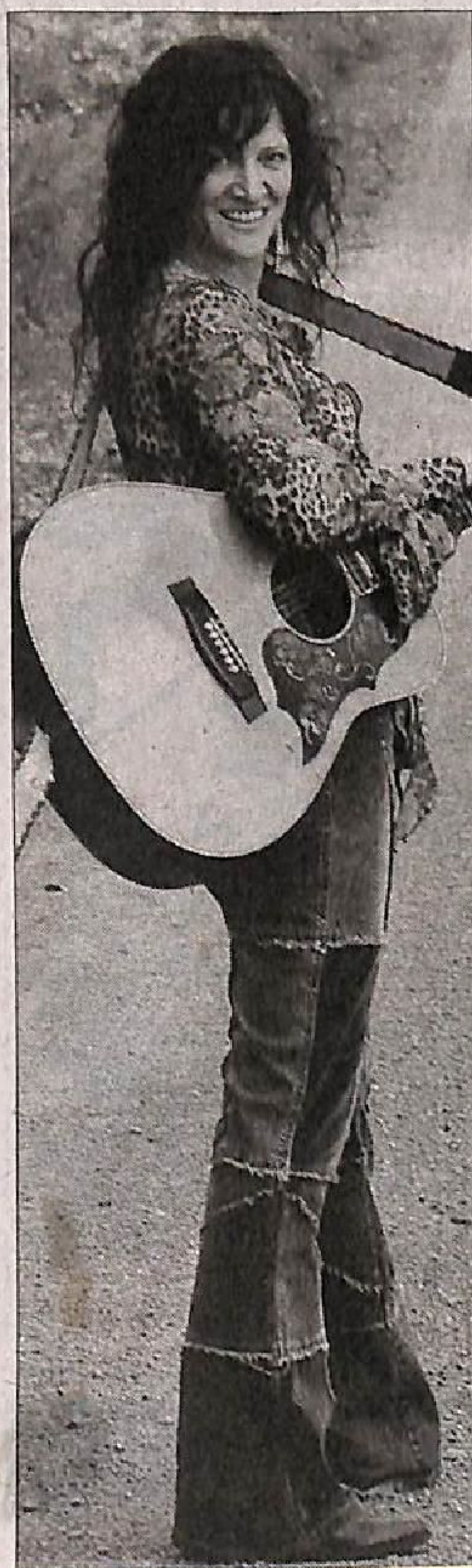


Second award for Cheryl Casselman



Two years and counting. Cramahe country singer Cheryl Casselman has won the top country performer award again in 2008 with her compelling song, *The Imminent Goodbye*.

The talented singer won the Ontario Independent Music award in her category in 2007 in the first year the awards were presented. She did it again Oct. 16 at the Phoenix concert hall in Toronto.

"I really didn't expect to win..." Ms. Casselman says.

As a 2007 winner, Ms. Casselman performed three of her songs at the awards ceremony with Cassandra Edison and Stephen Rapos.

Former Colborne musician Kirk Husak was also nominated for an award in the Best Male Performer category won by Marco D'Amico.

Nominees' songs were judge by four judges on a points

County OKs agriculture action

COLBORNE CHRONICLE OCT. 23/08

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Most people would be shocked to learn what most farmers make, Trent Hills Mayor and county councillor Hector MacMillan said: "It's below the poverty line."

In 15 years, more than 30% of Northumberland's agri-businesses have closed.

Agri business survey

The agriculture action plan committee surveyed the agri-business community. Slightly more than half are not interested in expanding or modifying their businesses. Almost 20% plan to be out of the business in five years.

Those who plan to expand are split — about half want to expand primary production, about 36% want to grow the retail side of their businesses. Nineteen per cent plan to expand processing, or increase their involvement in food-based value chains. Less than 10% showed interest in the bio-based fuel industry.

Regulatory burdens and lack of marketing support were the two biggest barriers to growth. Storage and distribution difficulties, volume requirements and tax burdens were also significant restrictors to growth.

Improved marketing and increased local processing capacity were listed as much-needed tools.

Close to half of the respondents to the steering committee's survey expressed the need for help with networking, education, financing and resource support, and business services.

Retailers interviewed listed safety, packaging and product volume and quality as well as competitive pricing as some of their needs. Interestingly, so did processors.

The report concludes people in the agricultural sector in this area —

including those on the county's 1,031 farms — need to locate new products, develop value-added opportunities and find alternate markets for transitional products grown and processed here.

Recent changes in retail infrastructure allow local sourcing of seasonal products. As well, the growing local food movement enhances opportunities for sales. The Proudly Northumberland branding program launched in 2007 promotes local farm producers, but lacks standards, county council heard. There is also a stated need to develop the logo program into a recognizable brand.

The current Northumberland Farm Gate Guide enhances local production and sales, bridging the gap between consumer and producer.

A regional vision statement for the agriculture sector states, "Together we will develop the opportunities that will enable our agricultural sectors and our rural communities to prosper."

Recommendations

The Agriculture Action Plan recommendations are numerous.

- In the area of agricultural production, it suggests the county work with livestock producers and other stakeholders to establish a small-scale niche abattoir. The facility would reduce shipping costs, and serve the 100-mile diet area which includes the lucrative General Toronto Area. Mr. Borowec commented on the growing demand for halal and kosher options.

- Business opportunity analysis tools are needed by agri-business owners so they can invest strategically in new opportunities.

- Web-based marketing tools and a web base of Northumberland's agricultural services will help the business.

- Access to large animal veterinary care needs to be improved.

- In the area of consumer marketing the Proudly Northumberland program needs to be expanded by updating the Farm Guide and promoting value-added opportunities for businesses selling locally grown food.

- Partnership-based marketing initiatives and economic opportunity studies will be developed in the plan. Sectors promising the greatest opportunities for growth, diversification and export need to be identified.

In general, the profile of the county needs to be increased and education provided to meet future challenges and educate those in the business and the public.

Public awareness is essential, as is advocacy. The public and policy makers must become more aware of the needs of agri-businesses.

Cost sharing with all levels of government will enhance housing, public transit, broadband and other infrastructure needs. The report recommends this type of farm support be encouraged.

Bio-products using Northumberland's farm products can be developed in partnership to create successful bio-product industries. Green industries could put Northumberland on the map. The production of hemp is an example of a means of developing market and manufacturing tie-ins. New construction materials made of agricultural biomass should be introduced to the consumer market after consultation with building inspectors.

Finally, quality of life can be improved through better broadband service and use of TeleHealth Ontario. Increased awareness of farm employment opportunities and training will enhance the rural work force.

Vehicle impounds continue

Last weekend, six drivers lost their licences and vehicles for seven days. In most cases, it was due to traveling a high rate of speed on Highway 401. However, one driver pulled up to a RIDE check with two passengers in the trunk area of the vehicle. One driver was also charged with possession of marijuana.

...
A Belleville man was arrested in the early morning hours Oct. 19 for impaired driving on County Road 25 in Cramahe Twp. He is to appear in court Nov. 5 for the charges of

impaired driving and drive with over 80mg.

...
The evening of October 17, a Mississauga woman was arrested and charged with impaired driving and drive over 80 mg on Hwy. 401 in Port Hope. Her court date is Dec. 5.

...
The afternoon of Oct. 18, a Scarborough man was charged for impaired by drug, possession of marijuana and possession of a controlled substance on Hwy. 401 in Port Hope. He is to appear in court Nov. 24.

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