needed for a more comprehensive right to repair. These include reforms in provincial consumer protection laws that require manufacturers to design products with ease of repairs without the fear of infringing upon various intellectual property rights.

“It’s still complicated as farmers need to get the tools,” said Davis. “There are some open dealers and repair shops to get these applications. These repairs aren’t only for farmers but also for other types of equipment.”

Centivany said that Canada remains behind Europe in right to repair issues. However, she said that Quebec passed Bill 29, which protects consumers from planned obsoles-



**Gone are the days when fixing a tractor, like the one pictured or others of its vintage, was a simple job that a farmer could undertake. Tractors have become more complicated with onboard computers and GPS units, requiring repairs at a dealership. Canada’s Right to Repair legislation will allow repairs outside of the dealership, which is something farm groups lobbied for.**

cence and promotes reparability and durability of goods.

She added that the Ontario Legislature passed first reading on Bill 187, an act intended to protect right

to repair items ranging from household appliances, wheel chairs and motorized vehicles, including heavy farming equipment. 🌱

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# Status quo for Ontario's farmers, as confidence drops

*OFA survey uncovers a few surprises among some familiar themes*

**By Luke Edwards**

With trade, tax and tariff concerns swirling, Ontario farmers generally held pat amid dropping confidence in the industry last year.

That's according to the results of a business confidence survey conducted by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. This is the second year the organization has conducted the survey, and OFA senior policy analyst Ben LeFort said there have been some noticeable shifts in the past year.

"We see enough of a difference in the confidence and investment that tells us a story of a drop of (overall) confidence over the past 12 months," he said.

Responses from the 1,061 farmers across the province who filled out the survey in December saw a fairly sharp drop in the number of people who were "very confident" in the outlook of Ontario's farm sector in 2025. That number fell six points from 18 to 12 per cent. Those who answered "somewhat confident" also dropped slightly, while those who answered with "not so confident" or "not at all confident" rose about five and two percentage points, respectively.

Similar trends held when farms were asked for their outlook for their own individual operation.

At the same time, more farmers reported staying the course last year than the previous. When asked to describe the growth of their farm

in 2024, 74 per cent said it stayed the same, up from 68 per cent in 2023.

Meanwhile there were matching two-per cent decreases for those who reported expanding their business (17 per cent in 2023 to 15 per cent in 2024) and those who reported downsizing (11 per cent in 2023 to nine per cent in 2024). Those who reported diversifying also dropped two per cent, but that figure was already small, going from four to two per cent.

LeFort called it "a year of farmers staying pat, staying with the status quo."

A drop in confidence and investment wasn't terribly surprising, especially given the timing, as the survey ran just as the threat of American tariffs began ramping up.

"It's hard to feel extremely confident when you've just heard this news," he said, adding with the ongoing uncertainty, he expects this mood to continue throughout 2025. LeFort also expects they'll be adding more trade and tariff specific questions to the survey in year three.

Beyond getting a general sense of the mood among farmers, the survey also sought input on issues facing farmers. LeFort said this will help the organization prioritize its lobbying and advocacy efforts.

And on this front, there was a little more stability. Taxes and energy costs returned as the top two policy priorities farmers reported. Protecting the right of property access, a new option this year, took third spot, beating out encouraging Ontarians to buy local, which was last year's third highest ranked policy priority.

However, buy local was still the fourth highest, and given more recent news he suspects it remains a high priority for farmers.

One somewhat surprising figure on the tax front is that farmers identified rising property taxes as the biggest concern.

"The carbon tax certainly gets much more headlines...but property tax has been a growing concern for the past decade," LeFort said.

Looking ahead to 2025, farmers expect rising input costs to pose the biggest challenge to their business, a repeat of last year. In second spot, however, is rising insurance costs, which came as a bit of a surprise to LeFort.

"The cost of insurance rising to number two is definitely a red flag. It really highlights the importance of doing this survey for us," he said.

That is one of the overall goals of the project, LeFort said.

