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# Breaking Ground

(in Northeastern Ontario)

*Fall 12*

*A Publication of the North Eastern Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (NEOSCIA)*

## Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence (In Northern Ontario) 2012

*by Graham Gambles, Regional Communication Coordinator, NEOSCIA*



*Front Row: from Left to Right: Lee-Ann Chevrette, Janet Parsons, Ann Pyette and Karen Tracey. Back Row: from Left to Right: John Parsons, Ted McMeekin, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Greg Pyette and Neil Tarlton*

In a late afternoon meeting at Sudbury on September 25, the Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs greeted five northern recipients who won the "Provincial Award" this year. Each one was additionally encouraged with a monetary Award of \$5000 and a commemorative plaque.

Prior to the individual congratulations, Minister McMeekin reminded those assembled that the Agri-Food industry is still the #1 economic driver in the Province, and that the Ontario Agri-Food Logo is second only to McDonalds in brand recognition within the Province. He then named 3 area producers and 2 regional Associations as the northern

contingent for the 50 Premier's Awards that were presented this year. They are: Boreal Forest Teas (Lee-Ann Chevrette), Thunder Bay District. This entrepreneur has developed a unique product line of 8 herbal teas that come from organic cultivated herbs and wild-harvested boreal forest plants. Her suppliers include local herb producers and 2 first nation communities. The teas have been showcased at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and this exposure has helped build a Southern Ontario customer base.

Pike Lake Farms (the Pyette family), Manitoulin District. Timing is everything, and switching to a strawberry production system that included raised beds, drip tape irrigation, and plastic

*Continued on page 3*

This newsletter is published 4 times per year. Articles can be submitted in either English or French and should be submitted to the Communication Coordinator (see below). Please supply translation, if available.

Material in this newsletter is based upon factual information believed to be accurate. Action taken as a result of this information is solely the responsibility of the user. We reserve the right to edit articles.

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**Go to GeoVisage, <http://geovisage.nipissingu.ca>  
for Currant and Historical Weather Data**

## COMING EVENTS

# Temiskaming Agricultural Innovation Forum

*October 24th & 25th, 2012 Riverside Place, New Liskeard Ontario*

Time	Item	Speaker
<b>Wednesday, October 24th</b>		
1:00 to 5:30 pm	Bus Tour of Quebec Ag Research Centre, Thornloe Cheese and Grant Farms	Meet at Riverside Place 12:45 pm
6:00 pm	BBQ using local beef and The Roaster	Riverside Place
7:00 pm	Networking	
<b>Thursday, October 25th</b>		
8:00 am	<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Mayor Kidd</b>
8:15 am	Innovation Initiatives Ontario North Agri Food and the Creation of a Wellgevity.ca State	Rob Deline
9:00 am	Nipissing University "GeoVisge: Integration of geospatial data for agricultural decision support" "Introducing UAVs for precision agriculture"	<b>Dr. Mark Wachowiak</b> Nipissing University <b>Dr. John Kovacs</b> Nipissing University
9:45 am	<b>Break</b>	
10:00 am	Ag Canada "Monitoring Crop Growth Using Remote Sensing Technology"	<b>Dr. Shang</b> Agricultural
10:45 am	"Building Ag-Bio Based Businesses – The Role of Bioenterprise in the Development of Value Added Products and Markets"	Doug Knox VP Technology Bioenterprise
11:45 am	Funders Panel Fed Nor, NOHFC, NRC, NSERC Yves Landry Foundation Ontario Trillium Foundation	<b>Denise Deschamps</b> <b>Bruce Strapp</b> <b>Roly Kilpatrick</b> <b>Tibor Turi</b> <b>Karyn Brearley</b> <b>Donna Maitland</b>
12:15 to 1:30 pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:30 pm	Panel Discussion Topics	<b>Roly Kilpatrick</b> Moderator
	A - Crop Enhancement Technology	<b>Gord Surgeoner</b> <b>John Rowsell</b> <b>Dan Tassé</b>
	B - "Value Added Processing / Value Chain Cycle"	<b>Doug Knox</b> <b>Jamie Draves</b>
	C - "Sustaining / Improving Local Food Marketing" (Local Food Mapping, Distribution Networks, Breaking into wholesale / retail chain stores)	<b>Pierre Belanger</b> <b>Pam Hamel</b> <b>Denis Nolet</b>
	D - "Meat Production Enhancements" (White Meat, sustaining local abattoir, specialty meats & bison)	<b>Al Aitchison</b> <b>Denis Lougheed</b> <b>Tom Gerber</b> <b>Barry Potter</b> <b>Dr. Carole Lafrenière</b>
	E- New Food Product Development	<b>Eveline Kasner</b>
3:30 pm	Establish a Working Committee and Nominate Elect a Chairman / Next Steps & Closing Remarks	
4:30 pm	Closing Remarks	

## Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence (In Northern Ontario) 2012

*Continued from page 1*

mulch allowed this operator to harvest their product a full 3 weeks ahead of their northern competitors, and matching southern producers schedules. They have now expanded to vegetable crops and have opened an on-farm store where they also sell their own maple syrup and beef from their Black Angus herd.

Roche Court Farms (the Parsons family), Nipissing District. Smart farmers use smart phones, and this smart family developed a user friendly "APP" known as the "Field Tracker Pro". It can be used on the go to help farmers keep accurate records of cropping activities. The system eliminated the paper notebook for data collection and the info can be directly exported to Excel spreadsheets. Better records make for better decisions with a corresponding better bottom line. Contact the Parsons for info!

Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association (Karen Tracy, Exec. Dir.), Manitoulin District. This 14 member group developed a comprehensive communications and media strategy to promote the northern fish-farming community, and they have seen positive results. More consumers are asking for Ontario farm-raised rainbow trout! Awareness of the industry is also developed by social media and by coordinating educational tours for government, food service providers, buyers and the general public.

North Eastern Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (Neil Tarlton, Sec.-Treas.) Sudbury District. Since 2009, the annual "Crop Caravan" tour of the 8 member districts in the region has featured specialists from OMAFRA, as well as the agricultural industry. Over a period of 5 days each summer, the tour travels to a specific farm in each District where the farm neighbours gather to hear good, practical crop production and associated information with a local reference point. This on-farm "reality show" is a step-up on traditional indoor workshops and presentations, and meets the efficiency requirements of the speakers.

Johnston's Cranberry Marsh & Muskoka Lakes Winery of Muskoka District was also among the Northern winners. Murray Johnston and Wendy Hogarth of Bala received their award at an earlier gathering. They were honoured for international outreach, having shipped 30,000 cranberry vines to Latvia last year. The Latvian government approached them with a request to help that nation establish a cranberry industry. New equipment was required to be invented to harvest the vines for replanting. The Muskoka team is now talking to interested parties in Poland.

## SOLAR FORTUNES

*By Graham Gambles, RCC - NEOSCIA*

Over the past few years, many farmers have installed "Microfit" solar collectors here in the North. The purpose was to develop a new "on-farm product" that could be sold directly back to Ontario Power Generation at a "decent" profit over a 20 year contract. In 2012, the Province reduced the "Return On Investment" of future contracts and the potential profit was not as "decent" as it once was!

Combine this with the fact that the designated volume for solar inputs (and other green energy sources) entered into the Provincial "energy grid" is approaching its maximum allotment under the "Green Energy Plan", and you will find that the Ontario "Green Energy" industry is facing some very tough times. It is not helped by the reality that due to the current global economic jitters, there is a huge excess in the production of solar equipment in comparison to current demand. This was the underlying negative feeling at the SSX "Solar Expo" convention held at Toronto in early September.

