

Special financing on now



WEIDEMANN
designed for work

TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

ONEIDA NEW HOLLAND
905.765.5011
634 FOURTH LINE
CALEDONIA ONTARIO

ONEIDA NEW HOLLAND NIAGARA
905.688.5160
1410 FOURTH AVE ST
CATHARINES ONTARIO



NIAGARA

PROMOTING AGRITOURISM

A4

PLOWING MATCH PREP

A5

FARMS

NIAGARA REGION - ONTARIO'S ORCHARD

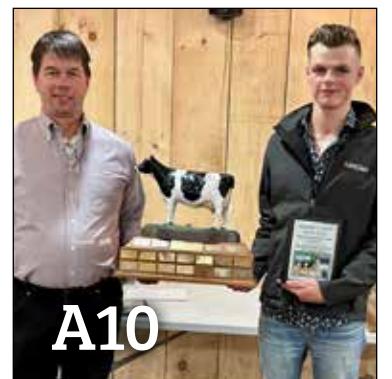
ISSUE 10 / JANUARY 2025



A3
Clean vines, new wines



A7
Doggie donors



A10
Holy cow

WISHING YOU A HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!

Larry "BILKO" Bilkszto
Your Local REALTOR® Since 1989

www.bilko.ca - larrybilko@gmail.com
office 905-641-1110 hm office 905-562-3000
RE/MAX Garden City Realty Inc., Brokerage

O'NEIL'S 2025 Special!
FARM AND LAWN EQUIPMENT (1971) LTD.
2461 Reg Rd 56 Binbrook, Ontario
PH: 905.572.6714 Email: info@oneils.ca

New
20HP Compact & Loader

0% For 84 Months
NO Money Down!
\$ 255.00 a Month!

O.A.C.

Happy New Year
2025

Thank you for contributing to the success of 2024! We look forward to continuing to bring you the local agricultural news that matters most in 2025.

WALKER
WINTER VERSATILITY

Numerous solutions to transform your Walker Mower into a snow removal workhorse
SNOWBLOWERS • DOZER BLADES • ROTARY BROOMS • OPERATOR CABS

PIC'S MOTOR CLINIC 2514 Hwy 20, Fonthill • 905-892-3041
picsmotordclinic.com



Premier
Equipment

premierequipment.ca

2024 END OF SEASON BLOWOUT

FINANCING RATES AND OFFERS END JAN. 31ST, 2025

GREAT RATES STARTING AT
1.99% FINANCING FOR **24 MONTHS**
OR 2.5% FOR 48 MONTHS
OR
UP TO \$20,000 CASH IN LIEU
ON FEATURED PRE-OWNED UNITS!



STK#143975

\$3,500
CASH IN LIEU

JD 5075GL 2018 ... \$57,995
OPEN STATION, 24/12, 3 REMOTES,
MFWD, 1129 HRS



STK#137207

\$5,000
CASH IN LIEU

JD 5100GN 2022 ... \$109,995
NARROW, MFWD, PREMIUM CAB,
24F/12R, 132 HRS



STK#142196

\$5,000
CASH IN LIEU

JD 5100R 2018 ... \$83,995
16/16 COMMANDQUAD, STD AIR SEAT, 2
REMOTES, JOYSTICK, MFWD, 1875 HRS



STK#142913

\$5,000
CASH IN LIEU

JD 5125M 2022 ... \$135,995
32/16, PREM CAB, 3 REMOTES, DUAL MID
REMOTES, 2 SPEED PTO, 178 HRS



STK#139690

\$15,000
CASH IN LIEU

JD 8295R 2014 ... \$221,995
PREM CAB WITH SUSPENSION, IVT (50K),
ILS, 5 PREM REMOTES, 6392 HRS

WinterGreen
ON NOW!
0% FOR 60 MONTHS
FINANCING
ON ALL COMPACT TRACTORS

HONDA
Honda snow blowers
available now!
Visit us to find out more!

WINTER BOOKING PROGRAM SPECIAL
10% OFF
PARTS AND LABOUR
ON REPAIRS
WHEN BOOKED BEFORE
FEBRUARY 15, 2025
AND INSPECTED BY
MARCH 31, 2025
Call your local Service Department!

WINTER PARTS ORDER Program
December - January
*Deferred payment options available until November 15, 2025! Ask for details.
SCAN HERE
to learn more about the Winter Parts Order Program!

Smithville - (905) 957-2133
2887 South Grimsby Rd #13, Smithville ON

Direct Parts Line: (289) 797-0071
Direct Service Line: (289) 799-4290

HONDA **STIHL**
AVAILABLE AT SELECT LOCATIONS!



NIAGARA FARMS

Publisher

Stewart Grant • stew@granthaven.com

Editor

Luke Edwards • luke@granthaven.com

Business Development

Heather Dunbar • heather@granthaven.com

Graphic Design

Erin Parsons • niagarafarmsnewspaper@gmail.com

Billing Administrator

Jen Gaetan • jen@granthaven.com

Contributor

Ann Marie Chechalk

36 Water St. St. Marys, ON, PO Box 2310 N4X 1A2

niagarafarmsnewspaper@gmail.com | 519-868-1290 | granthaven.com



Restoring small-town journalism, one community at a time!

**YOU CAN'T PREDICT THE FUTURE
BUT WE CAN HELP PROTECT IT.**



meester
O/B P.V. & V. INSURANCE CENTRE LTD.

1 800 465 8256 | 905 957 2333 | info@meesterinsurance.com

www.meesterinsurance.com

Clean vines, new wines focus of \$2M Ontario research grant

By Niagara Farms Staff

Research at Brock University aimed at improving Ontario's grape and wine industry got an injection of funding last month.

The Ontario Research Fund announced \$2 million in funding for an ongoing project run by the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute. Called the Viticulture Innovation and Next-generation Oenology Solutions: Strengthening Ontario's Grape and Wine Sector for Climate Resilience, Innovation Excellence and Global Economic Leadership, or VINO Solutions for those on a word count, the project includes work into commercializing several tools for climate adaptation, disease and pest resistance, and more.

"Our proactive, integrative approach of building resiliency into both grape and wine production systems by combining academic expertise and industrial partnerships across the country, will ensure the Ontario grape and wine sector continues to be a leader in cool climate wine production," said Debbie Inglis, CCOVI director and professor of biological sciences. Inglis is also the principal investigator for VINO Solutions.

The project includes several aspects. Among them: developing disease-free grapevine material for propagation at nurseries, grapevine testing services and yeast identification, new projects for controlling insect pests in vineyards, unique Ontario yeasts that can help over-

come fermentation challenges brought on by climate change, licensing of new grapevine propagation technique, and new wine styles.

Knowledge translation programs are also a part of the project.

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership previously provided funding as well. All told, support from government, industry partners and Brock has totaled \$7.4 million for the project.

But that financial support pales in comparison to the impact the grape and wine industry has on the Ontario economy, said Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff.

"Brock University's project is a breakthrough for Ontario's \$5.5-billion grape and wine industry," he said. "It gives grape growers access to clean plant material, a robust pest management strategy and methods to expand the selection of world-class wines they produce."

People from several organizations are collaborating in the project. It includes people from Brock, Niagara College, Simon Fraser University, the University of Guelph, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Ontario Grape and Wine Research Inc., the Canadian Grapevine Certification Network, Seeger Vineyards, Schenck Farms and Greenhouse, Illumina, Upper Canada Growers, Cave Springs Vineyard, ABAzyne BioSciences, Synergy Semiochemical Corporation and Stouck Vineyards. 🌿

Front page photo: Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) is leading a multi-institutional project, headed by CCOVI Director Debbie Inglis, to develop new grape growing and fermenting approaches that will boost the grape and wine industry. Team members on the wine quality projects include (from left) Biological Sciences master's student Frédéric Rivard, Inglis, Lab Manager and Technologist Fei Yang, and Biological Sciences master's student Reid Ball. ~ Brock University photo

FARM FOR SALE



PRICE IS \$2,820,000



COLDWELL BANKER
BIG CREEK REALTY

This beautiful former tobacco farm is roughly 146.2 acres in size and is now available on Glen Erie Line. Approximately 115 acres of sandy loam workable soil, 28 acres woods/bush and approximately 4 acres including the house and barns. Portions of the property have been tilled to allow proper drainage. Relatively flat topography. MLS#40677865

James
DEGROOTE
BROKER OF RECORD

519-582-1023 | 275 James St., Delhi, ON N4B 2B2 | bigcreek@oxford.net

www.bigcreekrealty.com

New name for provincial agritourism organization



To go along with its new name, Agritourism Ontario also has a few major projects it's hoping to undertake in 2025. ~ Agritourism Ontario photos

By Luke Edwards

If anyone would know the importance of branding, it would be an organization focused on tourism.

