



# Strengthening Relationships for the Benefit of the Sheep Industry

**T**hank you to all of you who came out to the Ontario Sheep Convention last month. I'd also like to thank all those that worked behind the scenes to make the Convention happen, more specifically the staff at Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) who planned, organized and worked to ensure everything went smoothly.

In addition to the Convention marking our official name change to Ontario Sheep Farmers, the focus this year was on the research and projects that we have been engaging in. One of the primary concerns we have heard from producers over the years was that investments were being made into projects that were resulting in reports sitting on shelves. To address this concern, we ensured that the work we have been engaging in was being reported back to you this year at the Convention.

I'd like to express my thanks to the three board members whose terms ended this year, David Bentley, Josephine Martensson-Hemsted and Ron Follings. Thank you for your commitment to the industry. Being an active board member does require you to be away from your businesses and family and I do appreciate the sacrifices that you have made to ensure that the industry was well represented. Sandi Brock, John Hemsted and Chris Moore, I welcome you to the board this year.

As we often heard at this year's Convention, we have incredible potential in our industry. The ability to meet this potential will require a concentrated effort from those across the industry, not just in Ontario. I strongly believe that the formation of the National Sheep Network (NSN), and especially the relationship that has developed between the Alberta Lamb Producers (ALP), the Les éleveurs d'ovins du Québec (LEOQ) and OSF, will greatly help us achieve that potential.

Although there are some in our industry that are saying the sheep industry is currently divided, the NSN is now one of the strongest national commodity organizations, especially given the strong working relationship that Ontario and Alberta have with Quebec. Government bureaucrats and elected officials have mentioned that our ability to work collaboratively with Quebec increases the industry's credibility. In fact, I'll go as far as saying that this relationship scares politicians. Our relationship has been strengthened by identifying the need to make sure we are thoughtful with our communications and ensure we are providing context. Because of this, we have even become an example to other commodities.

To date, the NSN, with considerably less money than what we had been paying into the CSF, has 1) helped stabilize heavy lamb prices by sharing marketing information, 2) raised international presence with our delegation to the ASI Convention, and 3) increased the sheep industry's political profile in issues like NAFTA, corporate tax reform and Business Risk Management.

While the NSN currently only has three active provincial members, we are committed to ensuring that we work with other provinces and keep our focus on issues such as genetics, health, flock improvement programs, and research. **OSN**

## HOLIDAY CLOSURE

**The Ontario Sheep office will be closed from December 25 through to January 2 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Wishing all of our farmers and industry stakeholders a happy holiday season.**

**Editorial policy:** Ontario Sheep Farmers welcomes and encourages letters to the editor and article suggestions from farmers and industry partners as a means of communicating with the Ontario Sheep Farmers board of directors and other farmers on issues of importance. Letters may be on any sheep industry topic, including Ontario Sheep Farmers' policies, programs and procedure. Letters may address previous articles or letters to the editor, and the editor may comment on the accuracy of the information in letters. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for style and grammatical errors. When submitting a letter, please include the name of the author, address, phone number and/or email address (for verification purposes). Printed letters will include the author's name. Potentially defamatory or libelous material, or personal attacks on individuals will not be permitted. If an author feels that the editor has inappropriately edited or not print a letter, a written request can be submitted to the board of directors for review to determine if there has been a violation of *Ontario Sheep News'* editorial policy.