"We feel like we have a pretty good handle on what those issues are but we want to be able to quantify what are the top issues that our members want us working on," he said. And as they get more years of data it will become even more useful as they can track trends and see how things are changing or staying the same.

LeFort will continue doing deep dives into the data. He was happy to receive nearly 1,100 responses, up from around 800 the first year, and which included a wide variety of farm types from all corners of the province. One thing he and the OFA team will be pushing for going forward, though, is to get more young farmers providing responses. The most recent survey saw only four per cent of respondents in the 35

*Continued to page A19 →*

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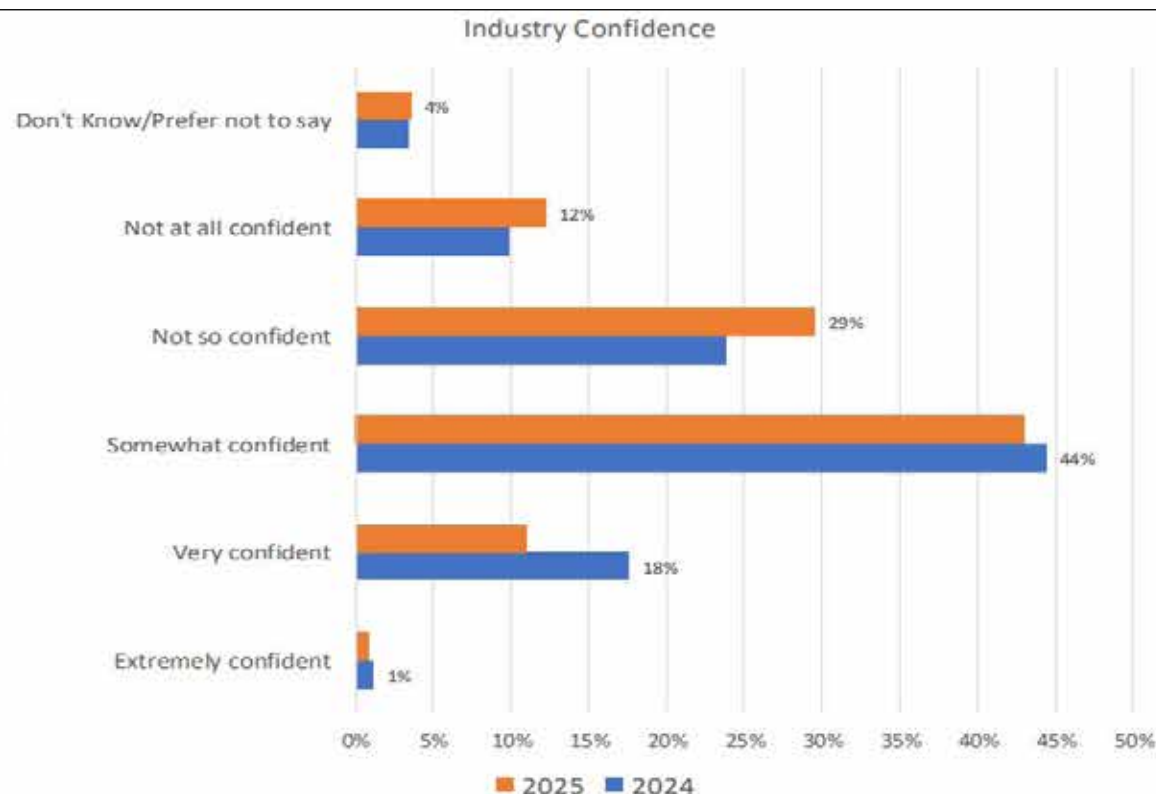


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# How confident are you in the outlook for the farm sector in Ontario in 2025?



According to a survey conducted by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in December, farmers in the province have less confidence in the outlook of their industry than they did at the same time in 2023. ~ OFA image

→ Continued from page A18

and younger category. Farmers tend to skew older, but even so, that's a number he wants to see increase.

Those younger people who did respond seem more optimistic.

In fact, LeFort said there's basically "a direct line between age and confidence."