So it shouldn't have come as much of a surprise that the association formerly known as Farm Fresh Ontario has been renamed Agritourism Ontario, a change that coincides with some new projects the provincial organization is launching in 2025.

"Farm Fresh Ontario sounds nice, but it doesn't really describe what we did," said Kevin Vallier, CEO of Agritourism Ontario.

The association has been around for a while, its founding took place in 1973, but has had a few different public facing names. In addition to not really getting at the core of their service, Vallier said the previous name also often got people confused with similar sounding organizations like Foodland Ontario.

Additionally, the term agritourism has become more accepted in the vernacular as farm operations have come to better understand

the opportunities that exist in that area to add revenue.

However, even with the name change, Vallier stressed their focus remains unchanged. Agriculture, after all, is the first part of the agritourism portmanteau.

"We want to make sure the focus is still on agriculture," he said.

"At the end of the day, we're connecting families to farms."

And with that focus in mind, the name change also comes with a couple projects they're working on. The first, is a new app they plan to develop to better hit that goal of connecting families to farms.

"We want to make it easier for people to visit a farm," Vallier said.

Planning is still in the high-level phase, but the CEO envisions a service that offers information on things like what's in season, where people can find pick-your-own farms or other farm tours, as well as an easy access point to get tickets or passes.

He also sees the potential of a space in the app for farms that offer wedding services, as well as an itinerary builder for someone in the city who wants to make a day trip and hit a few farm-related spots.

Other regions, such as Hawaii and Italy have launched similar services, Vallier said, and their plan is to take a "greatest hits" approach to combine what's worked elsewhere into one app.

To do so, he said it's important to work with as many agricultural associations as possible to get as much information to the fingertips of would-be visitors.

"We welcome families onto our property and connect them with agriculture," said board chair Darlene Downey, who also runs Downey's Farm in Caledon. "Children have fun while learning about local food and products. It's a special connection and through this extraordinary support we can continue to grow and showcase Ontario agriculture."

Another project involves developing an economic growth strategy that focuses on agritourism. While agritourism has moved past the buzzword stage and become a widely recognized and viable option for farm operators, Vallier said there's still some lack of data and overall understanding of what the future of agritourism could and does look like.

That project is likely to take eight to 12 months, with a request for proposal to go out early in the new year.

Once complete, Vallier said they'll make it available to all.

"The goal is to share it as far and wide as possible," he said.

To help fund the projects, Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness provided a \$345,000 grant over three years.

"Agritourism is such a dynamic and growing part of Ontario's nearly \$51 billion agri-food sector. There are so many engaging, energizing, and fun experiences open to people across our province that reconnects them to their land and soil and inspires them to choose world-class, locally grown food products," said Rob Flack, OMAFA minister.

Agritourism Ontario has nearly 300 members. For more information email info@agritourismontario.com.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas!

Wishing you a New Year filled with good health, happiness, and prosperity!



Call your LOCAL Realtor "BILKO"

for any real estate needs in 2025!

COMPLIMENTARY PROPERTY EVALUATION

Find out what your property is worth with no cost or obligation

NOT INTENDED TO SOLICIT PROPERTIES ALREADY LISTED FOR SALE

WWW.BILKO.CA - LARRYBILKO@GMAIL.COM
905-562-3000 - 905-641-1110



Larry "BILKO" Bilkszto
Your Local REALTOR®

RE/MAX Garden City Realty Inc., Brokerage

EACH OFFICE INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND OPERATED



PLATINUM
I am honored once again to have achieved the coveted Platinum Award from RE/MAX International for 2024!

A sincere thank you to all who have supported me with your business and referrals, this achievement wouldn't have been possible without you!

Organizing committee keeps plowing ahead

By Luke Edwards

It'll be a busy fall at the West Niagara Fairgrounds in 2025.

In addition to the annual West Niagara Fair, the Grassie site will also play host to the International Plowing Match as it returns to Niagara for the first time in a century. One of the largest annual ag events in the province, organizing the event takes a ton of work.

Renate McGillivray, co-chair of the local organizing committee, said they're in good shape as the calendars turns over to 2025. However, she knows there's a lot left to be done.

"We're very excited with how the plans are coming together...we've got a very good group of people with farming backgrounds," she said.

Hundreds of volunteers will be required to ensure the five-day event runs smoothly. McGillivray said they're hoping to have 700 volunteers, which would help them keep shifts short so volunteers aren't stuck working all day.

"Let them enjoy a little bit of the day," she said.

Volunteers will be needed for all kinds of jobs, from looking after admissions, to selling souvenirs, to organizing some of the special events like the opening banquet.

"There are a lot of different jobs to do," McGillivray said.

Volunteering isn't the only way to get involved, though. Sponsorship packages are also available and McGillivray pointed out that profits from the event get split between the Ontario Plowmen's Association and the local committee.

"We're bringing business to our community but we're also bringing money to our not-for-profit organizations with this plowing match," she said.

They're also looking for entertainers to perform, especially on the Saturday of the event. Organizers are open to a wide variety of entertainment.

"We're really going to stuff it full of entertainment," McGillivray said.

The International Plowing Match is a massive event on par with the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. As the name suggests, it features plowing competitions, however McGillivray said that's just the start of it.

"I think people need to be aware of the rural expo more," she said.

Beyond the four days of plowing, there will be the Ram Rodeo, Canadian Cowgirls, live entertainment, tons of ag education, an RV park, Friday banquet and a tented vendor city "with anything you could ever imagine for sale."

Having attended past plowing matches, including the 2024 event in Lindsey, McGillivray said she's enjoyed watching the horse plowing matches, which gives her a reminder of how grateful she is to have a tractor. But she also enjoys the antiques and overall atmosphere of the event, likening it to a reunion for many.

"I think it's fun that we have families all come together and enjoy it," she said. "There's multiple generations there watching the other generation plow."

The 2025 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo takes place from Sept. 16 to 20, at and around the West Niagara Fairgrounds. For more information visit plowingmatch.org. Those interested in volunteering, sponsoring, and entertainers who'd like to perform at the event can email ipm2025@plowingmatch.org.



The 2025 International Plowing Match is coming to Niagara. There's a lot of work to do to plan the event, but organizers are happy with the progress they've made so far. ~ Pixabay photo



200+ Exhibitors, over 100 industry speakers, a community full of fellow growers to network with, all under one roof.

ONTARIO FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONVENTION

FEBRUARY 19-20, 2025
NIAGARA FALLS CONVENTION CENTRE



Scan & Register today!

ofvc.ca

[f](#) [x](#) [@](#) @ofvc1 #ofvc2025

FOR FARMERS.
BY FARMERS.



Projects bring high-speed Internet to more rural homes



Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for Niagara West, joins Steve Pinsonneault, parliamentary assistant to the minister of rural affairs; Brian Grant, mayor of Wainfleet, and Rob Foster, regional councillor and treasurer of Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology, along with councillors and staff of the Township of Wainfleet, at the Central Fire Station in Wainfleet.. ~ Ontario Government photo

By Niagara Farms Staff

The completion of three projects in Niagara will help bring high-speed Internet connectivity to more than 5,400 homes and businesses.

Steve Pinsonneault, the province's parliamentary assistant to the minister of rural affairs, joined Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff as well as several other local dignitaries last month to celebrate the completion of the three broadband infrastructure projects. The projects come through the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology 1.0 initiative.

"We know reliable Internet access is a gateway to growth in rural Ontario," said Oosterhoff in a press release.

"This expansion of rural broadband across Niagara is connecting more families and businesses to high-speed Internet, helping bridge the connectivity gap in rural communities across our region."

The projects include two fibre-optic networks by Bell Canada, which total 245 kilometres across several communities, including: St. Anns,

North Pelham, Colemans, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Point Abino, Sherkston, Lorraine, Bethel, Willow Bay, Long Beach, Wainfleet, Ostryhon Corners, Chambers Corners, Winger, Forks Road, Perry and Wellandport.

The third project is from Cogeco, and includes more than 53 km of fibre-optic cable for areas of Grimsby Centre, Grassie, Allen's Corners, Kimbo, Fulton, Abingdon, Caistor Centre and Caistorville.

