



President of the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture

Chris Hamilton

This year has been a challenging one for Niagara agriculture producers mostly due to weather. In the southern region of Niagara, I counted ten good days of farming weather between all of April and May. The summer was a little kinder but unfortunately turned to the wet fall we are now experiencing. I wish the best of luck to those of you who still have crops to be harvested. This year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Niagara North and South Federations of Agriculture a vote was held with regards to amalgamation. There had been many meetings and correspondence between the boards of both Federations over the past year to put this proposal together. At the AGM the members present voted in favor for amalgamation and starting January there will be one Niagara Federation of Agriculture. I want to assure our membership that this new collaboration will be a strong voice for agriculture in the region. I encourage the membership to get involved in meetings and events in the new year. I wish everyone a safe and happy end to the year 2019. I also hope the absolute best to you all for 2020.



President of Niagara North Federation of Agriculture

Albert Witteveen

2019 has been another interesting year for Niagara farmers. Growing season had many challenges for all sectors in managing this crop year.

Work behind the scenes this year began with me becoming the new chair of the Agriculture Policy Action committee at the Niagara Region. I'm excited to be in this role for the farmers here in Niagara. We are currently working on the Raw Water for Irrigation program.

The Niagara Region has ear marked seed money to get this initiative off the ground with industry partners and stake holders. It will take time to structure and develop a working plan. In my new role as a Regional Councillor for West Lincoln, I have been given the opportunity to also sit on the Greater Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance. There has been a lot to learn about the past initiatives and the alliance's refreshed direction. This is a committee that has representation from six regions throughout the GTA. We look at recognizing the values that agriculture has within the GTA. Asset mapping and bringing local food into Long Term Health facilities are just some of those initiatives.

Niagara North and partners were busy this past spring hosting an agriculture day at the West Niagara Agricultural Center. Our annual Regional tour took place with great success bridging the gap between farmers, regional staff and Regional councillors. Always a great learning opportunity for all. Participation at the Fall fair is always a great success where the city meets the country, another great opportunity for us to educate and promote our industry.

Throughout the year, a very important initiative was taking place here in Niagara. Both Niagara North Federation and Niagara South began discussion of a possible amalgamation. Much discussion took place, pros and cons were addressed on the possible value of this move.

This fall at both of our Annual General Meetings this proposition was put to a vote and was passed by the majority of the voting attendees. As of January 2020, we will be known as the Niagara Federation of Agriculture. This is exciting as we will be able to pool our resources with members, directors and the farmers in the Region of Niagara. In the new year, we will work on new strategies to make a stronger more effective organization. I'm excited to see this after my involvement in the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture as president over the last 20 plus years.

So, as we turn a new leaf in the new year, these will again be exciting times for us all. Wishing everyone a safe and fun Christmas season with family and friends.

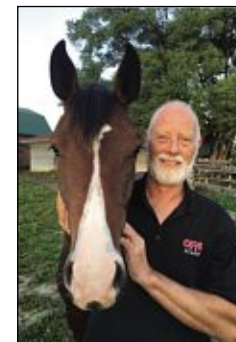
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.



OFA Member Service Representative for Niagara, Hamilton-Wentworth Halton

Nadine Gill-Aarts

Hello! My name is Nadine Gill-Aarts and I am your new OFA Member Service Representative (MSR) for Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, and Niagara starting in November 2019. I have been employed with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture for five years as the Member Service Support Representative, promoting OFA on the trade and farm show circuit in addition to working closely with MSRs from South-Western Ontario. My agricultural background is varied, having experience on many agricultural operations including berries, grains and oilseeds, swine, dairy, floral greenhouse, and poultry. I grew up in the Kawartha Lakes but have called Niagara home since 2012. My husband, Jon, and I work with my father-in law on our grain and oilseed operation in Wainfleet. I am passionate about agriculture and enjoy being an active member of my community, including sitting on the planning committee for the Marshville Heritage Festival which takes place over the Labour Day long weekend. I look forward to assisting Niagara's OFA members and getting to know you all through various agriculturally related events. If you see me out and about, please say "hi"! As always, you may connect with me through the OFA at: nadine.gill@ofa.on.ca. Have a happy and safe 2019 harvest!



Member Service Report

Henry Swierenga

So, a few years ago (thirty to be exact) I spotted a posting in a local farm paper which outlined an available position as a Field Representative with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). I thought to myself at the time, I could do that for a couple of years and applied for the position. Little did I realize at the time, that it would be the start of a long and satisfying career with the OFA, working alongside members of the farm community. A career that I have thoroughly enjoyed as it allowed me to utilize and challenge my skill sets to their fullest potential. I have had the opportunity to travel and meet members of the farm community not only across Ontario, but across Canada. I have had the opportunity to work with 3rd year television students at my alma mater, Niagara College, to produce agricultural related educational videos (and yes, we even won an award a few years back). I have had the opportunity to meet with our farm family members at countless trade shows all over Ontario, but most of all, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with the farm community in my own back yard. (A back yard which includes Niagara, Hamilton and Halton). The issues that we have dealt with over the years have varied from everything imaginable in an urban/rural setting. Successes were hard fought for and some issues still need to be resolved. (How about putting agriculture on an equal footing with Natural Heritage Systems?) The issues and challenges for the farming community will continue to bubble up and your local and provincial Federation of Agriculture will continue to fight on your behalf. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all the volunteer executive members and directors I have had the privilege of working with over the years. The fact that you gave up your valuable time to work on behalf of all farmers, speaks to your dedication and commitment to driving forward the economic well being of our farm community.

As I move forward with my family to other challenges and adventures, I am happy to announce that Nadine Gill-Aarts has accepted the position of Ontario Federation of Agriculture Member Service Representative for Niagara, Hamilton and Halton. I wish Nadine nothing but the best and I am confident that the farm families of Niagara, Hamilton and Halton will be well served. As for me, it's been an absolute privilege and I thank you.



Henry and Nadine promoting the No Trespassing project initiated by OFA

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