



OFA restructuring moves forward

by Wendy Omvlee, Member OFA Executive Committee

The demanding work towards restructuring the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is moving forward with the appointment of an implementation team.

The process began at the 2005 OFA convention when delegates called for change to the organization's governance structure. After a year of consultations, the structural review committee reported to the 2006 convention, and delegates there approved moving to the next stage in the process – implementation.

This marks the first time OFA has moved beyond the study stage as it looks for more efficient and effective ways of representing the province's farmers. Over the past 20 years, at least four studies were done as OFA looked for improvements to how it is governed. Those studies resulted in very little change.

Now, farmers at all levels of the organization – all the way from grassroots to board members to executive leadership – are focused on coming up with an organization capable of getting the results modern agriculture needs and demands.

Recent consecutive years of negative economic times for farmers and their families are making us focus on the best ways to have an impact on politicians and bureaucrats. We have learned that agriculture and the people involved in the sector need respect and action from the governments that determine our operating rules and regulations.

The people who are the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have decided a new approach is needed for dealing with our governments. The plan is to have details of a new OFA in the hands of delegates at the 2007 convention next November.

Between now and June, the implementation team will be looking at issues such as the size of OFA's board of directors, the geographical

representation members of that board will take to meetings, how the president and vice-presidents will be chosen, how directors will be elected, and the frequency of meetings for the board.

Today's directors and executive members are elected for one-year terms. The implementation team has been mandated to recommend suitable lengths of terms in office for leaders of a revised OFA and a suitable selection process.

An important component of the OFA is its county organizations. In the past, these county federations have operated with basic autonomy from the provincial organization. One of the recommendations from the structure review team was to develop a constitutional linkage between OFA and the local federations.

Provincial legislation that established terms of funding for local federations by the provincial organization has created a form of semi-formal relationship between the two federation levels. Now, the implementation team will have to consider turning this into a formal relationship with a constitutional linkage.

New ways of developing policies that can translate the needs of the farming community into legislation for agricultural policy will have to be formulated. Creating a policy forum for the restructured OFA was one of the recommendations. Directors at the January meeting took initial steps in this direction when they presented ideas to be discussed at a policy forum session being planned for the March board meeting.

This process may seem complicated, but OFA's board of directors is committed to creating better ways of taking agriculture's message to the politicians and the public. We look forward to receiving the views of all OFA members on these important issues. Keep in touch with OFA to learn how you can participate.

AGRIS Co-operative announces federal support for biofuels project

Chatham/CCNMatthews - Kim Fysh, AGRIS Co-operative's Board President, and Bob Peden, UPI Energy LP's Director of Central Ontario Energy Alliance, announced to members at AGRIS Co-op's first annual meeting Jan. 17 that the co-op has received \$158,000 from the Agricultural Adaptation Council's Biofuels Opportunities for Producers Initiative (BOPI).

BOPI funding assists the Canadian government in meeting its biofuels commitment of 5 percent average renewable fuel content in transport fuel by 2010. UPI Energy LP is the co-operative's energy supplier.

Announced last fall by Minister Agriculture and Agri-Food Chuck Strahl, BOPI is designed for agricultural producers and rural communities to participate in increased biofuels production.

"AGRIS Co-operative Ltd. will, with the BOPI support, complete a feasibility study and business plan to look into building a soy crushing plant to produce and market primarily soy diesel, including the marketing of the by-products (hulls, meal, glycerol, others) within Southwestern Ontario," said Fysh in a press release.

AGRIS Co-operative General Manager Jim

Campbell said, "Completing the feasibility study and business plan will give our Board of Directors the needed knowledge to continue working towards opportunities related to the production and marketing of soy diesel. This BOPI program is very innovative and, in particular, because it requires direct producer involvement, is very supportive of the grain and oilseeds producers in the AGRIS trading area. We are appreciative of this support to our project and the overall strategic direction the federal government is taking in its support of environmentally-friendly fuels."

The co-op also reported to members the successful merger between La Co-operative de Pointe-aux-Roches and Orford Co-operative Ltd. with a combined savings in duplicated expenses of approximately \$450,000. The board of directors presented the financial statement, future strategic plans and other highlights of the year.

AGRIS Co-operative Ltd. is a 100-percent farmer-owned grain marketing and farm-input supply company and serves more than 1,200 farmer members in 14 locations in Essex, Kent, Elgin, Middlesex and Lambton Counties.