"Our government is improving connectivity in Niagara, bringing us another step closer to our goal of providing every community across Ontario with high-speed Internet access by the end of 2025," said Kinga Surma, minister of infrastructure.

"The expansion of fast, reliable Internet access to more Niagara homes and businesses will continue building Niagara's capacity to do business in today's connected, online economy," said Regional Chair Jim Bradley.

Lincoln Regional Councillor Rob Foster, who sits on the SWIFT board, pointed out high-speed

Internet has become a necessity for businesses and farms in rural Niagara.

"This has brought quality Internet to areas where it is required, given the demands of today's businesses, including modern agriculture," he said. "As we move forward, we continue to collaborate with the province to address the remaining broadband needs of our rural communities while building on the success of projects funded by both the federal and provincial governments."

"Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology has successfully worked with local Internet Service Providers and completed several major projects here in Niagara, bringing broadband connectivity to key under-served areas," said Foster.

SWIFT 1.0 is a \$273-million project aimed at expanding high-speed Internet access to nearly 67,000 homes and businesses across Southwestern Ontario. In Niagara, \$25 million has been spent, resulting in the completion of four projects and a high-speed Internet access to 6,083 homes and businesses. 🌱



Working for You, Delivering for Niagara West
 — For assistance with provincial government services —

SAM OOSTERHOFF
 MPP - Niagara West

4961 King St. E, Unit M1
 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
 905-563-1755
 sam.oosterhoffco@pc.ola.org



Dog owners encouraged to consider blood donation

By Luke Edwards

This month Lindsey Loft and her rescue dog Solo will head to the vet to do a collective good deed that's become a tradition for the pair.

Solo will roll up his proverbial sleeve and donate blood for the eighth time. Loft started taking Solo for the donations after seeing an ad about it online. A longtime dog lover, she experienced the pain of caring for a sick dog when her previous dog had a brutal, and ultimately fatal, bout with pancreatic cancer.

"Having been through all that with her, it kind of puts a whole new perspective on, if I can help another dog, why wouldn't I?" Loft said.

Before seeing the ad, Loft hadn't really thought of dog blood donations, which is common even among the most devout dog lovers.

"That's the biggest struggle we start off with. It has gotten better, but it's just getting the word out," said Breann Irwin, regional unit manager for the Canadian Animal Blood Bank.

Irwin had a previous interest in blood transfusions and began volunteering for the blood bank before getting hired on last year. She covers the Niagara region, organizing clinics at vet offices and animal hospitals that are willing to host them.

While awareness is still a challenge, Irwin said as soon as they hear about the blood bank, most dog owners are quick to offer their support.

The process is fairly easy, though there are some requirements. Dogs must be between one and eight years old, and at least 55 pounds. Taking that much blood out of a smaller dog could be dangerous. They also need to be up to date on their vaccines and well tempered. Irwin said the dogs aren't sedated so they need to be able to sit still for a few minutes as the procedures occurs.

"We don't push it, not all dogs are meant to be donors, which is understandable," Irwin said.

Beyond the benefits of possibly helping others, Irwin said the dogs also receive free tests for heart-worm and ticks, as well as red blood cell levels and blood type.

"So that's something the owners don't have to pay for when they

take their dogs into the clinic," she said.

Donors will also receive access to a complimentary blood product for each unit of blood donated, should the need ever arise.

Much like humans, dogs have different blood types, with 60 per cent having positive blood types and 40 per cent having negative. Negative blood types are always in high demand, since they can be given to any dog regardless of their blood type.

The dog's breed doesn't matter, it's only the blood type.

Donations can be used to treat anemia, in cancer treatments, or after trauma events.

Loft said she and Solo are usually in and out in about 20 minutes, with the actual drawing of blood only taking about five minutes.

When she first brought him for a donation, Loft admitted she wasn't sure what to expect, especially given Solo's a rescue dog she got from Atlanta.

"He was totally fine with it, I didn't know how he would be because it was a whole new thing for me and it was a whole new thing for him," she said.

After his donations, Loft said Solo usually wants to rest for a little bit, but tends to bounce back within a day or two. It's a common reaction for dogs who donate, though Irwin said others act like they haven't even skipped a beat.

Either way, the dogs get plenty of treats afterwards.

Loft encourages all dog owners to at least look into it.

"If your dog is willing and able to, and you're willing and able to, then do it," she said.

In her short time with the blood bank, Irwin said she's heard a few stories of life-saving procedures made possible thanks to donations. She usually passes those stories onto the donors.

"You can tell how happy and thrilled they are to help out too," she said.

Dogs can donate their blood every three months. Owners can be by their dog's side throughout, but they don't have to be if they're a little squeamish around needles and blood.

For more information, including upcoming clinics, visit canadiananimalbloodbank.ca. Those interested can also email Irwin at birwin@canadiananimalbloodbank.ca if they have questions. 🌱



Every three months, Lindsey Loft brings her dog Solo to one of the Canadian Animal Blood Bank's donation clinics. Each of Solo's donations could help save as many as three dogs. ~ Lindsey Loft photo





**CALL FOR A DEMO,
TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU**

<p>ONEIDA NEW HOLLAND 905.765.5011 634 FOURTH LINE CALEDONIA ONTARIO</p>	<p>ONEIDA NEW HOLLAND NIAGARA 905.688.5160 1410 FOURTH AVE ST CATHARINES ONTARIO</p>
--	--

READ US ONLINE AT:
www.granthaven.com/niagara-farms

Province considering expanding energy generation in Nanticoke

By Niagara Farms Staff

With demands for electricity in Ontario expected to rise 75 per cent in the next 25 years, the province has begun discussing how to meet that increasing demand, and Haldimand County is part of those discussions.

A government press release issued in late November said the Ontario government has asked Ontario Power Generation to kick-start discussions on three existing sites, including at Nanticoke in Haldimand. OPG will be discussing expansion opportunities with

Indigenous, community and municipal leaders.

"To meet soaring energy demands, we are working with communities to plan ahead and build for our future so that we can generate more power that is reliable and affordable for our families today and tomorrow. Our plan will ensure we keep energy bills down and the power on for generations to come," said Stephen Lecce, minister of energy and electrification, in the release.

The forecast increase in electricity demand would be equal to adding four and a half cities

the size of Toronto by 2050. With some projects already announced that the Province projects will meet demand through 2035, Ontario will still need an additional 16,000 megawatts by 2050.

In addition to Nanticoke, discussions on expansion will also take place for Wesleyville in Port Hope, and Lambton in St. Clair. The government said these areas were chosen because they're already zoned for electricity generation, are close to transmission and are located in areas experiencing significant growth.



In an effort to get communities on board, the Province has floated ideas of community benefits, that includes a possible \$50 million fund to support infrastructure investments and attraction of co-located industry. The release also pointed to increased property taxes and more jobs and economic development.

The release stressed the importance of consulting with Indigenous groups.


"As we prepare for the largest expansion of electricity generation in over thirty years, our government is embracing an important opportunity for economic reconciliation among First Nations communities and workers," said Greg Rickford, minister of Indigenous affairs and First Nations economic reconciliation. 🌱

Worried about
**Powdery
Mildew?**
Get **Gatten!**


Gatten® fungicide
Gatten® acts on multiple stages of powdery mildew development, delivering both preventative and post-infection control.


Technical and sales support provided by




CohortWholesale.com



Always read and follow label directions.
Gatten® is a registered trademark of OAT Agrio Co., Ltd.
Copyright ©2021 Nichino America, Inc.





**Scan the QR code
and read us online**

Happy
New
Year

2025

NIAGARA FARMS



**Scan the QR code
and read us online**



Submit your story ideas to:
Luke Edwards, Editor
luke@granthaven.com

GRANT HAVEN MEDIA
LOCAL NEWS YOU CAN COUNT ON

Read us online at: www.granthaven.com

Maple Leaf Foods wins annual Paul Mistele Memorial Award

By Niagara Farms Staff

A company with roots in Niagara was honoured recently by Feed Ontario.

Maple Leaf Foods won the 2024 Paul Mistele Memorial Award, with the announcement coming during Farm and Food Care Ontario's 17th annual harvest gala held in late November. The event brought together 240 farmers and sector leaders to celebrate the industry and raise money for FFCO's outreach activities.

