

# **OFA – Policy Advisory Council (PAC) Meeting**

**February 20, 2019**

**Guelph, ON**

---

## **Welcome and introductions:**

Mark Reusser, Vice President and Ryan Passey, Leeds county PAC and PAC Steering Committee member welcomed the PAC. Ryan volunteered to co-chair the meeting.

## **Agenda review:**

Mark Reusser reviewed the agenda, no additions were made.

## **County concerns:**

### **1. Elgin**

A residential property has a home on it that is of cultural heritage interest to the new owner. Once the owner was made aware of the potential wind turbine installation, municipal council was approached with a plan to create a cultural heritage committee. The property now has a proposed Cultural Heritage Designation which includes protecting the property views and vistas as part of their heritage landscape.

Farmers are opposed to the proposed designation because it involves the potential that farming business activities are now subject to the review and potential restrictions that a Cultural Heritage Committee would have over our properties because of a Heritage Designation Property abutting ours. There are concerns the [bylaw] gives the non-farming residents this control. The information was provided as information for other counties to be aware of the potential for such action.

### **2. Chicken Farmers of Ontario**

Chicken Farmers of Ontario requested an update on the Mental Health Strategy. Janine Lunn updated that there are three things the OFA is currently supporting. Main support is for the University of Guelph provincial strategy for rural mental health (workshops coming in 2019), supporting the Do More Ag organization with Speaking Up on Mental Health and supporting the Northumberland County pilot project focusing on local access to rural mental health services.

Many events are being organized locally, get in touch with a local OFA Member Service Representative to find out more.

3. Simcoe

Dave Ritchie brought forth a concern that when the President of the OFA is your local county zone director, due to a busy schedule that person is not available to the local county to attend meetings. Simcoe county is asking for direction in this scenario.

Neil Currie responded that it could fall on a Director at large candidate, another Director or a staff person. He encouraged Simcoe to let head office know of dates and someone would be arranged to attend.

4. Waterloo

Jeff Stager raised an issue that when a fire occurs on a county boundary a dispatched fire crew may not cross the boundary due to a variety of jurisdictional issues. This does not serve the rural community well. He quoted an incident in Wilmot Township and asked if others have experienced this issue.

Don McCabe commented there are municipal agreements to define the coverage area and extend of the coverage offered. Also, communications can sometimes dispatch a department incorrectly. Both issues can be resolved by working with municipal councils

5. Niagara North

Niagara North received a letter from the Grape Growers of Ontario concerning non VQA, inexpensive wines being sold in grocery stores. Concerns that Ontario grown product will not have access to this market. Their request is for everyone to lobby their elected officials.

6. Grey

Paul Wettlauffer commented that OFA took concerns on Lyme Disease to the Ministry of Health in response to a 2011 AGM resolution. However, testing methods to date in Ontario are not adequate to confirm the disease. Some patients have travelled to the USA to get a proper diagnosis and this is not covered by OHIP. It was suggested that OFA should open the file again and lobby for accurate Lyme disease testing. Also, an information piece to all OFA members on the disease could be useful.

### **Responding to Animal Activism - OPP West Region Provincial Liaison Team (PLT)**

Michelle Cole and Michelle Schaffer from the OPP West Region Provincial Liaison Team (PLT) provided an explanation of the history, the primary role and mandate of the PLT. They highlighted that their major focuses are on First Nations and Animal Activism and their primary concern is public safety.

With regards to animal activism they stated that the PTLs role is to communicate with both sides, ensure all parties understand their rights, explain what a criminal offense is and that offenses will be prosecuted. Their presence is to keep the peace.

Their advice to farmers that feel that the local police or OPP are not respecting their rights during an animal activism event or in the case of trespass is to escalate the issue to a sergeant or higher. There are rights for both parties.

## **Issue Updates**

*Mapping Ag systems* – How is this progressing with the new government?

Peter Jeffery commented that it is tentatively put on hold to allow municipalities to do some refinements. The government is being slow.

*Risk Management* - Conservative Government promised \$150 million, is that still on track?

Ben Lefort commented that he believes that is still on track but is most likely on their year 2 of the mandate.

*Damage from External Trade Disputes*

Neil Currie commented that this issue will be debated through a resolution process at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture annual meeting the week of February 25.

## **Waste management background**

Janine Lunn presented the results of an OFA member survey that posed questions regarding farm waste.

The PAC discussed the issues of used motor oil disposal, municipalities that take bale wrap at the curb side pickup and the environmental fee that is paid upon purchasing an item should be used for disposal.

Ian Nokes provided the PAC with an overview of agricultural waste, focusing on plastics on the farm. He went through challenges to recycling plastics, processing options and barriers. He mentioned that there are less options as landfills refuse to accept some plastics due to mediocre markets and not enough innovation to make it work in Ontario.

Ian spoke of the provincial governments Make Ontario Work Environment Plan that includes four silos of interest, including keeping land and soil clean.

