

# NEWSLETTER

## THE UNITED VOICE OF SASKATCHEWAN FARMERS AND RANCHERS.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Saskatchewan's annual spring 'mega-project' will soon be underway! We can only hope that Mother Nature will cooperate by finally releasing the whole province from the relentless grip of winter. In the meantime, APAS Board and staff have been busy researching and advancing effective agriculture policy on your behalf.

The APAS team of RM Representatives, Directors, and staff spent the better part of the winter and spring meeting with RM councils and ratepayers to present and promote the benefits of an APAS membership. The long list of invitations to attend meetings and the positive responses received has been rewarding, with the vast majority of councillors and ratepayers indicating that they are pleased with the focus and transparency being displayed throughout the organization. The commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved makes me proud to be a part of a winning team.

On the provincial policy front, the prominence that agriculture received in the 2009 provincial budget was encouraging. As I have said in the past, it was a great day for agriculture and rural Saskatchewan. In addition, our enhanced relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture has provided the opportunity to present our key policy positions in a clear and direct manner. Most recently, Minister Bjornerud and I met on the last day of March to discuss collaborative efforts on the issues facing the province's producers.

The EG&S symposium co-hosted by APAS was a tremendous success and has laid the groundwork for the important work to continue. For more details about the Symposium or to view the presentations, I encourage you to visit the EG&S portion of our website.

General Manager Nial Kuyek and I attended the spring meeting of the Prairie Farm Leaders in Winnipeg with representatives from KAP and WRAP. We identified and discussed common issues such as the proposed changes to the Canada Grains Act (Bill C-13) including our concerns over inward weighing and inspection and the bonding requirement of licensed grain companies.

We talked at length about the ongoing crisis in the livestock sector and environmental goods and services programs across the west. Following the meeting, Humphrey Bannack, Ian Wishart and I spent the rest of the afternoon doing media interviews on a broad range of agricultural issues. During these interviews and many other communication opportunities, media and listener responses to APAS' position on a wide variety of issues have been encouraging. The three Prairie Farm Leaders will meet again in late July during the CFA semi-annual meeting and APAS will host the fall meeting in Regina in October.

In later April, I attended the Executive and Board of Directors meetings of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture in Ottawa. During the discussions on trade, it seems there is finally recognition around the world that agricultural trade is key in the world economic crisis. On the changes to Product of Canada Food labeling, at this point, consumers and manufacturers will still be left with a system that poses more questions than answers. Discussions at CFA also revolved around climate change, which is a rapidly evolving and quickly growing file since President Obama's visit to Canada. We are confident that Canadian producers' history of sustainable agricultural practices is a key part of the solution, especially in regards to carbon sequestration and storage. As well, while I was in Ottawa, Rosser Lloyd, Director of Income Stabilization for AAFC, gave an update on Agri Stability, Agri Invest, and Agri Insurance. Continued monitoring and participation into the evolution of these programs remains a high priority for APAS and our national organization, CFA. We also had an opportunity to lunch with Minister Ritz's staff during which we focused discussions around the lack of initiatives for youth involvement in agriculture.

And finally, a special thank you to Heather Smith, the new Director General of Policy, Planning and Integration Directorate for Agriculture and AgriFood Canada (AAFC) on for her visit to APAS' office in April. Vice President Don Connick and Aj Thakker, Communications Consultant especially appreciated

the opportunity to meet with the newly appointed Director General and to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. Thank you also to Dean Vey, Regional Director, Market & Industry Services Branch (Saskatchewan), Debra Boyd-Chisholm, Senior Analyst, Intergovernmental Affairs, Strategic Policy Branch, and Brenda Patton, Senior Marketing & Trade Officer, Market & Industry Services (Saskatchewan) for their active and enthusiastic participation in the meeting. APAS looks forward to continuing the dialogue and will be forwarding an invitation to Ms Smith and the AAFC staff in Saskatchewan to join us in Saskatoon in June for the 2009 midterm meeting.

