Partnership paid off for farmers

The newly unveiled $25-million dairy and livestock research facility near Elora appears to be another example of the power of public-private partnerships to create something dynamic.

Following an open house of the sprawling, state-of-the-art centre on Thursday, representatives of the funding stakeholders, whose investment spurred the facility, rightly touted its promise. They also praised the collaboration that saw it come about.

As they asserted, this new centre positions local researchers, domestic farmers and industry to have terrific advantages in developing and sustaining innovations that should have enormous positive applications for industry stakeholders and consumers in a competitive international space.

No doubt, this case will also give hope to backers of other local causes seeking to advance ambitious proposed developments and ventures through public-private partnerships (or P3s).

After all, this formula resulted in a $25-million investment that had no shortage of proud and boastful funding parents recently — and a wide community of excited agri-food stakeholders on hand as well. This collaboration, however, included the critical piece that many P3-formula wannabes lack. It had big private backing interest and funding from this sector available.

In this instance, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario made a multimillion-dollar contribution.

In commenting on what the private and public money delivered in Elora, Stewart Cressman, chair of the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario, stated: “We are the envy of other jurisdictions with our partnerships.”

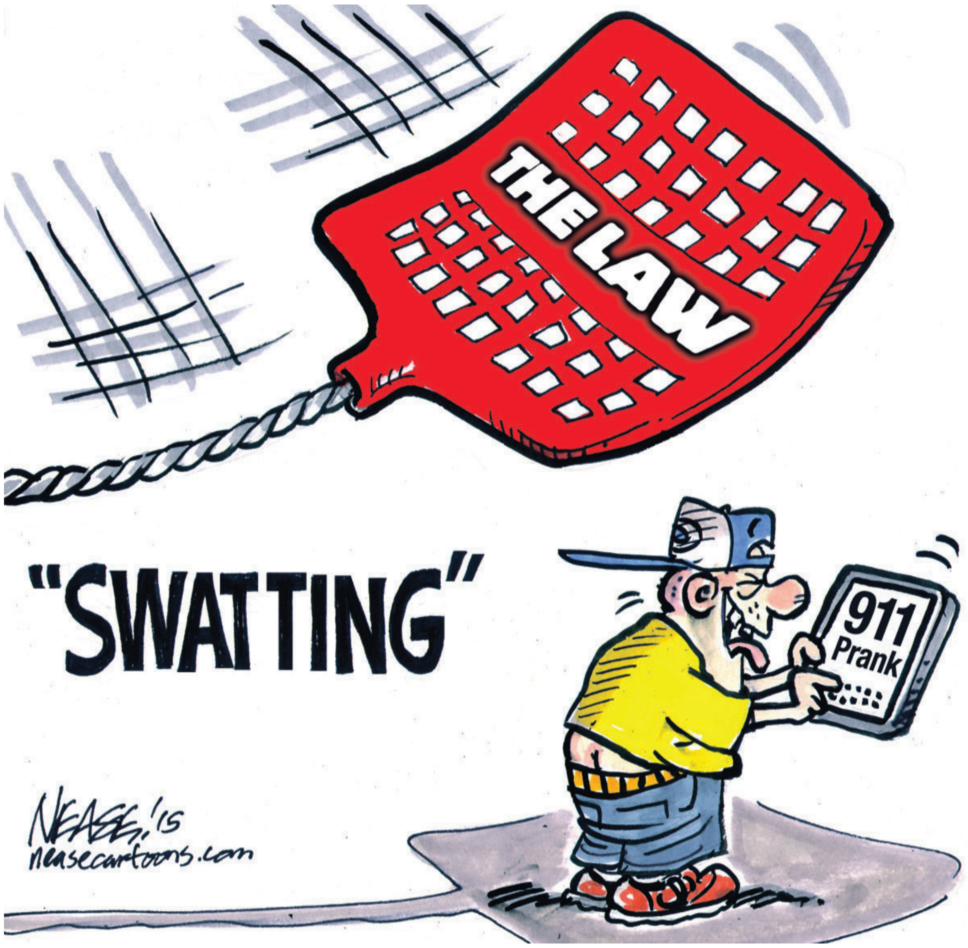
He said that was because the collaborative funding modernized key agri-food research infrastructure and that will help “accelerate the discovery and adoption of innovations that enhance and sustain Ontario’s agri-food sector and fuel a productive economy.”