4-H Clubs begin another year

The Essex County 4-H Association is holding its annual Awards and Sign Up Night at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 6 at the Essex Legion Hall.

Are you between the ages of 10-21 or an adult who enjoys working with youth? If so, you are invited to come out and discover 4-H.

As a youth, you have the opportunity to learn new skills, attend camps, workshops, fun events. As an adult volunteer, you can help young people develop the skills they need to become successful, responsible citizens.

A 4-H club consists of a minimum of six eligible aged youth and a screened adult volunteer. As a club leader, you use "hands-on" learning to teach members a topic of interest. Resources and training sessions are

available for volunteers.

Besides the project related skills, youth develop self-confidence, leadership and communication abilities. The program offers a wide variety of conferences, exchange trips, scholarships and competitions at local, regional, provincial, national and international levels.

In Essex County, 4-H clubs of Swine, Beef, Dairy, Sheep, Poultry, Rabbit, Guinea Pig, Horse Interests, Horse Riding, Scrapbooking, Sewing, Christmas Crafts, Baking, Weaving, Knitting, Drama, Field Crops and Plowing are being offered.

For more information, contact Dianne at 519-727-6409 or visit the Ontario 4-H website at www.4-hontario.ca.

OCOFA offers advice for a wacky winter

By early January, thousands of anglers are usually on the ice across Ontario. This year, however, Mother Nature has altered the landscape of our lakes and rivers, making ice fishing all but impossible in most of the province. The Ontario Conservation Officers Association is offering some helpful advice for those determined to go fishing this winter:

"It's perfectly legal to fish in the open water during the winter – from shore or in a boat – the only major difference is that you're only allowed one line instead of the two used for ice fishing", says Dan

VanExan, OCOFA president.

Many areas have closed seasons in the winter, and these closures are in effect regardless of the condition of the water.

For those who are fortunate enough to have ice on their favourite lake, use extreme caution this winter. Even on lakes that have been frozen for several weeks, changing weather has not allowed for good ice formation.

Also, take a moment to make sure your angling licence hasn't expired and that you are familiar with the fishing regulations.

LAVIN AUCTIONS INC.
Brake and Muffler Shop Closed
 Under instructions from trustees Deloitte and Touche we have scheduled the auction at Brenda Brake Inc. (former MacDonalds Auto Clinic) at 5878 Tec. Rd. E. Windsor for Friday, Jan. 26 at 10:30 a.m. (Preview 9 a.m.).
Equipment: Bear computerized alignment machine w/all accessories, Bear 12,000 lb. 4 post lift, 2 post rotary hoist 9000 lb., electric ramp hoist, Amaco brake lathe, Strut tamer, Devilbis air comp., Hunter tire change and wheel balancer, exhaust pipe bender w/ lg. assortment of dies, Mig and Stick welders, torch sets, 20 ton press, fuel pump tester, parts washer, coolant flush machine and storage drums, greasers, floor and bottle jacks, engine stand, various tool chests, steel work benches, storage racks and shelving, display stands, air and electric tools, vise, grinders, fans, fire ext.'s, hand tools plus much more. **Inventory:** Mufflers, exhaust pipes, clamps, wipers and more. **Office:** Desks, chairs, cash register, phone system, T/V, signs etc. **Note:** Business owner or hobby mechanic - plan to attend. **Terms:** Cash or certified funds - 10% Buyer Premium. Further info call **RICHARD LAVIN AUCTIONS INC.**
519-735-3070 TECUMSEH

Trees Available!
 Trees are available through ERCA's spring tree planting program in both seedling and large stock sizes. Orders will be accepted until **March 9, 2007.**

Would you like ERCA to plant your trees for you? Give us a call to arrange a site visit and discuss details. Call 776-5209,

 Essex Region Conservation Authority Paul ext. 377 pgiroux@erca.org www.erca.org

Jack Morris Auctions Inc. Reminder Ad
Farm Machinery Auction Sale
Saturday, January 27 at 10:30 a.m.
 For William and David McGuire at 4612 Morris Line, Merlin. From Kent Middle Line (Cty. Rd. 8) between Valetta and Tilbury, take Sharp Rd. north to Morris Line. Or from Hwy. #2 at Merlin Rd. go south approx. 1 mi. to Morris Line and turn west. Watch for auction signs. Details were in last publication or with photos at www.jackmorrisauctions.com
Proprietors: David McGuire, 519-689-4432, William McGuire, 519-682-0817
Auctioneer: Jack Morris, 519-687-2530 or 1-800-462-3561

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