"Maple Leaf has made a significant impact in ensuring that more food banks across Ontario can receive donations of high-protein chicken," said Feed Ontario's CEO, Carolyn Stewart. "As our network continues to face record-high demand, it is only through the generosity of partners like Maple Leaf that we can ensure food banks can be there for those who need them."

Over the past year the company has provided 210,000 pounds of freshly processed, tray packed chicken to Feed Ontario member food banks in Ontario. Those numbers mean that since 2015, they have contributed 10 million servings.

"Maple Leaf Foods is honoured to receive the 2024 Paul Mistele Memorial Award from Farm and Food Care Ontario," said Sarah Stern, director of community involvement at Maple Leaf Foods and executive director of the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security.

"Since 2016, the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security has been working to address and reduce food insecurity in Ontario and across Canada. We are committed to supporting communities and advocating for policy changes to make food security a reality for as many Canadians as possible."

Mistele was a farm leader who founded Ontario Pork's Donate-A-Hog program in 1998. The eponymous award honours "agricultural partners who have shown a significant and enduring commitment to ending hunger in Ontario," according to a press release sent out by FFCO.

Maple Leaf's integration of the Ontario Chicken Program through its new London-based production helped lead to the award.

The company may be a major national brand nowadays, but it began nearly two centuries ago when Grantham Mills started operation in St. Catharines in 1836. The Maple Leaf brand first appeared in 1898. Poultry remains one of Niagara's strongest, if sometimes overlooked, ag sectors.



Presentation of the 2024 Paul Mistele Memorial Award by Feed Ontario to Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (Left to Right): Shanade Thomas, manager of operations & programs, Feed Ontario; Rob Flack, minister of agriculture, food and agribusiness; Kelly Gubesch, Ontario poultry sales manager, Maple Leaf Foods Inc.; Crispin Colvin, chair of Farm & Food Care Ontario; Janelle Cardiff, chair of Farm & Food Care Ontario. ~ Submitted photo

Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness Rob Flack was at the gala, and thanked FFCO for its efforts "in building up awareness about the importance of food and farming in Ontario."

FFCO provides programs like The Real Dirt on Farming, hosts farm tours, and organizes events like Breakfast on the Farm.

"Our government looks forward to strong continued collaboration with FFCO in their outreach, education, and charity efforts and thanks them for their tremendous agri-food contributions."

Crispin Colvin, chair of the board of directors, calling the gala a "remarkable evening."

"From the gourmet all-Ontario menu to the inspiring connections made, the event highlighted our shared successes in fostering public trust in food and farming. It was an honour to celebrate the incredible efforts of our members and partners, including the presentation of the Paul Mistele Feed Ontario Award, which underscores the vital role our sector plays in addressing food insecurity."

All funds raised at the event will be put into future public trust initiatives. Anyone wishing to make a charitable gift to support FFCO's work can visit www.FarmFood-CareON.org.

VAAARKAMP MULCHING SERVICE



Our mulching service provides an excellent way to trim and clear bush/fence lines/ditches and building lots by breaking down stones and branches, leaving behind a soil surface that is smooth and clean.

- Land Clearing/Maintenance
- Clear Building Lots
- Drainage Ditch Maintenance
- Trim Back Fence Lines
- Stump Removal
- Trim/Clear Fence Lines
- No Need For Burning/Piling Brush

**Contact Mark Vaarkamp
CELL: 905.981.2758**

Niagara Holstein Club honours the best of 2024

How udderly fast 2024 flew by. The Niagara Holstein Club celebrated the end of another year and honoured some of the top dairy performers in the region, with its annual banquet in late November. Hosted at The Backyard Barn and with food provided by Highland Packers, the evening was a chance to take off the work boots and relax.

Here are the results:

DHI AWARDS

Grand Champion Cow - Moonlight Dairy's Moonshine Moreno Lattel. 4-1 16697 kg Milk, 711 kg Fat, 572kg Protein, BCA 350 402 376

Most Improved BCA - Alders Family Farm. 28.3 points, 74 records.

Highest Herd Average BCA

1. Summers Farm Ltd. Records - 101, BCA - 283 320 296, Comp - 299.7
2. Moonlight Dairy. Records - 189, BCA - 285 301 292, Comp - 292.7
3. Feederland. Records - 86, BCA - 272 296 282, Comp - 283.3

DHI Herd Management Awards

1. Summers Farm Ltd. Herd size - 115, Score - 902
2. Moonlight Dairy. Herd size - 270, Score - 773
3. Vellhaven Farm Inc. Herd size - 77, Score - 749

Lowest Herds SCC

1. Silverholme Holsteins Ltd. (88)
2. Vellhaven Farm Inc. (124)
3. Homevalley Holsteins Ltd. (140)

High Yearling

1. Silverbrook Ruban 124 from Dan and Megan Haanstra. (418 311 385)
2. Summersttime Alcove Tillman, from Summers Farm Ltd. (342 376 358)
3. Moonshine Laredo Unique from Moonlight Dairy. (331 367 355)

High Two-Year-Olds

1. Moonshine Zarek Dippie from Moonlight Dairy. (375 363 377)
2. Feederlane Dropkick Sugar from Feederlane Farms. (387 338 387)
3. Summersttime Horsepow Agnes from Summers Farm Ltd. (349 393 360)

High Three-Year-Olds

1. Moonshine Delta Crunch from Moonlight Dairy. (365 340 358)
2. Summersttime Never Again Pp Tua from Summers Farm Ltd. (309 391 350)
3. Abbylayne Capitalgain Sunshine from Albert Fledderus (334 363 343)

High Four-Year-Olds

1. Moonshine Moreno Lattelo from Moonlight Dairy. (350 402 376)
2. Moonshine Amulet Lookout from Moonlight Dairy. (354 380 376)
3. Moonshine Forever Patriot from Moonlight Dairy. (365 385 360)

High Five-Year-Olds

1. Summersttime Masterful Bacon from Summers Farm Ltd. (341 376 385)
2. Abbylayne Princess, from Albert Fledderus. (363 358 361)

3. Summersttime Impression Bart from Summers Farm Ltd. (322 356 327)

High Mature Cows

1. Moonshine Monetary Alysa from Moonlight Dairy. (355 341 346)
2. Abbylayne Shottle Morissa from Albert Fledderus. (333 371 309)
3. Marshville Bruce Junebug from Feederlane Farms. (335 336 338)

Other awards that were handed out included longtime production awards for gold (100,000 kg), silver (80,000 kg) and bronze (60,000 kg), multiple super production awards, and star-brood cows.

2024 SHOW AWARDS

Spring Heifer (Junior Calf) - Windview Lambda Lavender, Windview Holsteins.

Winter Heifer (Intermediate Calf) - Extramile Dollar 4 Ur Thoughts, Braeholme Holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema.

Fall Heifer (Senior Calf) - Brookturn Eye Candy Lotus, Brookturn Holsteins.

Summer Yearling - Royal Lynn Chief Jubilee, Gracehaven Holsteins, Royal Lynn Holsteins.

Spring Yearling (Junior Yearling) - Royal Lynn Victor Milly, Royal Lynn Holsteins.

4-H Champion - Brookturn Eye Candy Lotus, Brookturn Holsteins. (4-H member, Kaelyn Verdonk).

Reserve 4-H Champion - Extramile Dollar 4 Ur Thoughts, Braeholme Holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema. (4-H member, Avery Jansema)

Winter Yearling (Intermediate Yearling) - Feederlane Fuel Macaron, Feederlane Farms.

Senior Yearling - Kingsway Lambda Becca, Braeholme Holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema.

Junior Champion - Brookturn Eye Candy Lotus, Brookturn Holsteins.

Reserve Junior Champion - Royal Lynn Victor Milly, Royal Lynn Holsteins.

Junior Breeders Herd - Gracehaven Holsteins.

Milking Yearling - JAN158 Crushabull Fire, Braeholme holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema.

Summer 2 Year Old - Marshville Viral Jiji, Matthew Roszell.

Spring 2 Year Old - Windview Sidekick Jeepers, Windview Holsteins.

Winter 2 Year Old - Feederlane Unix Mary, Feederland Farms.

Junior 3 Year Old - Brookturn Mirand Valerie P, Brookturn Holsteins.

This Year and Last Year's 4-H Calf - Abigail Knutt

Senior 3 Year Old - Feederland Sidekick Twix, Feederland Farms.

4 Year Old - Dougford Sidekick Jessa, Windview Holsteins.

Life Production 70 000 kg - Brookturn Dempsey Pleasant, Brookturn Holsteins.