Also interesting, was an increase in confidence among farmers in the north of the province. But it's not all sunshine and roses, as those farmers documented a distinct issue with a lack of protection for crop damage as a result of wildlife. LeFort said he wasn't surprised, as he's worked on this issue in the past.

As he continues to dig into the results, LeFort plans to offer up insights to local OFA chapters, with any unique findings at the local level.

He encourages farmers to check out the results and watch a webinar that was recorded on the survey. Both are available on the OFA website. He also encourages farmers to keep an eye out for the next survey, which will run again in December.

For the survey, there were 51 farmers in Niagara who responded, 28 from Haldimand, and nine from Hamilton-Wentworth. 🌱

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# Delicious Recipes

## Slainte: Enjoy these recipes with your green beer this month

As we near the day where everyone gets to celebrate their Irish heritage - even the ones who may not have any - it's a good reminder that the Emerald Isle's cuisine extends beyond the humble potato. Irish dishes can take advantage of other root vegetables like parsnips, or leafy greens like cabbage. Irish stew is a well known favourite and bread lovers can enjoy a slice of freshly baked soda bread. Here are a few Irish inspired dishes with an Ontario twist courtesy of Foodland Ontario that you can make to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, or really any time of year.



### Irish Stew

#### Ingredients

- 8 Ontario lamb shanks
- Salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) each dried thyme and rosemary
- 2 bottles (341 mL each) Ontario stout-based beer
- 3 cups (750 mL) beef broth
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) packed brown sugar
- 3 Ontario Onions, cut into wedges
- 3 each Ontario carrots and parsnips, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) pieces
- Half Ontario rutabaga, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) wedges
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped fresh parsley

#### Instructions

Season lamb with salt and pepper; coat with flour. In large ovenproof casserole, heat half of the oil over medium-high heat. In batches, brown lamb, adding more oil as needed. Remove to a plate. Stir in any remaining flour, garlic, thyme and rosemary; stir over medium heat for 1 minute. Remove from heat and gradually stir in beer; bring to boil, scraping up brown bits. Boil for 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir in 2 cups (500 mL) of broth. Return lamb to pan; bring to boil. Cover and bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 1-1/2 hours.

Meanwhile in skillet, melt butter and sugar over medium heat; stir in vegetables; season with salt and pepper. Add remaining broth and bring to boil. Add to lamb, cover and bake in 350°F (180°C) oven another 1-1/4 hours or until lamb and vegetables are tender. Sprinkle with parsley to serve.



### Savoury Soda Bread

#### Ingredients

- 2 tsp (10 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 Ontario onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups (500 mL) whole wheat flour
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) large flake oats
- 2 tsp (10 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) each baking powder and baking soda
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) cold butter
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) shredded Ontario old cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) finely chopped fresh Ontario parsley
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) Ontario buttermilk
- 1 Ontario egg

#### Instructions

In small nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion; cook until softened about 3 minutes, stirring often. Remove onions to small bowl; set aside. In large bowl, combine whole wheat flour, all-purpose flour, oats, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Cut in butter with pastry blender or 2 knives until crumbly. Stir in onion, cheese and parsley until combined. In medium bowl, whisk together buttermilk and egg; add to flour mixture. With spatula stir until dough forms a ball. Knead dough on lightly floured surface for 1 to 3 minutes or until it just comes together. Shape into an 8-inch (23 cm) round loaf. Place on parchment lined baking sheet. Cut "X" in top of dough, half the depth of the loaf and to within 1-inch (2.5 cm) of the edge. Dust top of loaf with flour. Bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 50 minutes or until the bottom of loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Cool on wire rack.