The situation was confirmed by the primary speaker, George Smitherman, the former Ontario "Minister of Energy" who is credited with developing Ontario's Green Energy mandate. Both he and other speakers confirmed that the current lack

of government interest in designating more solar supply for the Ontario Grid (solar is currently less than 0.5% of the energy mix while nuclear exceeds 50%) will reduce equipment prices with a corresponding failure of business and loss of jobs in the Ontario Solar industry.

But what has this got to do with you – the farmer who owns a producing solar unit? Apparently lots! Although your contract is secure and the solar panels themselves will probably never cause you problems or failure over the next 20 years, the electronic components (primarily "Inverters") could very well need replacement before the contract runs out. In an industry that is shrinking globally, can these parts be purchased at a reasonable cost? Perhaps you have signed a management agreement plan with the installing company to cover such eventualities? Consider that many of these service companies are currently without work and are now ceasing operations and even filing for bankruptcy. They may not be able to service your facility even now – never mind 10 or 15 years down the road.

All speakers at the convention agreed that everyone should consider purchasing further insurance to protect their interests. At the very least, re-read your contracts

and speak to your solar contacts as to what will happen to your agreements should the industry as a whole suffer a major downturn.

But there is a "silver lining". Right now, global solar equipment costs have dropped to about 60% of their value listed only a couple of years ago. The quality of the components has also gone up over this time period. The prices may continue to drop throughout 2013 as companies struggle to survive. This would be a good time to invest in "off-grid" solar installations (you are NOT selling power to OPG, but using it yourself). If you are off-grid, you do not restrict to buying Ontario made equipment. Most likely a site such as a remote cabin would be the best opportunity, but what of constant daytime electrical needs on the farm? Could you replace some of that power that you currently buy from OPG/Hydro 1? One example may be a livestock barn that has huge electrical bills for fans running continuously. Perhaps air conditioning/cooling equipment? Take a look around your operation and see if the solar decline could be of benefit to you! Is there an advantage to you if you can be seen to be "Green"?



## 2012 Fungicide Evaluation on Barley

prepared by: Daniel Tassé, OMAFRA New Liskeard

**Ferme Sansoucy  
c/o Yves & Sylvie,  
Belle Vallée**

Objectives: to evaluate the potential benefits of applying a fungicide on barley for leaf and/or head disease reduction. In this demonstration the product was applied for head protection since it was applied at early heading.

Variety: Barley 6 row 'Encore'

Fungicide: Prosaro

Previous Crop: canola

Fungicide application: June 28<sup>th</sup> (9:00am no wind clear sky) at early heading

Swathed: August 3<sup>rd</sup>

Harvested: August 20<sup>th</sup> 2012

No Fungicide				With fungicide "Prosaro"		
	Yield	Moisture	Bushel weight	Yield	Moisture	Bushel weight
Strip #1	4,347lbs	14.4%	44.7lbs	4,919lbs	14.6%	44.9lbs
Strip #2	4,207lbs	14.5%	44.5lbs	4,716lbs	14.5%	44.5lbs
Strip #3	4,080lbs	14.4%	44.8lbs	4,455lbs	14.6%	45.0lbs
Average of plots	4,211lbs (1.90t/ac)	14.4%	44.7lbs	4,696lbs (2.13t/ac)	14.6%	44.8%

Strip harvested: .79acres

Weighed: Crops Coalition Weigh Wagon

### Yield Results:

#### Grain Yield

- Yield increase with the fungicide "Prosaro" is significant and consistent across all the strips
- Increase yield with fungicide by 9-13% with an average of 11%. The combine had no yield monitor therefore very difficult to observe a 485lbs yield difference without having these test strips weighed with the weigh wagon
- 11% more yield or 485lbs (10bushels) more per acre with fungicide
- Moisture at harvest was the same with or without the treatment. The barley stayed in the swath for 17days.
- Strips without the treatment had a distinct darker colour with more upper leaf (flag) diseases present (net, spot blotch and scald)

#### Straw Yield

- Small bales (30lbs) at 58bales per acre or 1,728lbs (.8tonne)
- No measurement were made between treated and untreated sections
- Less dust noticeable in the treated section (with fungicide)

#### Quality on grain:

- Samples were submitted to evaluate grain quality. Both sections treated and none treated were of good kernel quality.