To all of APAS rural friends and supporters, please exercise caution during this spring seeding season and take extra care to protect those that you love. I look forward to seeing you all in June at the Midterm meeting and to renewing friendships both old and new.

*Greg Marshall*

## AGRICULTURE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS.

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## Voice of 'Real' Farmers by Garnet Etsell

Democratic or grassroots farm organizations have a long history in Canada as being the recognized credible voice of the majority of Canadian farmers. Today, the influence of that strong united voice appears to be challenged by the very governments we elected to represent us. So-called 'stakeholder consultations' are often held without truly engaging - and in fact deliberately bypassing - the credible farm organization structure that we - as the primary stakeholder - created to represent our industry and all of our producers.

In ignoring the legitimate 'producer-directed' farm organization structure, government officials will (falsely) claim that the public good is better served by calling forward selected (and usually sympathetic) individuals to provide a 'real' producer's opinion as representative of the industry as a whole. Unfortunately, that single producer's

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Ag news, views  
and reviews.

opinion is rarely if ever responsible to any real farmers other than the one voicing it.

In Canada, agriculture has long been recognized as a vital and strategically important industry: producing food, fibre and more recently fuel for our growing population while ensuring the overall health and well-being of our citizens. In doing so we have helped to secure our sovereignty as a nation; acted as a responsible and caring steward of the land and its vast natural capital; and produced vast quantities of safe high quality food for export to the world which acts as a net contributor to Canada's continued economic growth.

For the average urbanite and even for many rural citizens, the organization of Canada's various farm groups may seem confusing. However, there is a great deal of logic to the current structure, which always has the 'grassroots' farmer at its base.

Because of agriculture's importance - both domestically and internationally - past governments established provincial and national ministries to assist with the advancement of the sector as a whole. Initially these ministries focused on production, extension services, land management and key research areas to provide security and promote growth in the sector. In more recent years, the focus has shifted towards regulation and enforcement (including consumer protection, animal and plant health and environmental standards), risk management support, international trade and crisis management.

Canadian producers are blessed with the ability and opportunity to collectively grow several hundred different commodities across the country. Each commodity and sometimes each region have unique production and marketing strategies. Commodities and regions may compete directly against one another for the Canadian and foreign consumers' dollars.

As agricultural production grew in complexity, producers of like commodities banded together to form provincial commodity or sector organizations to help themselves and each other with marketing or production challenges and to create economies of scale to ensure that an adequate infrastructure was in place to serve the entire value chain. In addition to addressing production and marketing issues, many commodity groups

provided networking and educational events or facilitate research studies to further the goals of the sector and producers.

Over time, these diverse groups realized that although each commodity has its own unique characteristics, there were - and are - issues and challenges that they all have in common: accessing transportation infrastructure; navigating government bureaucracy, sustainable rural development, economic impacts that come with climate and biological variability and diversity; constantly evolving international trade issues and competitive disadvantages due to foreign environmental and agricultural policies; and of course an ever-shrinking rural population resulting in a decline in political influence across the country.

These groups correctly recognized that the challenges facing their own sectors and the industry as a whole were growing more complex every year and there was much to gain from ongoing dialogue, collaboration and cooperation. Hence 'umbrella' farm organizations were established at both the provincial and national level to deal with 'pan-agri' issues and to reduce duplication of effort between the organizations wherever possible while supporting the growth of all of the organizations' expertise within their specific area of influence.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) is Canada's largest national umbrella farm organization with ten provincial members (i.e. general farm organizations like APAS), nine national commodity group members and three organization members. As such, when the organization speaks out publicly on agricultural and rural issues; it truly represents the united voice of over 200,000 farm families across Canada.

Issues or initiatives of importance to any or all of the groups are brought forward to regular meetings of CFA where they are openly discussed and passionately debated with a goal of reaching consensus amongst the members' representatives. CFA's directors and leaders are duly elected farmers who are directly accountable to the members of their specific organizations - and are thus answerable to you - the individual farmer who is most affected by the resulting national and provincial policies.