### Irish Beef and Vegetable Pies

#### Ingredients

- 12 oz (375 g) lean Ontario ground beef
- 1 Ontario onion, chopped
- 1 cup (250 mL) diced peeled Ontario potatoes
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) each diced Ontario carrot and parsnip
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried rosemary leaves, crumbled
- 1 cup (250 mL) sodium-reduced beef broth
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) tomato paste
- 2 tsp (10 mL) Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp (5 mL) Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
- 1 Ontario egg
- 1 pkg (400 g) ready-to-use refrigerated pie crusts
- Coarse salt (optional)

#### Instructions

Heat large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef, onion, potato, carrot, parsnip and rosemary; cook stirring, breaking up beef with spoon, until beef is browned, about 8 minutes. In medium bowl, whisk together broth, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt and pepper; stir into skillet and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until vegetables are tender and mixture thickens, about 15 minutes. Mash mixture roughly with fork. Transfer to bowl; refrigerate to cool completely. In small bowl, whisk egg with 2 tsp (10 mL) of water; set aside. On lightly floured surface, using 5-1/2-inch (14 cm) bowl, cut out 4 circles from each crust, rerolling scraps. Roll each circle into a 6-inch (15 cm) circle. Equally divide beef mixture onto one half of each circle, leaving a 1/2-inch (1 cm) edge. Brush edge with egg wash; fold dough over filling to enclose. Seal with fork. Cut slits on top; brush with egg wash. Sprinkle with coarse salt, if using. Place on large parchment paperlined baking sheet. Bake in 400°F (200°C) oven until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 5 minutes before serving.



### Irish Pan Haggerty

#### Ingredients

- 5 slices Ontario bacon, diced
- 2 cups (500 mL) thinly sliced Ontario onion
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 lbs (1 kg) Ontario white potatoes, thinly sliced (not peeled)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) shredded aged Ontario cheddar cheese
- 1-1/4 cups (300 mL) chicken broth
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh Ontario chives

#### Instructions

In 12-inch (30 cm) cast iron or oven-proof skillet, over medium-high heat, cook bacon until crispy. Remove to medium bowl. Add onion to skillet; cook for 8 minutes, stirring often. Stir in garlic; cook 2 minutes or until onions are very soft and caramelized. Stir into bacon. Remove skillet from heat. Arrange layer of potatoes in bottom of skillet. Top with half of the bacon mixture; season with salt and pepper. Add another layer of potatoes; sprinkle with 1/2 cup (125 mL) of the cheese. Add another layer of potatoes, top with remaining bacon mixture; season with salt and pepper. Add final layer of potatoes. Pour in broth. Cover tightly with foil or lid. Cook over medium-low heat for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove foil. Top with remaining cheese. Bake in 425°F (220°C) oven for 10 to 12 minutes, until cheese is bubbly and lightly browned. Sprinkle with chives.



→ Continued from page A16



### Rainbow Trout Chowder

#### Ingredients

- 1-1/2 tbsp (22 mL) butter
- 2 slices smoked Ontario bacon, diced
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced Ontario parsnip
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced Ontario onion
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) diced Ontario celery
- 2 cloves Ontario garlic, minced
- 2 Ontario yellow flesh potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1-1/2 tbsp (22 mL) all-purpose flour
- 3 cups (750 mL) fish stock or vegetable broth
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) Ontario craft beer, pilsner or lager (optional)
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) chopped fresh Ontario thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 250 g Ontario rainbow trout or lake white fish, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) 35% Ontario whipping cream
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

#### Garnish:

- 2 slices smoked Ontario bacon, cooked and chopped

#### Instructions

In large pot, over medium-high heat, melt butter. Add bacon and cook stirring for 2 minutes. Add parsnip, onion and celery, cook stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes or until softened. Add garlic; cook stirring for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant. Add potatoes and cook stirring constantly for 4 minutes. Add flour; cook stirring for 2 minutes.

Add stock, beer (if using), thyme and bay leaf; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and cook until potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. Stir in fish and cream; return to simmer, stirring just until the fish is tender and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Remove bay leaf and discard. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish each bowl with chopped bacon.



### Irish cream apple cake

#### Ingredients

- 1-3/4 cups (425 mL) all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp (10 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 3/4 cup (175 mL) butter, softened
- 1 cup (250 mL) granulated sugar
- 2 large Ontario eggs
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) Irish cream liqueur

- 2 cups (500 mL) peeled, diced Ontario apples (McIntosh or Empire), about 2 medium

#### Irish Cream Sauce:

- 1 cup (250 mL) 18% Ontario table cream
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) cornstarch
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) Irish cream liqueur

#### Instructions

In medium bowl, mix together flour, baking powder and salt; set aside. In large bowl with electric mixer, beat butter and sugar until fluffy; beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in flour

mixture alternately with liqueur until combined. Stir in apples.