#### Cost benefits:

- Economical benefits were achieved on yield alone. If we use a market price of \$260 per tonne per barley or .11¢ per pound x 485lbs of extra yield with the fungicide = \$53 per acre minus the product (\$16 /ac) and application rate (\$9/ac) the net gain is \$28/ac.

Thanks to Bayer Crop Science and Marieke Patton for their contribution towards this project.



## 2012 Temiskaming Crop Tour

By Graham Gambles, NEOSCIA Regional Communication Coordinator

This year, the Temiskaming Crop Coalition (TCC) united with GFO District 15 to deliver the annual summer BBQ and evening crop tour. This year's host was Koch Farms and over 230 people gathered for a spectacular supper. Later, three buses carried well over 100 people to 5 sites that were showcased.



NLARS research staff evaluate canola field trials

The most highly anticipated stop was the "Corn Under Plastic" project (lead story in the "Summer 2012" edition of Breaking Ground"). The earlier planted area (under plastic mulch) emerged when night air was measured at -7C, but the temperature under the plastic never fell below +1C. Similarly, day time temperatures under the plastic reached +19C while the outside air hovered around +10C.



Midsummer remnants of plastic mulch in cornfield

It was noted that growth did stall for 2.5 weeks during the summer drought, but unmulched corn stalled for a longer period. By July 19, the day of the tour, most of the plastic had disintegrated to pieces no larger than 8x8 inches in size. The plastic is photo degradable and was perforated at the factory to allow the emerged seedling to thrust itself through the openings at a certain point of maturity. These built in factors also allow for the disintegration of the product before harvest.

Final evaluations will be done at harvest and a full production and economic report will be provided in a future issue of BG.

Jen Bruggman from the Ridgetown Campus (U of Guelph), was on site to help identify various bugs that are NOT friends of the farmer, and help the locals decide what chemicals to use (and when) to reduce the problem. Her talk focused on the Western Cut Bean Worm and Sweet Midge moths. She cautioned that one year control is insufficient as both insects can overwinter as larvae even here in the north.



Jen Bruggeman shows how to identify insect eggs

Dr. Dan Walters of Nipissing U. spoke of the "Geovisage" weather program (See contact on page 2 of this issue). The University is still waiting for government certification that will allow them to fly their UAV (remote controlled aircraft) as part of their "remote sensing" crop evaluation project.

The miniature planes carry 6 cameras that operate at different wave lengths, and fly low so that cloud cover is not an issue, such as it is with Satellite images.



Field recommendations by Darren Gray

The Soybean plot trials featured 15 hybrid cultivars (7 non-GMO and 8 second generation "Roundup Ready" products). The fertilizer regime standard was 50# P, 17N, 37K, 21S, 37Ca, plus Cu and Mn (for flavor). It was noted that if beans are planted at the same time as corn, you can push the limits and try 2400-2500 heat unit cultivars.



Josee Falardeau enjoys a great stand of alfalfa. Alfalfa and wheat trials were also included on the tour, as were Bayer Crop Science Canola plots.

**"Jumping or several small opportunities may get us there more quickly than waiting for one big one to come along"  
- HUGH ALLEN**



# NEOSCIA Saguenay Bus Tour

By Graham Gambles, NEOSCIA Regional Communication Coordinator



*The NEOSCIA Saguenay bus trip allowed imaginations (and kites) to soar, as evidenced by the "new hobby" of George Emiry from Sudbury District!*

AND A WONDERFUL TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!!! This is the first large scale bus tour that has been undertaken by our organization, and it is unique in the fact that we led an inter-provincial, multi-lingual farm group into an area that is rarely seen by farmers in our region. Everyone who attended agrees that it was a great success in presenting new ways to manage farms and farm businesses in this area.