This nation, however, is a vast county - geographically,

climatically and biologically diverse - presenting unique challenges to unique regions and all directly impacting how agricultural practices can vary from region to region across the country. As the issues affecting producers grow more complex, local farm populations have learned to elect individuals who have the passion, time and expertise to work tirelessly on the policies and programs that best advance the interest all our sectors and all farm families. These voters rightfully expect and receive regular reporting back and consultation through their commodity or provincial organizations on what is being monitored and debated at the national and provincial levels. The elected farm leaders participate in the debate at both ends of the discussion, receiving and providing feedback in order to express the industry's collective voice in clear consultation with membership scattered across the country.

This is why it is critically important for governments at all levels to work with and honestly listen to elected members of recognized farm organizations across Canada - they are articulating the deliberate synthesis of a discussion which has its roots with the every individual farmer in Canada. Consultations with governments during policy development are important. Time is often of the essence in these meetings and therefore what is presented needs to be articulate, concise and truly representative of average farm families and their specific situation. It is critical that those contributing in these consultations be accountable back to 'real' farmers for what is said. This accountability can only be achieved if the consultation is done through or with the direct participation of the recognized farm organization structure.

Our industry wants to work collaboratively with our governments to develop sound and effective rural policy that positively contributes to Canada's social, economic and environmental fabric. The mechanism for this collaboration is open communication and mutual respect achieved through ongoing dialogue and formal consultation. It is imperative that both the dialogue and consultation follow due process to truly ensure that the voice of 'real' farmers is really heard.

***Garnet Etsell is the Chair of the BCAC and a real turkey farmer in the Abbotsford area.***

## General Manager's Message Nial B. Kuyek

Dear Members;

A high priority for APAS RM Reps, Executive, Board and staff recently has been effectively and positively representing APAS at meetings of RM Councils and RM Ratepayers. A quick count indicates that APAS representatives have done presentations to more than twenty-five RM Councils and attended a dozen ratepayers meetings since early February. In all cases, the APAS presentations included discussion of the significant changes that have taken place within our organization, the accomplishments of APAS over the past twelve months and key priorities for the upcoming year.

It is important to remember that in-person presentations and the resulting discussions are essential to a member-based organization like APAS. These opportunities have enabled APAS to build knowledge and understanding of the focus, recent accomplishments and current priorities of APAS. This is invaluable communication - for with knowledge and understanding come support for the important purpose, role, and activities of APAS.

The strong messages of support from Councils and Ratepayers for the vocal and visible presence of APAS has been energizing and gratifying to our representatives and staff. A second major benefit to APAS from these face-to-face meetings is direct feedback and unique ideas from Councils and Ratepayers on organizational and policy issues. This dialogue enables APAS to clearly hear the perspectives and viewpoints of individual ratepayers and to ensure that the organization is on the right track in pursuing the priorities of the membership. In our member structure, the ideas germinated in local RM offices and town halls can eventually become provincial and national agricultural policy.

These meetings, this newsletter, and the continual expansion of our new website are all attempts by APAS to ensure that our communications and information to key stakeholders are open and continual. Should your RM wish to arrange a meeting with APAS for such discussion, I invite you to contact your RM Representative, the APAS Board members for your area, or the APAS office.

Best wishes for the spring season!

# THE APAS TEAM

## PRESIDENT

Greg Marshall [president@apas.ca](mailto:president@apas.ca)

## VICE PRESIDENTS

Don Connick and Jeff Simpson

## GENERAL MANAGER

Nial Kuyek [nkuyek@apas.ca](mailto:nkuyek@apas.ca)

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Sonia Korpus [admin@apas.ca](mailto:admin@apas.ca)

## INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT

Ajay Thakker [athakker@apas.ca](mailto:athakker@apas.ca)

## DISTRICT 1

Ernie Briggs [ErnieBriggs@apas.ca](mailto:ErnieBriggs@apas.ca)  
of RM of Willowdale #153

