

# OFA President and Vice-President Candidate Profiles

# Peggy Brekveld

Sometimes farming requires dirty boots, long days and short nights - it isn't always picture book perfect! (Just this week I chipped a tooth milking in the parlour!) And yet, I expect that even though this is true, you still love what you do. Farming is in one's soul, and you can hardly imagine life without it...

At OFA, we talk about Farms and Food Forever, a message very similar in sentiment. We advocate for 38,000 farm members just like you, on issues that affect the farm and food sector. I am proud to be a part of this work, and I am looking for your support to lead OFA this year as president.



I have been on the Board of Directors for 8 years; 5 of those have been as vice-president. I believe in the importance of good governance, and was one of the voices that encouraged us to take the step of establishing a permanent governance committee, and have been a part of the audit and budget committees. I am engaged in our lobby efforts, meeting with politicians from all parties, and I am a proud supporter of our summer Field Day event, which brings MPPs and their staff to the farm to see what modern agriculture looks like. Being at the VP level has included more than a 100 days a year actively engaged in OFA work, and I am committed to continuing in this path.

**What does the future of OFA look like?** I believe that it looks a lot like me:

- Engaged in bringing the message to government that agriculture is the leading economic driver in Ontario, that we are environmental stewards of the land, and that we produce over 200 different commodities that are among the healthiest and safest foods in the world
- Governing with respect for the resources that you, our members have entrusted to OFA
- Building stronger partnerships with our commodities, community and provincial organizations.
- Part of a team, a team that includes our members, our staff, our researchers and our board of directors, driven to Produce Prosperity in Ontario!
- Growing and Adapting to a modern agriculture and food industry, one that will be even better when it includes investment in infrastructure, such as broadband, natural gas and healthy community hubs in Rural Ontario.

# **Peggy Brekveld**

During my 8 years on the OFA board, I have seen continuous growth and change. OFA is more focused with our lobby messaging of Producing Prosperity in Ontario. We have seen improvements at our Policy Advisory Council meetings, including a focus on how OFA can better support our County and Regional Federations. There is renewed interest in leadership training and opportunity through the Proud to Lead program. And it is great to see 6 candidates vying for our At-Large Director position! I am proud to be a part implementing these improvements; I am proud to be part of this organization.

I ask you for your support as I become your next OFA President.

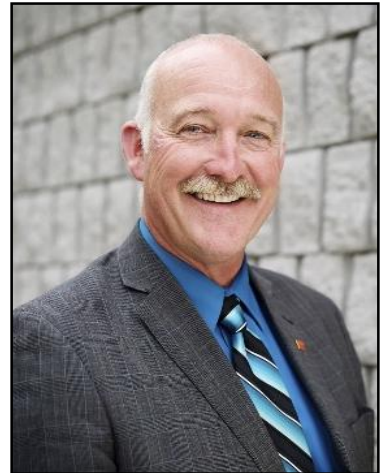
Sincerely,

Peggy

## Keith Currie

As I think back on when I started farming with my father, I remember coming home from school wide eyed and ready to take on the world. Like most my age, energy was abundant and there was no shortage of ideas on how to make our operation better and how I was going to reform the business that my family had been operating for 7 generations before me. I was excited about my farming future and what lay ahead.

I suspect that my enthusiasm was similar excitement that many feel entering into the world of agriculture. And while 30 years later the one thing that has not changed is my excitement for what lies ahead for this industry and how OFA can and will continue play a big part of shaping the road ahead.



As I reflect back on all the changes that have occurred in the way we operate our operations and the new crops, genetics and technologies that have evolved in my career in agriculture, I can't help but be excited about what lies ahead in our future. But as exciting as these changes are, the opportunity for agriculture moving forward is incredible.

Local and on the ground issues will always be on the OFA agenda to deal with. Our long history of tackling these issues will always be at the core of what we do. Since introducing Producing Prosperity in Ontario just over 2 years ago, our engagement with beyond farm gate organizations has increased immensely. I have worked diligently to foster and build these relations to build a network outside of primary agriculture who can advocate on our behalf during their lobby and advocacy events.

As our farming operations change and evolve to meet the demands of production along with the demand for transparency, so too will the way we need to advocate for agriculture and the Agri-Food industry as a whole. The demands by the consumer for the greater need by our industry to have full disclosure will change our approach as we go forward. As an industry there has never been a greater need for us to be united to obtain the leverage we need to maintain and increase our influence on decision makers.

I am excited about what the future holds for agriculture. Working together with our members and our partners collectively, we will begin to reveal the great potential agriculture has to offer. I respectfully ask for your support to elect me as your president.

# Keith Currie

This past year I have chaired the President's Council, a committee of industry reps from primary agriculture, processing, retail, academic and U of G student rep. I was also honoured to be asked by OMAFRA minister Ernie Hardeman to be a co-chair on his Minister's Advisory Group. Both of these endeavours are strong opportunities to further the agriculture agenda in a way that has the complete farm to fork voice. As we turn the calendar on 2019, you will need a strong voice to represent the needs of your farming businesses and the industry as a whole. I am that voice that you can count on. I ask for your support to be re-elected as your president to continue the good work OFA is known and trusted for.

Respectfully,

Keith Currie

## Crispin Colvin

I have had the privilege of representing you as a Director for the past three years. I am pleased to be able to continue in that role for another term.