As there was a total of about \$20,000 contributed from public funding (FedNor/ South Temiskaming Sud Community Futures Development Corp.) and from the Quebec/Ontario Agribusiness Sector combined, the trip was open to all from the farming community, (not just members of the NEOSCIA). We had 11 people from N.W. Quebec, 4 from each of Cochrane, Nipissing, and Sudbury Districts, and 15 from Temiskaming. About 1/3 were unilingual English, 1/3 unilingual French, and 1/3 Bilingual. All had an agricultural background, be it in actual farming, agribusiness, or in agri-education/research. Note that a few were retired, but had contacts and family still active in agriculture, to whom they would report.

Earlier in the spring we had over 50 people interested in taking the trip, but some medical situations, and more importantly, the drought/economic situation of the 2012 farming season prompted a great number to pull out of the event. A smaller bus, seating 40 people, was then contracted from Willard's.

As the Saguenay farm community is predominantly unilingual French, the project could not have been undertaken without the translation services provided by Agribusiness. The lead translator was Josee Falardeau of SynAgri at Notre- Dame- Du- Nord. Farm Credit Canada's regional Manager, Dany Gingras, and his N.E. Ont representative, Jack Phillips (North Bay) were also essential in the preparation and translation process, as well as in note-taking. Dan Tasse of OMAFRA at Temiskaming Shores was a key figure in the early development of this project. Autumn Gambles of Nipissing University video-taped the proceedings, catching both the original statements and responses to questions in the French language

and the English translations of the comments. More than 3 hours of video/audio tape is available for future report writing on this event. Candy Keith of NLARS also provided extensive note-taking while Neil Tarlton (NEOSCIA Secretary-Treasurer) captured the "still shots".

The Saguenay farming region, located about 350 miles due East of the interprovincial border, is a virtual twin of the agricultural district that surrounds Lake Temiskaming, and has implications for farming in the rest of Northern Ontario. It is similar in its isolation, climate, and crops. Although the Saguenay soils were formed under salt water while the Temiskaming soils were formed under fresh water, the salts have long since washed out of the surface level that is used for farming. The soils in both regions are therefore comparable.

However, crop management techniques are different.

*Continued on page 20*

## Alex Skepasts Award Presented

Each year, the Temiskaming Grain Growers honor former New Liskeard College of Agricultural Technology instructor Alex Skepasts, by presenting an award in his name at the Kemptville College (University of Guelph) graduation ceremonies. The \$100 Award is given to a second year graduate for excellence in crop production. The award is presented on behalf of the farm people of Temiskaming, in recognition of Mr. Skepasts desire to improve field crop practices through research findings. This years winner, Christopher Seed, will be continuing his studies at the University of Guelph. (Past winners include Tammy Sansoucy and Loren Runnalls.)



*Chris Seed of Temiskaming (left) congratulated by Rene Van Acker*



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### FALL...the time to celebrate the harvest!

Pumpkinfest is one way growers of all ages can compete and display their efforts. Giant pumpkins are always part of fall harvest celebrations.



The pumpkins, of all shapes, sizes and colours, arrive at weigh-in sites in Mindemoya, Lively, Powassan and New Liskeard. They come in trucks, cars, on wagons and in trailers.



2012 saw growers accept and meet the challenge of growing **BIGGER!** Jeff Warner, of Englehart, had held the record with his 2010 New Liskeard entry that weighed 636 lb. However, Jeff's entry for 2012 at the New Liskeard Fall Fair easily beat his previous record weighing in at **1,147 lb.** Jeff has been a grower for some time and enters other competitions throughout Ontario.

The Powassan Farmers' Market site weighed-in another record breaker – Dave Locke of Novar brought his 800 lb entry.