Arlynn Kurtz [ArlynnKurtz@apas.ca](mailto:ArlynnKurtz@apas.ca)  
of RM of Fertile Belt # 183

## DISTRICT 2

Norman Nordgulen [NormNordgulen@apas.ca](mailto:NormNordgulen@apas.ca)  
of RM of Rivers #72

Shawn Bourgeois [ShawnBorgelos@apas.ca](mailto:ShawnBorgelos@apas.ca)  
of RM of Wood River # 74

## DISTRICT 3

Don Connick [DonConnick@apas.ca](mailto:DonConnick@apas.ca)  
of RM of Carmichael #109

Kevin Gilbert [KevinGilbert@apas.ca](mailto:KevinGilbert@apas.ca)  
of RM of Piapot 110

## DISTRICT 4

David Spencer [DavidSpencer@apas.ca](mailto:DavidSpencer@apas.ca)  
of RM of Connaught # 457

Norm Hall [NormHall@apas.ca](mailto:NormHall@apas.ca)  
of RM of Emerald # 277

## DISTRICT 5

Greg Marshall [president@apas.ca](mailto:president@apas.ca)  
of RM of Mount Hope #279

Garth Burns [GarthBurns@apas.ca](mailto:GarthBurns@apas.ca)  
of RM of Prairie Rose # 309

## DISTRICT 6

Jeff Simpson [JeffSimpson@apas.ca](mailto:JeffSimpson@apas.ca)  
of RM of Mountain View #318

Charles Boser [CharlesBoser@apas.ca](mailto:CharlesBoser@apas.ca)  
of RM of Grass Lake #381

## COMMITTEES

### ECONOMIC, TRADE AND STRATEGIC GROWTH

Director..... Arlynn Kurtz  
Director..... David Spencer  
Director..... Greg Marshall  
RM Rep..... Dorothy Weetman  
RM Rep..... Stan Novogrodski  
RM Rep..... Ken Rosaasen  
RM Rep..... Garry Moroz  
RM Rep..... James Slywka  
RM Rep..... Allan Witt

### ENVIRONMENT AND FOOD SAFETY

Director..... Don Connick  
Director..... Norm Hall  
Director..... Charles Boser  
RM Rep..... Brian Snell  
RM Rep..... Marion Kelly  
RM Rep..... Stan Novogrodski

### FINANCE

Director..... Ernie Briggs  
Director..... Shawn Bourgeois  
Director..... Don Connick  
Director..... Greg Marshall

### GOVERNANCE

Director..... Arlynn Kurtz  
Director..... Norm Hall  
Director..... Jeff Simpson  
RM Rep..... Terry Hildebrandt

### GRAINS AND OILSEEDS

Director..... Shawn Bourgeois  
Director..... David Spencer  
Director..... Garth Burns  
Director..... Greg Marshall  
Director..... Jeff Simpson  
RM Rep..... Merv Kryzanowski  
RM Rep..... Brady Nelson  
RM Rep..... Darren McLeod

### LIVESTOCK

Director..... Ernie Briggs  
Director..... Norm Nordgulen  
Director..... Don Connick  
Director..... Kevin Gilbert  
RM Rep..... Brian Snell  
RM Rep..... Bill McPherson

### RESOLUTIONS

Director..... Ernie Briggs  
RM Rep..... Dorothy Weetman  
RM Rep..... Donavon Block

# Burning Issues

## Bill C-13

- The federal government has introduced proposed amendments to the Canada Grain Act (Bill C-13). These changes include clarification of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) mandate; changes to inward inspection and weighing; changes to the CGC – administered security program (bonding); changes to blending and registration of receipts and audits; and elimination of the Grain Appeals tribunal.
- APAS, the CFA and its member organizations, CWB and numerous commodity and farm groups have expressed concerns relative to the proposed changes, particularly to inward inspection and weighing and the CGC-administered security program.
- APAS and a number of farm and commodity groups have commissioned an evaluation of producers payment security options, including security based (bonding), insurance based, fund based, and clearinghouse models.
- Ensuring that the interests of producers are represented and protected in any changes to the Canada Grain Act will continue to be a high priority for APAS and the CFA .