The envy he spoke of, however, could just as easily have applied to the leaders of groups looking to fund similarly ambitious projects without a ready industry partner or two.

We have reached a time where Ottawa and Queen’s Park have demonstrated more of a willingness to open their chequebooks for investments in infrastructure when there is committed private money on the table, too.

As the dairy centre story suggests, it has become tricky to milk public purses alone to do such projects.

The Independent & Free Press



www.theIFP.ca
THE INDEPENDENT & FREE PRESS
905-873-0301
Publisher: Dana Robbins
General manager: Steve Foreman (sforeman@theifp.ca)
Retail advertising manager: Cindi Campbell (ccampbell@theifp.ca)
Managing editor: Chris Vernon (cvernon@metroland.com)
Distribution manager: Nancy Geissler (ngeissler@theifp.ca)
Classifieds/Real Estate
Kristie Pells (realestate@theifp.ca)
Classified Call Centre
1-855-415-8237
classified@theifp.ca
Accounting
1-866-773-6575
Editorial
Cynthia Gamble: News editor (cgamble@theifp.ca)
Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer (ltallyn@theifp.ca)
Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports (emaher@theifp.ca)

Get the latest headlines delivered to your inbox by signing up for our twice weekly electronic newsletter. Go to www.theifp.ca and click on ‘Newsletter sign-up’ at the bottom of the homepage.

Letters to the editor

Chong off on the numbers

MP Michael Chong’s most recent Conservative newsletter, paid for by taxpayers, featured the 2015 budget bill, which has not yet been passed by Parliament. He suggests the bill is a “significant achievement.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Chong makes misstatements and omits some important information. An example:

Over the past nine years Mr. Chong’s government has added $157 billion to the national debt. It now stands at $17,000 for every woman, man and child. In 2009 Conservatives incurred the largest yearly deficit in Canadian history — $55 billion.

So how did the Conservatives balance this particular budget bill just in time for the election? The bill is predicated on 2 per cent annual growth in the economy. Canada, however, showed negative 0.6 per cent growth in the first three months of 2015.

Mr. Harper and Mr. Chong have eliminated 37,000 public service jobs. Those include front line service positions at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (20 per cent cut), the Department of Veteran Affairs (25 per cent cut), Service Canada (including EI services), Transportation Safety and the Coast Guard. We can expect food safety risks and less service.

The bill includes a reduction of $900 million in public service benefits (vacation pay cuts) which have not yet been “negotiated” with CUPE. Expect service interruptions if CUPE strikes. The Conservatives will reduce federal health care spending by $36 billion over 10 years. This, despite growing health care needs especially for ageing Canadians. Expect a looming health care crisis.

Mr. Chong’s government will advertise spending on transit ($750 million) and defence ($12 billion), but these dollars won’t be available until two years. Mr. Harper has increased tariffs (ie. taxes) on more that 1,290 imported product categories — everything from child car seats to coffee makers to carpets. An additional $330 million in taxes which will mostly impact low and middle income families.

Mr. Chong’s government will keep Employment Insurance premiums higher than is necessary. They are counting on this back door tax on workers to generate an extra $5.5 billion annually.

And yet all these cuts and maneuvers were still not enough. To barely make it across the balanced budget line, Mr. Chong’s government sold off our $1 billion of General Motors shares — early and below projected value. In addition, the federal contingency disaster fund was reduced from $3 billion to $1 billion per year. Financial experts have used terms such as “playing with the numbers” and “financial sleight of hand” to describe these moves.

Of course the budget bill mentions nothing about the environment and carbon emissions, youth un and under- employment, or the loss of manufacturing jobs and car plant closures here in Ontario.

Now for the secret about Conservative spending. Mr. Harper and Mr Chong have lent out $211 billion through what is called “non-budgetary spending”. This is money to people and companies which does not appear in the budget bill and is not reviewed by Parliament. Previous governments have done some of this, but Mr. Harper and Mr. Chong have increased the amount by 400 per cent in order to create the impression of sound financial management.

Peter van Vloten