Grand Champion Cow - JAN158 Crushabull Fire, Braeholme Holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema.

Reserve Grand Champion Cow - Brookturn Mirand Valerie P, Brook Turn Holsteins.

Best Udder - JAN158 Crushabull Fire, Braeholme Holsteins, John and Jacqueline Jansema.

Breeders Herd - Feederlane Farms.

Best Female Bred By Exhibitor - Brookturn Gold Chip Lacey, Brookturn Holsteins.

Highest Production of Top 3 Class Winners - Feederlane Chelios Taboo, Feederlane Farms. BCA: 307-381-318, Comp: 1006

Bert Eggink Memorial Award - Brookturn Dempsey Pleasant, Brookturn Holsteins.

Premier Breeder - Feederlane Farms.

Premier Exhibitor - Feederlane Farms

BREEDERS CUP WINNERS SPRING 2024

Judge: Scott Walker

First lactation - Feederlane Alongside Tarot

2nd Lactation - Feederlane Sidekick Twix

3rd Lactation - Abbylayne Impression Taekwondo

4th Lactation - Vellhaven Ali Brew Sandra

Dam/Daughter - Moonlight Holsteins, Maui Agnes & Rambo Angela

Grand Champion - Feederlane Sidekick Twix

Reserve Champion - Abbylayne Impression Taekwondo 🌿



Caradoc Townsend Mutual Insurance Company

Aaron Miedema
Trusted Insurance Agent
Direct : 905-741-6392

Let's Connect
780 Old Highway 24,
Waterford, ON N0E 1Y0
Office Tel: 519-443-7231
Fax: 519-443-51981

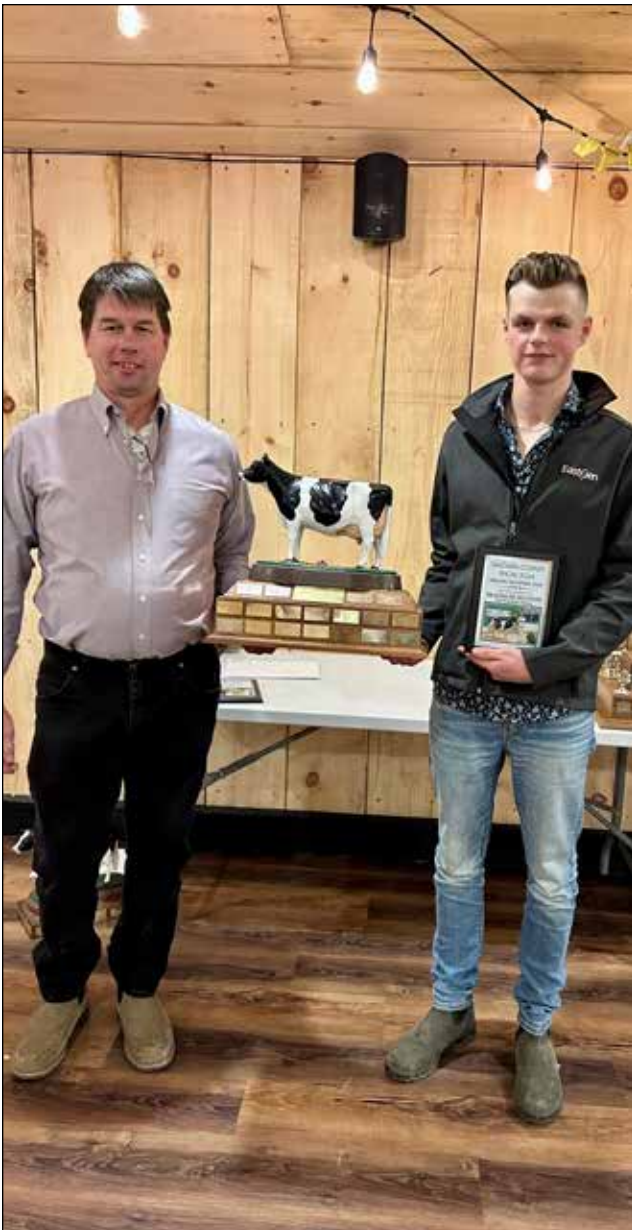
🟢 Automotive 🟢 Farm
🟢 Residential 🟢 Commercial

www.ctmins.ca



Insuring Family Farms in Haldimand & Norfolk Since 1879

Vanbenthem Cattle Company
3 Generations of Beef Farmers in Haldimand County
John and Linda Vanbenthem with Aaron Miedema (Agent),
Sophie, Olivia, Albert, Andrea, and Isaac



Brad Jansema accepts the award for his grand champion cow at the Niagara Holstein Club's awards banquet. ~ Niagara Holstein Club photos



Summers Farms won the Top BCA Herd and Top Management Award at the Niagara Holstein Club's award banquet.



Bob Crawford received his 50 Year Veteran Breeder pin from Holstein Canada.

WELLANDPORT  **Home hardware**

WE'VE GOT YOUR FARM SUPPLIES

WE OFFER:





HEATED LIVESTOCK WATERER: CANARM RITCHIE




CALF HUTCH

CONTACT US FOR PRICING

5157 Canborough Rd, Wellandport
(905) 386-6252
wellandport@gmail.com

STORE HOURS
 Monday-Friday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm
 Saturday: 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Sunday: Closed



Jon Snippe
Dealer - Owner



Mark Hauser
Manager

CANADA FLEABANE

West Lincoln conducting public engagement about Canada Fleabane

Should Council designate Canada Fleabane as a Local Noxious Weed in West Lincoln? That's what the Township is asking the public to weigh in on through a new online survey.

Background

In 2024, the Township received correspondence from local farmers concerned about Canada Fleabane negatively affecting crops. Canada Fleabane is not currently listed as a noxious weed under the Weed Control Act, and noxious weeds can only be added or removed to/from the Weed Control Act by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

However, the Weed Control Act gives local Councils the ability to designate additional plants as Local Noxious Weeds, to provide the control of potentially damaging weeds in local areas, before they become widespread, by using the Weed Control Act's mechanisms of enforcement.

This would give Township-appointed Weed Inspectors the ability to enforce the removal of Fleabane from private property and agricultural lands under the Weed Control Act. Failure to comply with removal of local noxious weeds may result in monetary penalties.

Get Involved

Council directed staff to conduct public consultation regarding the regulation of Canada Fleabane, after which, results will be provided at a future Committee meeting prior to considering a local weed by-law.

The online survey will be available from January 8 until 29. Find full details and complete the survey at www.westlincoln.ca/fleabane.

West Lincoln
Your Future Naturally

Farm Transition Appreciation Day returns Jan. 9

By Niagara Farms Staff

Quite often, a farmer's future planning extends no further than the next harvest.

Farm Management Canada is hoping to change that. The organization created Farm Transition Appreciation Day five years ago. It will once again take place this month, on Jan. 9. The day is a chance to celebrate farms that have transition plans and encourage those that don't to consider making one.

Succession planning in the agriculture sector is an issue in Niagara and beyond. In a report released by the region following the latest Census of Agriculture, economic development staff

found some unsurprising, but still concerning numbers. While the median age of farm owners is increasing, nearly two thirds of farms have no succession plan, and those who do, are mostly verbal.

Nationally, the census found only 12 per cent of farms have a written succession plan. That's despite an estimate from BDO that three quarters of farms will transition in the next decade.

In a press release about Farm Transition Appreciation Day, Farm Management Canada offered five tips:

1. Start the conversation about farm transition at least 10 years before the transfer

is set to take place to allow sufficient time for everyone to prepare and adjust

2. Hold a formal meeting involving everyone to identify and harmonize the family and business vision and goals in writing
3. Establish a clear and mutually agreed on transition timeline between the current owners and successors to reduce uncertainty about the future of the farm and everyone's role within it
4. Prepare a formal written farm transition plan that can be shared, referenced and reviewed on a regular basis
5. Hire a coach or transition planning facilitator to help keep your transition planning on track

The organization also encourages farmers, industry partners, governments and agribusinesses to share farm transition success stories, resources and other tools. This year's theme is "Legacy in Motion."

Those posting about the day on social media are invited to use #FTADay2025.