## Livestock

- Prices for hogs and cattle continue to be depressed with a growing number of producers exiting the industry. The future of our livestock industry is in question.
- In the spring of 2008, APAS commissioned a study of the cow-calf sector. Potential policy solutions were discussed with members over the summer and fall. At the 2008 AGM, livestock policy was established around four key pillars – an environmentally based livestock support payment, freezing of community pasture rates, continued opposition to COOL legislation in the U.S. and changes to Business Risk Management programs. Following the AGM, APAS lobbied both federal and provincial governments for assistance to the livestock industry.
- In late February of 2009, Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Bjornerud announced the \$71 million Saskatchewan Cattle and Hog Support program.
- APAS commended the provincial government on their initiative to support the livestock industry and continues to lobby the federal government for a national support program for the sector.
- APAS plans to engage livestock industry groups and government in further discussion of the problems in the livestock industry and towards a long-term vision for the livestock industry.

## Safety Nets

- Farm support programs do not adequately cover the costs of production.
- Meyers Norris Penny conducted a review of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance in 2008. Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Bjornerud announced that the 2009 Crop Insurance program would include 12 of the 16 recommendations.
- There are growing concerns that AgriStability will not provide effective income support.
- APAS participated in the review of Crop Insurance and has commended the provincial government on the improvements introduced in 2009.
- APAS and other industry groups have suggested changes to AgriStability and AgriInvest to make these programs more responsive.
- Crop Insurance and Business Risk Management programs continue to be a priority for APAS.
- APAS will continue to lobby for changes that would cover the costs of production.
- APAS will be examining AgriStability to identify changes that could be made in order to make the program more responsive to the needs of both grains & oilseeds and livestock producers.

## Rail Transportation Costs

- CN and CP revenues from grain shipments in 2007-2008 exceeded their revenue caps by \$2.60 per tonne.
- According to a study commissioned by the Canadian Wheat Board, railway input costs have significantly decreased since 1992. It is estimated that an updated volume-related cost calculation could save prairie farmers \$172 million annually.
- APAS has called for action that would allow for payback of the 2007-2008 per tonne overage of \$2.60 directly to producers.
- The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, including APAS, pressed for a full update of the volume-related composite price index to pass on the efficiency gains to producers.
- APAS continues to press the federal government for a full railway costing review.

## Strategic Growth

- APAS is dedicated to improving internal and external communications.
- APAS's five-year strategic plan was updated in early 2009.
- APAS's website has been rebuilt and enhanced.
- APAS has initiated a monthly newsletter to RM Representatives and member RMs.
- The policy committees of APAS have been restructured and are active in pursuing issues.
- APAS will continue to improve communications with RM Representatives, Councils, and Administrators.
- APAS will strengthen working relationships with commodity and other industry groups.

# Upcoming Events

## MAY 2009

### MAY 11-14

RMAA 2009 Annual Convention

### MAY 21

Premier's Dinner - Regina.

## JUNE 2009

### JUNE 17-19

Western Canada Farm Progress Show

### JUNE 24

Board of Directors Meeting, Saskatoon

### JUNE 24 & 25

APAS Mid-Term Meeting, Saskatoon

## JULY 2009

### JULY 28-30

CFA Semi-Annual Meeting, Kelowna, BC

### JULY 30

Prairie Farm Leaders Meeting, Kelowna, BC

## OCTOBER 2009

TBA - Prairie Farm Leaders Meeting, Regina, SK

## 2009 MID TERM June 24-25

### JUNE 24

**APAS Mid-Term Meeting**, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Saskatoon

**Registration:** 9:00 am to Noon

**Welcome Luncheon:** 11:30 am

**Midterm Meeting:** 1:00 – 4 :30 pm

**Optional Events:** 4:30 – 6:00 pm – Details TBA

**Banquet and Social with Live Entertainment:** 6:30 pm - Venue TBA

### JUNE 25

**APAS Mid-Term Meeting**, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Saskatoon

**Breakfast:** 7:00 am

**Meeting:** 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

The Radisson Hotel in Saskatoon has reserved a block of rooms in the name of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) at a rate of \$124/\$129 for a standard Single/Double Occupancy. Closing date for booking at this rate is June 1, 2009.