OFA is joining a science research council that is researching converting plastic into biochemicals. At high temperatures plastics can be turned into fuel or chemicals.

## **Dealing with waste – adopting the 3Rs on farms**

### **Round table discussions:**

#### **Do you support/participate in gleaning (process of utilizing/repurposing leftover harvest)**

Generally, everyone supported the concept of gleaning with the following comments:

- Dehydration project in Elgin County, produce is dried and made into a soup mix, a product that food banks can accept. This may get rolled out to other parts of the province.
- Produce with a short shelf life, not possible for gleaning, produce is rolled back in to the soil as fertilizer.
- Gleaning is great concept, but hard to donate. People want prepared foods, that they don't have to cook.
- Retirees enjoy the volunteer program of gleaning.
- Food safety and food storage issues with gleaning.
- Surplus eggs go to food bank.

#### **How do you dispose of farm plastics? Are there new concerns or strategies? Gaps in the system?**

- Some municipalities allow twine and mesh in household pick up.
- Film wraps – burning is the only option.
- Nowhere for bale wrap to be disposed.
- Look at technologies around the world that are converting plastics to other products.
- Producer of the plastic should be responsible for the disposal.
- OFA could encourage bulk sales of farm inputs in order to reduce packaging.
- Quit using plastics - should demand products that do not contain plastic, like in the old days.
- OFA could build a database of options/places to recycle plastics, tires and oil.
- OFA could lobby the government to support research in plastic recycling technologies.
- Preferential tax rates for structures that are environmentally sound and reduce usage of harmful plastics.
- Encourage companies to convert to soy-based plastics.

#### **How do you dispose of used oil?**

- Big concern for large operators, landfills will take small amounts of oil but not helpful to large users. Some companies are not picking up any more. Regional approach would be best.
- Investigate the coverage of Safety Kleen
- Municipality has biohazard day but in most cases it is small volumes

- Pay an environmental fee to buy new oil and must pay to dispose of it?
- Greenhouse industry, company will pick it up filter it and resell it back to the greenhouse industry.
- Niagara has permanent hazardous waste sites.

### **What direction on education?**

Janine Lunn presented the results of an OFA member survey that posed questions regarding education.

Tina Schankula overviewed the current OFA policy on rural education.

### **Round table discussions:**

#### **If OFA had an audience with the Ministry of Education, what types of specialized programming would you like to see offered through high schools?**

- Classes that teach life skills such as food, nutrition and budgeting.
- Bring back trade programs such as auto mechanic, wood working, machine shop, home economics etc.
- Expand co-op programs, allow students to be immersed in the workforce.
- Agriculture based science curriculum.
- Farm tours and the rear of grocery store tours (to see the waste).

#### **Ideas on flexible models of education?**

- Internet based learning for some it is effective, unique classes on line. Some rural communities must pay for an online course, not fair. Reliable internet not available in all rural areas.
- Hybrid models with some internet-based education.
- Private based education system.
- Remote learning.
- Expanded coop learning.
- Learning must be from reputable sources.
- Group learning needs to be a focus in measurable results for each student.
- Perhaps students aged 16-18 attend school three days a week and then on farm for two days a week.

#### **What should OFA's scope of involvement be, and on what issues in education?**

- Continue to lobby for more agriculture in the classroom.
- Request more qualified principles in the rural schools.
- A province wide policy won't work.

### **What has your experience been with schools in your area?**

- A policy on the maximum daily allowable time a student spends on a school bus should be adopted.
- Lack of educational opportunities, teachers don't know. Provide teachers with resources.
- The program "Farm comes to Town" was cut and is no longer offered.
- Farm safety days are beneficial.
- Agriculture in the classroom.
- Grow communities don't close schools.
- Need quality guidance counselors in schools to lead students to realistic career choices. Match the student's ability to post-secondary education options.
- School boards are large and urban based. Education Ministry in Toronto think they know what is best for rural education.
- More accountability on the local school trustees.

### **April PAC meetings**

Neil Currie explained that the scheduled April PAC meetings are regional. After a discussion with the PAC steering committee, it was suggested that the meetings be cut down to two or three regional meetings instead of four (Woodstock, Brockville and Sudbury). The meetings would be a joint PAC/Presidents meeting focusing on the basics of human resources and governance. The discussions could lead to more in depth training programs next winter.

### **Before the Plate movie**

Dylan Sher, creative mind behind Before the Plate created the project as a result of experiencing the misinformation about the farming industry first hand. Growing up just outside of Toronto, Dylan's initial impression of farming came from urban information sources that had a very negative view of modern agricultural practices. After enrolling at the University of Guelph for agricultural business, Dylan has realized the weight and scale of false information that consumers are exposed to which sheds farmers in a bad light. Dylan plans to use his urban upbringing as an advantage to the project as he has a better understanding of areas that are of concern in the cities and what social implications those carry.

The PAC were given the opportunity to view the movie.

### **Adjournment**