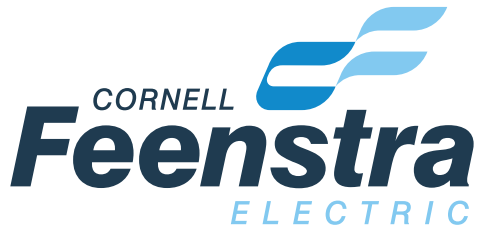
Farm Management Canada is a non-profit organization and the national umbrella for Canadian farm business management activity. For more information visit FMC-GAC.com.



NIAGARA FARMS



Scan the QR code and read us online



Start Saving Today!

Sign up today for a maintenance contract with monitoring.

\$225/yr – or – \$175/yr

Maintenance & Monitoring
For generators 2018 or newer that are **wifi enabled**.

Remote Monitoring: We will notify you of any alarm conditions on your generator.

*Monitoring requires a home wifi connection with adequate signal strength, or a wifi extender would be required at additional cost.

Dispatch a technician to repair if necessary.

1 annual service: Oil & filter change, complete inspection.

Increases the warranty to 5 year.

*Only available on new installations where the monitoring setup is within 90 days of generator activation.

Maintenance Only

1 annual service: Oil & filter change, complete inspection.



AUTHORIZED GENERAC DEALER

GENERAC



GENERAC



Powering growth.

Call us today at 905-899-2373
or email office@feenstraelectric.com
www.feenstraelectric.com

NIAGARA FARMS

Submit your story ideas to:
Luke Edwards, Editor
luke@granthaven.com

Spoelstra re-elected as OFA president

By Niagara Farms Staff

A Binbrook dairy and crop farmer will spend another year at the head of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Members re-elected Drew Spoelstra for a second one-year term late last year. Spoelstra spent a decade as a director on the board, representing the Halton, Hamilton/Wentworth and Niagara region since 2013. He also served as vice president before being elected president last year.

"I appreciate the trust and confidence that my fellow board members have placed in me to lead this organization for another year," said Spoelstra in a press release. "Food and farming touches all Ontarians in many different ways. It's a major pillar of the provincial economy so it's important for Ontario agriculture's voice to be heard by decision-makers and we will continue to make that a priority in the year to come."

Spoelstra will be joined by Sara Wood, who was elected to a second year as vice president as well as a second three-year term as director-at-large. Ethan Wallace will take up the second vice president position, taking over for Paul Vickers, who chose not to run again.

"We appreciate Paul's contributions to the executive over the past two years and wish him well with his future endeavours," said Spoelstra.

Paul Maurice joins the executive committee as an executive member this year.

Spoelstra has a mixed operation, with milking cows, beef cattle and horses. For crops, he grows corn, soybeans, wheat and hay, and has a Pride Seeds dealership. Spoelstra's also an active volunteer and graduate of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

The OFA represents 38,000 farm families across the province. 🌱



Binbrook's Drew Spoelstra will remain as president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in 2025, his second one-year term. ~ OFA photo

FREE

COOLING EXPERTS





**PLUG
AND
PLAY**







RELIABLE PACKAGED REFRIGERATION

(866) 748-7786 • www.kooljet.com



Big Country getting bigger

Smithville company eyes global market

By Luke Edwards

A little over a decade ago when they started making their own raw dog food, Rob and Geraldine Brouwer were surprised to find interest from beyond their St. Anns home.

Today, they're setting their sights much bigger, and looking beyond their local, provincial, and even national borders. A nearly \$9 million investment is going to help Big Country Raw become a global brand in the pet food market.

"It was just a little bit of a passion of ours. We had dogs and started feeding them raw food and saw the benefits and started making it to sell commercially, really not expecting that it was going to get to the size that we are today," said Geraldine, co-founder of the raw dog food company with her husband Rob.

The expansion project is ongoing, with a goal of having it complete towards the end of the first half of this year. The major part of the project is adding cold storage space, which Rob said is extremely hard to come by through external sources. All told, however, the expansion will nearly double the

space they have at the Smithville manufacturing site up to about 65,000 square feet.

With added space, they'll be able to continue creating new products.

"We're exploring a strong innovation pipeline of products that we want to bring out," said Rob.

Between his engineering mind to improve operations, and Geraldine's product development, both are drawn to innovation.

Currently, Big Country Raw serves pet owners from coast to coast. In addition to the manufacturing centre in Smithville, they also have distribution sites in Ottawa and Calgary.

Using local suppliers - about 95 per cent Canadian, with many of them located right here in Niagara - the company produces a variety of meals that are flash frozen, which Rob said helps lock in the nutritional value and makes for a healthier diet for dogs.

"So you could grind it and you can mix it all you want, but if the blast freezer cannot handle it, that's kind of the pinch point," Rob said.

Partnering with another local company, Stanpac, Big Country Raw has also released a line of dog ice creams, with Geraldine



Geraldine and Rob Brouwer created Big Country Raw, a company that began as a home business but is now eyeing international expansion. ~ Luke Edwards photo

saying they're planning to continue to innovate. A new maple flavour is planned for release in 2025.

And while they're dog people, the company is also expanding to provide cat food. It comes with added challenges. Cats are imprint eaters, meaning they tend to prefer whatever foods they ate after they stopped nursing. As such, Geraldine said it's not easy to get cats to change their diets.

However, with more and more cat owners, the Brouwers see an opportunity.

Globally, the pet food market is still dominated by a small number of major players, with brands familiar to most pet owners. Big Country Raw is currently working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to get the necessary approvals to go global.

The United States is, unsurprisingly, the major target. However,

Geraldine said there's interest from several regions.

To support the expansion, the provincial government provided some support, in the form of a \$1.3 million loan through its Regional Development Fund. Part of the loan could become forgivable if they meet certain targets and metrics.

However, Geraldine said the support is more than just a straight loan. As they prepare to wade into the global markets, having some government backing can help open doors.

The Brouwers expect to directly hire about 16 more staff as a result of the expansion. And as their foray into exporting continues, they pointed out job will come in a variety of forms, from skilled labour, to finance, sales and more.

For more information on the company, visit bigcountryraw.ca.

THIS WINTER, GET IT DONE AND THEN SOME.



From raising livestock to growing crops, farming is an all-year-round lifestyle. That's why Kubota equipment is built to work hard with you. Our winter event is the perfect time to save on Kubota tractors, implements and attachments. Our dedicated team is ready to support and put in the hours, because we know you do, day in and day out.



bergequipment.ca
42134 Highway 3
Wainfleet, ON L0S 1V0
(905) 899-3405



kubota.ca | [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [o](#)



Expansion at Big Country Raw's Smithville location will see new cold storage space and roughly a doubling of its production facility. ~ File photo

National Farm Leadership Program accepting applications

By Niagara Farms Staff

Farmers looking to up their leadership game have a few weeks to apply for a national program that teaches those very skills.

The deadline to apply for the National Farm Leadership Program is Jan. 17, with the program set to start a few weeks later on Jan. 27. The program is run by Farm Management Canada and aims to teach “current and aspiring farmers how to perform at their best when it matters most,” according to a press release.

It’s a six-week program with virtual learning, including live weekly sessions. There are also a pair of three-day, in-person residencies.

Group coaching and one-on-one coaching for the rest of the calendar year rounds out the learning opportunities.

The program covers topics such as: leadership development through improving self awareness, communication and team dynamics; stress management, with tools and techniques to perform and be resilient in the face of the pressures and demands of farm life; and real-time access to support through one-on-one coaching.

Online learning runs for six weeks from January to March. The three-day residencies will take place in Victoria, B.C. during the second week of March and last weekend of November. Participants will receive a personalized plan and unlimited access to LeaderLab, a private online learning community.

Farm Management Canada says the program is built for farm owners, managers and high potential employees who are stepping up or stepping back. Those working in the ag sector who support farmers can also benefit.

Kelly Dobson, a certified executive coach and fourth-generation farmer, leads the program.

Those interested but unable to commit to the National Farm Leadership Program are invited to consider the LeaderShift In-Sight, which runs from Feb. 10 to March 7. It involves live weekly sessions and virtual learning, teaching participants why people behave and interact in certain ways while learning tools to shift those behaviours for better results.

For more information, or to register for either program, visit leader-shift.ca.



A national farm leadership program aims to teach farmers, high potential employees and others in the ag sector important leadership skills. ~ Farm Management Canada photo

NATURAL NUTRIENTS FROM ROOT TO FRUIT

Unlock the full potential of your crops with Acti-Sol and Acadie fertilizers, packed with the nutrients your plants need to thrive naturally.

Call and mention this ad for 5% off your order

ACTI-SOL.CA * 819-336-4147

Special discount valid on orders place before February 28, 2025.

