

Manager's Fall Report

Where has the year gone? This has been a very strange year – time seems to have passed very slowly with us have to isolate and not being able to visit family and friends but then all of a sudden, we have arrived at the weekend that would have been the last fair of the season.



Thank you - I would like to thank everyone that sent letters to their elected officials and responded to our 'Expenses and Income' survey. We have been lobbying our elected officials for support and funding for our Agricultural Societies and the OAAS to deal with the significant financial hardships caused by the COVID pandemic and your letters and the information from the survey has helped us present our case.

Our efforts have been partially successful - OMAFRA has agreed to waive the requirements and provide the same "Agricultural Exhibition Grant" for 2021 that your Agricultural Society received in February 2020. You should be receiving this grant shortly to help cover some of your ongoing expenses rather than waiting until February 2021 for the payment.

We have also asked the government to provide extra funding to help cover the \$12.2 million shortfall that Ontario Agricultural Societies are experiencing this year due to cancellation of their fairs, events, and rentals. We have not received any response but at least we haven't been told 'no' yet! But even if that funding does not materialize you need to be proud of your efforts because OMAFRA and our elected officials are much more aware of the **significant** financial and other contributions that our Agricultural Societies make to their communities and the province.

We have also asked that the province consider ensuring that provincial health requirements are consistent across the province as we emerge from the lockdown and prepare for next years' events.

2021 Convention is GOING VIRTUAL! With the current provincial government restrictions and concern for public health, the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) Board of Directors has decided to move forward to a 2021 virtual experience convention. This decision was not taken lightly, but we feel that it is the right choice to ensure the health and safety of our members and volunteers.

The celebration of the 175th Anniversary of the organization will still occur but in a different format. Registered participants will be able to access various educational opportunities through a strong line up of dynamic topics and speakers. They will be able to enjoy excellent and talented showcase entertainment, which will be shared through the virtual experience. Browse and interact with our service members through our expanded and well-developed Virtual Tradeshow.

All OAAS Agricultural Societies members are invited to participate in the live virtual Annual General Meeting at no charge. The recorded version will be available later on our website for those unable to attend.

Click [this Link](#) for more details and fee information. And continue to watch our website, Facebook, and emails for further information on how to register as well as more details on the seminar topics, showcases, Tradeshow and the AGM.

2020 Agricultural Society membership (formerly Affiliation) fees - The OAAS Board has approved a decrease in 2020 Agricultural Society membership fees due to the financial hardship our Agricultural Societies are experiencing this year. The OAAS Board has approved that **the**

2020 fee will be 75% of the 2019 membership(affiliation) fees that each Agricultural Society paid

- if the 2020 membership fees are paid by December 31, 2020.

Similar to what our Agricultural Societies are experiencing, the OAAS could see a significant decrease in its revenue this year. We earn approximately 60% of our revenue from Agricultural Society Membership fees and 40% from the Convention.

We recognize that it has been a difficult year for fairs, and many did not generate much revenue. However, all Agricultural Societies should soon receive their 2021 OMAFRA grant which will allow them to cover some of their operating costs including their OAAS membership.

IMPORTANT: The OAAS has lobbied the Ontario government to provide similar funding to us as was given to Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) to assist in covering membership fees. If the OAAS does receive funding, we will refund all or part of your membership fees based upon the amount of funding we receive.

An email will be sent to your Agricultural Society shortly with more details on the 2020 Agricultural Society Membership fees.

Your fees keep the OAAS operating and allow us to provide many various services to our member Agricultural Societies. This year, in addition to our usual services, the OAAS provided information and assistance in dealing with COVID via email, on our website and through 14 webinars. We also supplemented the cost for district zoom accounts to enable continued support and communication within districts.

The OAAS has been lobbying and advocating with governments at all levels, particularly provincial for relief for agricultural societies. Brian Slaughter, President, Doug Yeo, Past President and Vince Brennan, Manager met with Minister Hardeman. I also presented on behalf of the OAAS at two Standing Committees for COVID19 Relief. I took part in multiple media interviews resulting in good media coverage of the impact of the pandemic on our Agricultural Societies and their communities. Thank you to all the Agricultural Societies that also interacted with the media to tell their stories.

Other Information - I took part in recent OFA sponsored meetings regarding Bill 156 and worked to include Agricultural Societies' grounds and facilities as "*Protected Zone*" under the bill to ensure that our exhibitors and spectators are protected from protestors.

We expect that the Federal government will be resurrecting the proposed amendments to the Livestock Traceability legislation so we will need to be prepared to respond to them to ensure that our Agricultural Societies are not burdened with more responsibilities under the legislation.

We are always looking for articles for a newsletter and our website. There were a lot of great activities, events and ideas at different fairs this summer and fall – please send articles and pictures to me. We need to promote our Agricultural Societies and get your stories out there!!

The District and Provincial Director roles and Responsibilities documents are posted on our website under the '**Board**' tab and "**Information for Directors**".

Amendments were approved at the recent Board meeting. This is the intent of the policy – see the website for the actual wording:-

All members of Boards (District or Provincial) must be a current member in good standing of an Agricultural Society in their District which is a current member of the Ontario Association Agricultural Societies. – i.e. you must be an OAAS member to be on an OAAS Board.

This policy has been an understanding in the past – but was not in writing.

The following was added to the District document:

District must keep their guidelines and policies up to date and send copies to the OAAS Office.

I will be sending the District Boards a copy of '*District Contact information spreadsheet*' to be updated and a check list as a reminder of the documents you are required to submit on an annual basis.

REMINDER – Any resolutions to the OAAS must be completed and received by the OAAS by November 30, 2020 - to be sent to Vince Brennan, Manager.

New OMAFRA contact info

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Respectively submitted,



Vince Brennan
Manager (OAAS)