

OAAS CONVENTION 2021 IS GOING VIRTUAL



OCTOBER 23, 2020: 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. We will deliver various educational opportunities to our members through a strong line up of dynamic topics and speakers. Participants will continue to enjoy excellent and talented showcase entertainment, which will be shared through the virtual experience. You can browse and interact with our service members through our expanded and well-developed Virtual Tradeshow.

Youth involvement and engagement continues to be a priority for the OAAS. For the first time, in addition to attending 2 specific Ambassador sessions, the Ambassadors will have the opportunity to take part in the entire experience throughout the week.

Being able to participate in the virtual convention will be a flexible opportunity you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home, reducing the costs of travel, accommodations, dining or taking time off work. Networking with our industry friends will have a new spin for 2021, as the OAAS will include some idea exchange features through the virtual convention programming.

Mark your calendar and save the dates of February 15 – 18, 2021, for the opportunity to access 32 evening educational seminars. Registered participants will have the opportunity to participate in 2 live events/seminars each evening and view all the seminars online for the following month.

We invite all OAAS Agricultural Societies members 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. Watch for further information on how to register as well as more details on the seminar topics, showcases, Tradeshow and the AGM.

Our convention provides approximately 40% of the annual revenue for the OAAS, which allows us to fund the convention and the other member services for you. Because of the pandemic's economic effect on our Agricultural Societies, the Board decided at our recent meeting, to decrease the registration fees for the '**OAAS Convention 2021: Gone Virtual**' to \$100 per registrant, if purchased by the early bird date of Friday, January 29, 2021. This is a savings of \$50 from the approved 2021 Convention fee of \$150.

Registration will allow participation in your choice of up to 8 live seminars from 32 offered over the 4 evenings as well as all Family and Entertainment Showcases, and the expanded Tradeshow online. Your registration also allows access to view those 32 seminars, all Family and Entertainment Showcases, and the expanded Tradeshow online for a month after the convention. NOTE: As in previous years, we will post the written material from the presentations

on our website; however, the actual videos and live feeds will only be available to registered participants.

We are offering Ambassadors the opportunity to register for only \$25 and the OAAS Past Presidents for a rate of \$50.

Since March, the OAAS Board and its staff have provided information and assistance for our membership on dealing with the COVID pandemic through emails, our website, and numerous webinars. We lobbied our elected officials and coordinated a letter-writing campaign that has thus far led to OMAFRA agreeing to waive requirements and provide the same amount for the "*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 now, rather than waiting until February 2021 to access it.

Thank you for sending letters to your elected officials and completing the '*expense and income*' survey we sent. We are still hopeful that there will be more funding available to assist our Agricultural Societies with the financial shortfalls you have experienced this year.

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 encourage members and agricultural societies to watch for future emails, posts on our website, and social media regarding registration details and information on our '**OAAS Convention 2021: Gone Virtual**' seminars and speakers. We realize that not all of your members may have the means to access the virtual experience and unfortunately that is the reality that we are living with this year. However, we believe the '**OAAS Convention 2021: Gone Virtual**' provides an excellent opportunity for many of your members, including those that may not have had the opportunity to attend previously, to engage and share ideas with one another.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Lambert
Convention Administrator (OAAS)
convention@oasfairs.com
ph: 519-287-3553



Vince Brennan
Manager (OAAS)