NIAGARA

FARMS

Scan the QR code
and read us online



New year, new greens

After perhaps indulging a bit over the holidays, it's always a good idea to get some more fruit and vegetables into your diet come January.

Historically, that hasn't always been the easiest for those of us in the Great White North looking for locally grown produce, especially when it comes to salad greens since we rely heavily on imports during the cold winter months. However, some companies are bucking that trend, finding ways to grow lettuces year round, such as Vision Greens' indoor vertical farming operation in Welland.

With locally grown lettuce available year round, here are a few recipes to try this month, courtesy Vision Greens.



Lettuce Smoothie

Ingredients

- 2 cups torn Vision Greens Crisp Romaine Lettuce
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 1/2 cups almond milk
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1/2 cup diced apple

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients into a blender. If you'd like a sweeter smoothie, add the honey, but if not, simply omit.
2. Process until smooth
3. Pour into glasses and enjoy



Strawberry Goat Cheese and Pecan Salad with Tangy Balsamic Dressing

Ingredients - Salad

- 4 cups Cherry Kiss Red Leaf Lettuce

- 1 cup strawberries quartered.
- 2 oz goat cheese (or feta)
- 1 handful candied pecans

Ingredients - Candied Pecans

- 1 and 2/3 cup pecans raw
- 1/3 cup maple syrup pure
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper (optional)

Ingredients - Tangy Balsamic Dressing

- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 and a half tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp sea salt

Instructions - Candied Pecans

1. To make the candied pecans, simply add all ingredients to a large skillet. Stir to combine and turn the stove on to medium.
2. Allow the mixture to start bubbling and stir very frequently with a silicone spoon. After 4-5 minutes when you notice the mixture beginning to thicken, reduce the heat to low-medium.
3. Continue stirring so that the syrup doesn't burn. The mixture will start to thicken and get sticky. Keep going and stirring frequently until the coating on the nuts begins to crystallize. This process will take about 12-15 minutes.
4. Remove nuts from heat and transfer to parchment paper to cool before adding to salad.

Salad Assembly

1. First make the tangy balsamic dressing. Combine all ingredients in a medium sized bowl and whisk vigorously until the dressing is smooth and combined.
2. Add Cherry Kiss red leaf lettuce to a large mixing bowl and toss with desired amount of dressing. Not too much, not too little is the way to go.
3. Once the lettuce is coated, either add the goat cheese, pecans, and strawberries to the bowl and mix it together or transfer to individual bowls and add toppings.
4. Serve and enjoy!



The Cali Burger

Ingredients

- 1 burger patty
- 1 slice tomato
- 1 ring of red onion
- 2 leaves of Vision Greens Crunchy Green Leaf Lettuce
- 1/2 sliced avocado
- 1 slice swiss cheese
- 8 bread and butter pickles
- 1 whole wheat burger bun with seeds

Dipping Sauce Ingredients

- 1 tbsp each of ketchup, yellow mustard, sweet green relish and mayonnaise

Instructions

1. Mix dipping sauce ingredients together
2. Grill patty
3. Assemble burger with all the toppings, and enjoy



The Fresh and Simple Salad

Ingredients

- 1 package of Vision Greens Crunchy Green Leaf or Cherry Kiss Red Leaf Lettuce
- Lemon vinaigrette half recipe
- 1 Persian cucumber, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup shaved Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp pepitas
- 1 avocado, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup microgreens
- Flaky sea salt, optional

Roasted Tamari Almonds Ingredients

- 1/2 cup raw almonds
- 1/2 tbsp tamari

Lemon Vinaigrette Ingredients

- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 small garlic clove, grated
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp sea salt, more to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp honey, or maple syrup, optional
- 1/4 to 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 tsp fresh or dried thyme, optional

Notes: Makes 1/2 cup.

Lemon Vinaigrette Instructions

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, garlic, mustard, salt, pepper, and honey, if using.
2. Drizzle in the olive oil while whisking and continue to whisk until the dressing is emulsified. Alternatively, combine everything in a jar with a tight-fitting lid and shake to combine.
3. If your dressing is too tangy, add more olive oil, to taste.
4. Add the thyme, if desired, and season to taste. Store in the fridge for up to 1 week. The olive oil will solidify a bit in the fridge. To soften, let the dressing sit at room temp for a few minutes and stir before using.

Salad Instructions

1. Roast the almonds: Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the almonds on the sheet and toss with tamari. Bake for 10 to 14 minutes or until browned. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes.
2. Assemble the salad. In a large bowl toss the Vision Greens lettuce with a few spoonfuls of the dressing. Add the cucumber, parmesan, pepitas, avocado, and tamari almonds. Drizzle with more dressing and top with microgreens. Season to taste with flaky sea salt, if desired. 🌿



Vision Green sees unbe-leaf-able potential in vertical farming

Expansion will allow company to double its production in Welland in 2025, with plans to go national

By Luke Edwards

They have the blueprint for green leaf.

Construction on a second growing tunnel at Vision Greens' Welland facility is expected to finish sometime in the latter half of 2025, doubling production capacity for the burgeoning vertical farm operation. Karen Gold, the company's head of marketing, said now that they have a blueprint for how to build and operate their growing tunnels, they're expecting to move beyond Niagara and go cross country.

"We expect in the next four years to be a fully national brand," she said.

Vision Greens grows four kinds of lettuce at its indoor, vertical farming operation in Welland. The company originated back in 2019, but it wasn't until 2021 that they began selling their product. Since then, steady growth has seen them max out their current capacity, providing one million pounds of lettuce to grocery stores across Ontario each year. The new growing tunnel will allow them to grow and sell two million pounds of lettuce.

Given vertical farming is still a fairly new sector, Gold said there was a significant amount of testing and learning that needed to be done in the early days.

"Because this type of farming is so new, it was a lot of trial and error," she said.

In fact, the technology they use is connected to efforts made by Intravision with the help of the University of Guelph, to grow produce on Mars.

Gold said it took some time to fully learn how to use the equipment, and develop the processes that ensure the best grown lettuce possible.

"Once we perfected it we were able to really start full scale growing," she said.

Now, with those processes developed, the company isn't shy about promoting its lettuce. Their website calls it the "world's best lettuce" and Gold backs up the claim.

She said indoor, vertically grown lettuce offers the best of all worlds: Locally grown, pesticide free, non-GMO, sustainable, and an expanded shelf life. That's in large part because they're able to control all the conditions, with computer systems that monitor heat, humidity, light and everything in between. And since their



Vision Greens began selling the lettuce it grows indoors at a facility in Welland four years ago. An expansion in 2025 will allow them to double the capacity in Welland, with an eye to expand nationally in the coming years. ~ Vision Greens photos

facility is controlled, they don't have to worry about pests.

"There's no downside to growing indoors, I believe, because not only do you get a better product but you can perfectly control the environmental conditions," Gold said.

It also allows them to harvest a crop essentially every month, especially valuable to Canadians who mostly rely on imports of lettuce for a large chunk of the year. Canada imports roughly 600 million pounds of lettuce a year. Gold said Canada is the largest importer of lettuce, and that number represents an import market worth of roughly \$2.2 billion.

The process itself is also impressive to watch, she said.

"It's pretty cool when you see the little pods of seeds and then by the end of the 27, 28 days it's a full scale beautiful lettuce that's harvested and packed, and in some cases shipped the same day," Gold said.

Their system is also easily transferable, Gold said. With a lot of the heavy lifting out of the way, replicating what they're doing in Welland should be relatively simple, with Gold suggesting water is the only real variable they may have to account for. The water in Welland may be dif-

ferent enough than, say, the water in Montreal, meaning tweaks may be required.

The other major hurdle is the high upfront costs, though the company appears optimistic both will be easy enough to overcome.

"It's all about getting your processes down," Gold said.

"Once we've got those in place it's easy to just keep repeating them and rolling them out as we expand."

Of the company's four varieties, Crunchy Green is the most popular. That's followed by their Fancy Spring Mix, romaine and red mix.

They require seeds specific to the indoor, soilless growing conditions. And with vertical farming still being somewhat new, they're limited in what seeds they can source. However, Gold said they are looking at adding more varieties as spaces allows.

Vision Greens' lettuces can be found at major retailers such as Metro, Food Basics, and Loblaws brands Fortinos and the Real Canadian Superstore. They're also in some independents, including Commisso's locally. All told, Gold said they've grown from originally having two distribution points to over 350 across the province.