Please make your reservation directly with the Hotel by identifying yourselves as part of the APAS group.

APAS RM Member Reps can be reimbursed for hotels, meals, and per diems by completing the appropriate expense forms and submitting them to the APAS office following the meeting.

#### Radisson Hotel Saskatoon

405 20th Street East

Saskatoon, Sk S7K 6X6

[www.radisson.com/saskatoon.ca](http://www.radisson.com/saskatoon.ca)

Reservations: 1-800-395-7046 US/Canada Toll-free

Telephone: (306) 665-3322 Fax: (306) 665-5531

*"Agenda, registration and hotel reservation forms are available by following the 2009 MidTerm link at [WWW.APAS.CA](http://WWW.APAS.CA)"*

## A Health and Dental Plan for Farm Families

### – But NOT an INSURANCE Plan?

**Unless a farmer's spouse works off-the-farm, chances are that the farm family may not have a health and dental plan. Right or wrong, most farmers tend to self-insure when it comes to health and dental. Unfortunately they end up paying for the full cost of their health and dental with "after-tax" dollars. This should not be the case.**

Now with the Health and Dental plan through the APAS benefit program through Olympia Trust, APAS members can enjoy a Private Health Services program (PHSP) and write-off 100% of those expenses as a direct business expense and receive a non-taxable benefit.

However, there is a myth that the Medical Expense Tax Credit option (METC) does the same thing. Is it true? As a self-employed person, or as a director of a corporation, can't we already write-off our medical expenses through the METC on our tax return?

*"That is a very common misconception", says Rick Yates, with Olympia Trust, "The METC has a deductible requirement which there is no tax relief for, and then the amount over and above the deductible is only given tax relief at the lowest marginal tax rate in the province. These 2 aspects place the PHSP in a much stronger tax savings position. For the self-employed individual, the PHSP allows you to write off 100% from the first dollar at your own tax*

*rate - and in the case of the director or an executive of a corporation, they can receive the full amount of the payment from dollar one as a tax free benefit, and still have the corporation being able to write-off the full amount of these medical expenses. That is why your savings will always be significantly larger with the PHSP whenever you are in a taxable position. Our web-site [www.olympiustrust.com](http://www.olympiustrust.com) has a tax calculator which shows you exactly your savings under a PHSP and compares it to the METC."*

**"...your savings will always be significantly larger with the PHSP"**

- Rick Yates, Olympia Trust

As an example, Rick Yates indicates that a farmer in the 35% tax bracket with \$1000 of medical expenses would save approximately \$400 more by using the PHSP (even after administration costs), while \$3,000 of medical expenses would result in savings of over \$700 when compared to the METC.

Eligible expenses range from prescription drugs, dental, glasses to laser eye surgery, insulin, other diabetic supplies and also claiming mileage for medical appointments when travel over 40 KM is required.

For personalized service on how the PHSP can help you with your medical expenses, call our benefits administrator at 1-866-306-APAS (2727), e-mail [apasbenefits@stratabenefits.ca](mailto:apasbenefits@stratabenefits.ca) or follow the links in the Membership section of our web-site at [www.apas.ca](http://www.apas.ca).

## Contact Us

### Head Office

100 - 2400 College Avenue

Regina, SK S4P 1C8

Phone: 306-789-7774

Fax: 306-789-7779

Email: [info@apas.ca](mailto:info@apas.ca)

Website: [www.apas.ca](http://www.apas.ca)

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