Spread in lightly greased and floured 9-inch (23 cm) square baking pan. Bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 35 to 40 minutes or until tester inserted in centre comes out clean and top is golden brown. Let cool slightly. Serve warm or cold with sauce.

Irish Cream Sauce: Pour cream into medium saucepan. In small bowl, mix together sugar and cornstarch; whisk into cream. Bring to boil over medium heat, stirring constantly, until bubbles; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in liqueur. 🍀



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# Join Niagara 4-H in 2025 for some hands-on fun

By Ann Marie Chechalk

What is the best kept secret in Niagara? It's the Niagara 4-H program!

For over a century 4-H Ontario has built youth into leaders. With roots in the rural areas, it now welcomes anyone from the towns, the cities and the rural areas. 4-H brings together youth aged six to 21 and passionate, engaged volunteer leaders to learn about selected topics through fun, hands-on activities and mentorship. Provincial camps, conferences, competitions and exchanges and scholarships are available to all who choose to find out about this wonderful program.

In Niagara we are always looking to add new leaders and new members. A 4-H club consists of six members and two screened leaders completing 12 hours of club work and an achievement day. Usually the 12 hours are divided into six meetings. Perhaps you have seen the hard working youth at our local West Niagara Fair, showing their calf, rabbit, guinea pig or goat. Maybe you exclaimed over the beautiful artwork or cake decorating by a lifeskill member that exhibited in the homecraft area. Maybe you have a skill to share.

To find out what it takes to become a screened leader and offer your talents to 4-H members in Niagara call Ann Marie at 905-973-3459 or email at [chechalk@outlook.com](mailto:chechalk@outlook.com) and join us as a volunteer or a member!

Members must be nine years of age by Jan. 1, 2025 and can continue until 21 years. Members may join any/all clubs for the one fee.

The membership fee is \$120, with \$110 being paid to 4-H Ontario to run the program. The remaining \$10 is paid to Niagara for manuals, photocopying, postage, banquets and awards, annual meetings, judging days, insurance, camp sponsorship, club sponsorship, club start up etc.

Niagara is working hard to start a Cloverbud program, watch for news of this.

Here's a list of clubs:

**Cavy Club** - leader Amber Gilbert, contact her at 905-321-8260 or [ambergilbert80@gmail.com](mailto:ambergilbert80@gmail.com). Amber will have guinea pigs to lend if you do not own your own.

**Cooking Club** - cooking club contact is [lynngibson21@gmail.com](mailto:lynngibson21@gmail.com) or [Deannabartels@gmail.com](mailto:Deannabartels@gmail.com).

**Lincoln Dairy Club** - learn about caring for and showing a calf. Contact Brad Eggink [Brad.eggink@stgen.com](mailto:Brad.eggink@stgen.com) or Amanda Comfort, [comfort.amanda@gmail.com](mailto:comfort.amanda@gmail.com).

**Niagara Goat Club** - learn about caring for and showing a goat. Call Ann Marie-905-973-3459 or email [chechalk@outlook.com](mailto:chechalk@outlook.com).

**Niagara Rabbit Club** - leader Amber Gilbert, contact her at 905-321-8260 or [ambergilbert80@gmail.com](mailto:ambergilbert80@gmail.com).

**Niagara Explore Club** - call Andrew Chechalk-905-572-3459 or [achechalk@outlook.com](mailto:achechalk@outlook.com), for more information.

**Niagara Plowing Club** - email Evan Scott, [evanth.scott@hotmail.com](mailto:evanth.scott@hotmail.com) or Calvin Dunlop [got2lovegoats@gmail.com](mailto:got2lovegoats@gmail.com).