West Lincoln gets bump in OMP funding

By Niagara Farms Staff

Queen's Park will be providing West Lincoln with a few extra dollars in 2025 as it tries to support rural communities in the province.

Ontario's Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Rural Affairs Steve Pinsonneault joined Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff and township dignitaries last month to announce the \$186,700 increase in money the township will receive through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. West Lincoln will receive a total just over \$1.2 million.

"We most definitely appreciate this funding enhancement that the province has provided to small, rural and northern municipalities through

an increase to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund," said Mayor Cheryl Ganann.

"This funding is critical for our municipality, which has a large rural component with high farmland percentages and a limited property tax base."

In November the Ontario government announced it will increase the fund by \$100 million by 2026, bringing the total funding envelope to \$600 million. The OMPF provides money to small, rural and northern Ontario municipalities that face fiscal challenges in part due to limited property assessment.

"This provincial support is critical for growing regions like Niagara - especially here in West

Lincoln, a key municipality designated for future growth," said Oosterhoff.

Last year the government also split the former Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Rural Affairs into two, creating a standalone Ministry of Rural Affairs.

"We are listening and taking action, as well as building supports that will enable small towns and rural communities to thrive and prosper," said Pinsonneault.

This winter the Province will also be consulting with municipalities on their priorities for the OMPF, as well as implementation of a reporting framework. 🌱

AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

It may hardly be noticeable early in the month, but by the end of January that little bit of extra daylight will be a hint that spring's not that far away. However, we should expect another couple months of cool weather before things really start to change. In the meantime, there are plenty of ag events to pass the time.

Here are a few upcoming:

JAN. 14 - JAN. 16

DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO AGM

The province's dairy farmers will be gathering in Toronto this month. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario's annual general meeting takes place Tuesday, Jan. 14 to Thursday, Jan. 16 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. For more details, visit dfoagm.com.

**THREE WEEKENDS IN
JANUARY, STARTING
JAN. 10 - JAN. 26**

ICEWINE FESTIVAL

The community's invited to come out and celebrate the uniquely Niagara delicacy of icewine with the annual Icewine Festival. It takes place over three weekends in January, starting Jan. 10 and wrapping up Jan. 26. Icewine lovers can enjoy the discovery pass and attend the Cool as Ice gala, which takes place on Saturday, Jan. 18. Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake will also host the Icewine Village, Jan. 18 and 19, and again on Jan. 25 and 26 from noon to 6 p.m. each day. For more information or tickets, visit niagarawinefestival.com.

**FEB. 1 - 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.
FEB. 8 - 11 A.M. - 3 P.M.
FEB. 15 - 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

SEEDY SATURDAY

It's never too early to start planning for the gardening season, and to help, there will be a few Seedy Saturday events coming up. Organized by various groups, Seedy Saturday events offer seed swaps for those looking to try their hand at growing something new, as well as workshops, demonstrations and vendors on hand. Hamilton will host one on Saturday, Feb. 1 at the Central Library Branch, 55 York Blvd. from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The following week the West Niagara Community Centre plays host to a Seedy Saturday, Feb. 8, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 177 West St. The Meridian Community Centre in Pelham follows that up with a Seedy Saturday event on Feb. 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 100 Meridian Way in Pelham. For more information visit seeds.ca/events.

FEB. 19 - FEB. 20

ONTARIO FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONVENTION

The Niagara Falls Convention Centre will once again play host to the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention next month. Attendees can take in two days of educational sessions, visit the trade show and take part in networking events. Registration can be done online at ofvc.ca. There are various ticket packages available and early bird pricing is in place until Feb. 12 at 5 p.m.



West Lincoln is one of the rural communities in Ontario receiving a bump in the amount of Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund dollar it will receive in 2015. From left, Steve Pinsonneault, parliamentary assistant to the minister of rural affairs; Cheryl Ganann, West Lincoln mayor; CAO Truper McBride; and Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for Niagara West. ~ Ontario Government photo

BUSINESS and SERVICE DIRECTORY

AGRICULTURAL SUPPLIES

ONTARIO AGRA
 PIPING & SUPPLIES INC.
(905) 386-1744
 SALES@ONTARIOAGRA.CA 5377 ELCHO ROAD
 WELLANDPORT, ON

- VERTICAL TANKS
- HORIZONTAL TANKS
- SUBDRAIN
- FARM DRAINAGE
- CULVERTS
- PUMPS & PLUMBING
- CISTERNS
- SEPTICS
- GEOSYNTHETICS
- PRECAST CONCRETE
- AGGREGATES



WE'RE HERE TO HELP FARMERS, CONTRACTORS, AND HOMEOWNERS.

ELECTRIC



Frank's Electric Motors and Controls Inc.

"If it will not turn, make it our concern"

- POOL / SPA PUMPS
- FURNACE / AC FAN MOTORS
- BARN / GREENHOUSE FANS AND MOTORS
- FREQUENCY DRIVES / 3PH MOTORS / GEARBOXES
- CISTERN / WELL / SUMP PUMPS
- COMPRESSOR MOTORS
- CENTRAL VAC

franks@franksemc.ca
 905-386-6955
 5165 Canborough Road
 Wellandport, ON

Darren Fousert
Frank Fousert

ELECTRICAL



Powering growth.

Keep your operation up and running with a full-service electrical contractor who has decades of experience in agricultural electrical systems. Serving the Niagara Region and Golden Horseshoe into Burlington.

CALL US AT
905-899-2373

CORNELL
Feenstra
 ELECTRIC

www.feenstraelectric.com

PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS HERE

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
 CONTACT HEATHER DUNBAR
 AT 226.261.1837 OR
 HEATHER@GRANTHAVEN.COM**

PLUMBER

**GEO THERMAL
 HEAT PUMPS
 A/C**

PLUMBING SERVICE

KONKLE
 PLUMBING & HEATING

SINCE 1981

905-563-4847
 KonklePlumbing.com

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

**NIAGARA
 FARMS**

Thank you for your invaluable contribution to the success of our publication in 2024.

**SUBSCRIBE TO HAVE THE LATEST
 EDITION OF NIAGARA FARMS
 DELIVERED RIGHT TO YOUR
 INBOX FOR FREE!**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO SUBSCRIBE
 www.granthaven.com/niagara-farms**

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP
FARMERS, CONTRACTORS, AND HOMEOWNERS.**



**IN
PARTNERSHIP
WITH**



Ontario Agra is Here For All of Your Farm Drainage Needs

As Niagara's official distributor of Bluewater Pipe, Ontario Agra is dedicated to helping our farmers get the most out of their land. Ontario has always been a global leader of farm drainage legislation and technology. As technology and resources improve, Ontario farmers will continue to experience the benefits of proper field drainage.

In order to help Ontario farmers remain profitable for the long term, we're continuing to research and share our findings regarding how to maximize crop yield and profitability through modern subdrain technology. **Farmers can expect a 10% - 20% increase in crop yield from subdrain installation, paying for their investment in five to seven years.**

How Drainage Tile Works in Clay Soil

Haldimand and Niagara clay has a reputation of being extremely compact, with a high water table and virtually non-existent drainage rate. Clay soil like this can impact your crop yield. The compaction and water retention of this soil increases the need for proper drainage, as it can help to introduce oxygen deeper into the soil. Most plants will only grow roots where they can access oxygen. By getting oxygen deeper into your soil, your plants can establish a better root system. This creates stronger plants for this growing season, and a healthier, more nutrient-rich soil for the future.

Desaturating the soil early in the season allows soil to warm quicker, increases air in the soil, and improves microbial activity. Providing a deeper root zone through the whole field by lowering the water table. All of these factors allow plants to root more deeply, ultimately giving the roots more ability to withstand both drought and flood conditions.

Tighter-spaced tiles can get excess water out more quickly during high-rainfall events, allowing plants to begin growing again more quickly. Waterlogged soil stunts plant growth until drained. Therefore, draining the root area quickly means you're giving plants additional growing time.

Ontario Agra Piping & Supplies is the exclusive distributor of Bluewater Pipe throughout the Niagara Region. If you're a farmer or homeowner who has struggled with drainage challenges in the past, Bluewater Pipe is the solution you've been looking for.

If you have any questions about how subdrain can work for your needs, please reach out to our team by phone at **(905) 386-1744** or email sales@ontarioagra.ca at any time.

(905) 386-1744 5377 Elcho Rd, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0
sales@ontarioagra.ca **ontarioagra.ca**