The board members that you have elected bring diverse experience in agriculture as well as in life. This serves all of us well. No one person is an expert in all fields. What we have, are knowledgeable people with a wealth of experience. My experience is not only in agriculture, but in political activity. This is much of the work we do as a board. We are advocating for our members at both the provincial and municipal levels as well as federally.



In order to understand the needs of OFA members, I have made a point of travelling to various areas to meet with boards and groups to learn first hand what the local issues are. It is important to be in Verner to talk to the members in the north, just as it is to stay in contact with members from Eastern Ontario. My home may be in Southwestern Ontario but my OFA duties are province wide. I think it's important to answer your questions in a timely manner. That is why my cell phone number is published. If I can't answer your questions, I know I will be able to find someone who can

As your representative, it is important to build relationships not only with MPP's and Ministers, but their staff as well. A level of trust between us and the elected and non-elected staff we work with is important to accomplishing what is needed to help agriculture. That level of understanding and trust takes years to develop. There are those, such as myself, who have experience in government as well as working with diverse groups, that can build on the good work that has been done. Forging relations with commodity groups is equally important. I have demonstrated my ability to work with various groups such as my Directorship on Farm and Food Care and the work done collectively on the new Animal Welfare legislation. The next challenge is that of animal activists. We know that the government is working on new legislation to deal with trespass and farm invasions. I, among others, have been active on this file. We need strong penalties and equally strong laws to protect our businesses. I will continue to lead a strong voice in these issues.

# Crispin Colvin

We must continue to put our program, Producing Prosperity, front and centre as key components still require much more work across the province. Broadband, natural gas and our rural infrastructure remain priorities. Ontario's economy depends on agriculture and the agri food sector. In order to remain one of the key economic drivers of the province, we need the government to invest in rural Ontario. This will always be a priority.

I will continue to work on your behalf to see these projects come to fruition. It takes time, tenacity and a good relationship with government. I ask for your support in electing Crispin Colvin as your Vice-President.

# Mark Reusser

I'm an optimist, not only in life in general, but also with regard to the future of agriculture and the ability of the OFA to help Ontario farmers navigate that future. There are and will continue to be challenges but I am confident that if we as an organization anticipate and plan well, we will meet and overcome everyone.

For over 80 years the OFA has been a forceful advocate on all issues that affect agriculture in Ontario. We, along with our knowledgeable and experienced staff, have addressed thousands of issues over the years including hundreds of EBR postings and files ranging from the fate of rural schools to the price of fuel and everything in between. We have a long history of reacting to issues in a rational, consistent and principled manner. While reacting is important and merits continued attention, the OFA board came to the realization about two years ago that just reacting to issues is no longer enough. We need to plan for the future by taking into account the attitude of consumers, industry and the government and ask bigger questions.



What are the tools that agriculture requires to grow and prosper?

In this time of government debt and deficits, how can we demonstrate that investment in agriculture and food benefits the entire economy, both urban and rural?

After consultation with the PAC and commodities, we began a campaign called "Producing Prosperity in Ontario" which calls on all levels of government to distribute investment throughout rural Ontario. Investment in roads and bridges, high speed internet and natural gas infrastructure has the potential bring prosperity not only to rural Ontario but the entire province. The Eastern and Western Wardens Caucuses have agreed to partner with us. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has given us enthusiastic support and the government in Queens Park has assured us that producing prosperity is a concept that is in line with their philosophy. The Conservatives have recently revised the rules regarding cross subsidization of natural gas infrastructure in order to in courage new investment in the rural countryside. We see these as a good first steps and eagerly await shovels in the ground.

At some point, we as an organization will have to address the need to raise the profile of agriculture and food in Ontario. We are and will continue to be the largest industry in the province as well as the biggest employer. Unfortunately, neither consumers, the media nor



# Mark Reusser

the government appear to recognize this reality. Without a concerted effort by individual farmers, the OFA and commodity organizations our industry will continue to be an afterthought. A higher profile will lead us on a path to garnering the attention that we not only deserve but require in order to prosper as an industry.

When I am not working on your behalf, my wife Mila and I tend our farm near New Dundee southwest of Kitchener. Our farm markets about 800,000 Kg of commercial turkeys annually as well as a small acreage of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. We also have large garden where I do some amateur breeding of tomatoes and melons. While our four children no longer live at home, they and their partners regularly return home to the farm for Sunday supper.

These past two years I have had the pleasure of co-chairing the Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative. This is a unique partnership between the OFA and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative as well as a whole host of farmers, conservation authorities, government ministries and commodity groups. Our mandate is to investigate and demonstrate the removal of phosphorus from drainage water in field tiles and drainage ditches in the Thames River basin. We believe that this initiative has the potential to help Ontario meet its commitment to reduce phosphorus contributions to Lake Erie by 40% by 2025.

I also chair the Ontario 4R Steering Committee. The 4R program is an accreditation process that endeavours to ensure that fertilizer is applied at the right time, place, rate and source thus facilitating increased production, enhanced environmental protection and improved sustainability.

You have elected a strong board of directors at OFA. Each brings a unique set of talents and skills to the organization and I thoroughly enjoy working with every one of them. I look forward working with the PAC, OFA staff, fellow directors and each and every member as we embark on a new year of working for farmers and advancing the business of agriculture in Ontario.

I'm both excited and optimistic about the potential for agriculture in the future. I believe that by working collaboratively with our partners and allies we can unlock agriculture's potential. I respectfully ask for your support to be re-elected as your OFA vice-president.

Mark Reusser

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