Be like Tyler Gilbert and join Niagara 4-H. As a member for many years this past December Tyler was awarded the Niagara Federation of Agriculture Top Cavy Club Member, the Rose Ridge Farm Career Achievement Award and the Champion Livestock Trophy. Tyler's Mom Amber supports Niagara 4-H by leading the Cavy Club and assisting with the Wainfleet Dairy Club. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photo

**Wainfleet Dairy Calf Club** - learn about caring for and showing a calf. Email Brenda Roszell at [feederlanefarms@hotmail.com](mailto:feederlanefarms@hotmail.com).

Registration to join 4-H is done through 4-H Ontario's website. The 2025 online registration form will be available on the 4-H Ontario website and can be accessed by clicking the Join Us button at the top of the website. <https://4-hontario.ca/youth/become-a-member>

## AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

**Spring arrives one minute after 5 a.m. on March 20 this year, ushering in a new season and one farmers hope will bring the right amount of rain, warmth and sunlight.**

**March is one of those unpredictable months that can be equal parts winter, spring and summer – and sometimes all in the same day.**

**As you're starting to get out in the fields and preparing for the upcoming growing seasons, consider setting aside some time for any or all of these ag-related events coming up.**

**MARCH 16–22**

### CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY WEEK

IA good reminder every year, Canadian Agricultural Safety Week returns March 16–22. Organized by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, the third week in March each year is a chance to offer tips and advice on how farmers and their employees can stay safe, including information on how to be proactive, how to invest in farm safety, as well as other topics like mental health.

For more information visit [casa-acsa.ca](http://casa-acsa.ca).

**MARCH 17–18**

### GRAIN FARMERS OF ONTARIO MARCH CLASSIC

Taking place in London, the province's grain growers are invited to register for the March Classic, a full day of speakers, panels and educational opportunities. Presenters will discuss the grain markets, succession planning, changing economic and labour trends, and more.

For more information, or to register, visit [gfo.ca](http://gfo.ca).

**MARCH 24–26**

### EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO AGM

Ontario's egg farmers will be meeting to discuss the state of the industry in late March in Niagara Falls, as the Egg Farmers of Ontario hold their annual general meeting.

It runs from Monday, March 24 to Wednesday, March 26 at Fallsview Casino Resort. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the organization. Advanced registration by March 14 is required. A link to the registration page can be found on the OFA website under the community events tab.

# Federal agriculture minister won't seek re-election

**Lawrence MacAulay  
retiring from politics after  
nearly four-decade career**

**By Niagara Farms Staff**

There remain many questions about what the future of the federal government will look like, but one thing's for sure, it'll have a new agriculture minister following the next election.

Lawrence MacAulay announced he won't seek re-election, capping off a nearly 37-year career in federal politics. In a statement posted to X, MacAulay said he's leaving politics in order to spend more time with family.

"It has been the honour of my life to represent the people of Eastern Prince Edward Island, but I'm not a young man anymore and I want to spend whatever time I have left with my family," he said.

MacAulay became an MP in 1988 when he was elected as the representative for the riding of Cardigan. Since then he's held several positions with government,

including two stints as the agriculture minister. In 2015 as Justin Trudeau came to power, he appointed MacAulay as the Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food. He'd return to the position after a brief stint as Minister of Veteran Affairs.

He grew up on a dairy and seed potato farm, a property they still own and lease out.

"When I put my name on a ballot for the first time in 1988, I could've never imagined where my career in politics would take me," he said.

MacAulay's retirement statement didn't single out any individual accomplishments for a career that spanned so long, saying there are so many he could name.

"But if I can be remembered for anything, I hope folks know that I have always tried to make life better for the people of our province and our country," he said.

MacAulay's announcement came two days after the Ontario election returned the PCs to power at Queen's Park. In that election, MPP Rob Flack was re-elected as



**Lawrence MacAulay, who had served as MP for Cardigan in Prince Edward Island since 1988 and Minister of Agriculture twice since 2015, won't be seeking re-election when Canadians head to the polls next. ~ Lawrence MacAulay, X photo**

MPP for Elgin-Middlesex-London. Before the election was called Flack was serving as the Minister

of Agriculture, Food and Agri-Business. 🌱

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