All final results are not in yet and photos will follow, but **CONGRATULATIONS to Jeff and Dave for their outstanding efforts!**

Please note the following email address change –

**noront.agrifood@gmail.com**

It takes muscles and a strong back to get the giant pumpkins into place without damage.



**Agricultural Fairs** display best efforts in food production and preserves, livestock and crops, as well as handcrafting and woodworking – highlighting the community and fun for the entire family. NOAFEM's presence at the fairs in Warren, Thunder Bay, Laird, Emsdale, Trout Creek, Magnetewan, Sundridge, Porquis Junction, Paisley, Arthur, Lucknow, Massey, Timmins and Norfolk County Fair provided an educational opportunity for fair visitors. Northern MAPLE continues to have a long list of fairs waiting for her presence, with requests extending into 2015.



**Farmers' Markets** celebrate the harvest season and consumers enjoy the best of local production. Anderson Farm Museum Heritage Society hosted a *Rock the Farm / Farmers' Market* eight Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. Thanks to **Leisure Farms**, Sturgeon Falls, **Grandpa's Dream Farm**, Iron Bridge, **Rocky Acres Farm**, Wahnapiatae, **Board's Honey**, Restoule, **Sucrerie Seguin Sugarbush**, Noelville, **Our Garden**, Ice Lake, and **Misty Haven Alpacas**, Corbeil for providing product for NOAFEM's participation.



# N.E.O.S.C.I.A.

North Eastern Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association  
Serving the Northern Agricultural Community since 1966

## *NEOSCLA Saguenay Bus Tour*

*Continued from page 18*



Whereas farmers are still clearing land and expanding their farms here in our region, the farmers of Saguenay have already reached the physical limits of their soil base. There is no land left to clear. As such, they have developed an "intensive" management system (more typical of Europe) in comparison to our "extensive" management system that is more typical of western Canada/USA. In addition, the Saguenay farmers have developed "Agri-Tourism" to an extent not seen anywhere in northern Ontario. This includes native fur products, horticultural production, extensive cheese production, micro-breweries, and agriculturally related food and gifts that are sold to tourists and the urban population as a whole.

In addition, a number of personal contacts were made with agricultural leaders in the Saguenay region. Many have agreed to come to our area and speak to farmers on both sides of the border. Also, the information gathered on this trip will be used to develop a collection of articles that will appear in the "Breaking Ground" farm newsletter over the next year. This publication will go out to more than 1000 farmers and agri-business on both sides of the border. (Funding had been provided by the Quebec agribusiness group to allow for unforeseen contingencies and this money will now be used for the dispersion of this information.)







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*"Choose a job you love, and you will  
never have to work a day in your life."*

– Confucius

*"Good instincts usually tell you what to do  
long before your head has figured it out."*

– Michael Burke

*"Having it all doesn't necessarily  
mean having it all at once."*

– Stephanie Luetkehans

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*"The best remedy for a short  
temper is a long walk."*

– Jacqueline Schiff

*"I like a little rebellion now and then.  
It is like a storm in the atmosphere."*

– Thomas Jefferson

*"Some people think it's holding on that  
makes one strong. Sometimes it's letting go."*

– Sylvia Robinson

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I am happy to announce that Ag Nor has joined the Central Ontario John Deere dealer group Green Tractors Inc. With the strength of six combined locations, we look forward to the opportunities this partnership creates for our customers and this vibrant ag community we are all proud to call home.

This merger allows us to remain strong in this highly competitive ag industry, and in Green Tractors, we have found a partner with complementary capabilities and a shared view on how a company should run.

Our goal at Green Tractors Eastern, as it was at Ag Nor, is to become an even better business partner to you and your operation. I will remain Branch Manager and you will recognize all of my staff from Ag Nor. Please stop in soon for a visit.

Thank you for all your support over the years.  
Sincerely,

  
Denis Trudel  
Branch Manager  
Green Tractors Eastern

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