



June 21st, 2021

Re: Crossroads Challenge Update

Dear Ontario Sheep Farmers,

The Crossroads Challenge is as much about listening as it has been about building a new strategic plan for the Ontario Sheep Farmer (OSF) organization. We have listened, and followed you as your emails, survey responses and conversations have led us along the path being created, towards the kind of future you want for the Ontario sheep industry.

We have heard clearly that growing the industry is your priority over the next five years. To help you be successful at capitalizing on the significant opportunity the industry has, there is a need for the OSF to intentionally engage you, governments, value chain partners and the public strategically and professionally. This lays the foundation for our *draft* strategic objectives (note emphasis on draft):

1. **Public policy and public trust.** To grow an industry that is sustainable, ethical, and beneficial to our communities by engaging stakeholders within the agri-food sector, locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally.
2. **Research, knowledge transfer and mentorship.** To support you in your own business by focusing on finding and mobilizing critical information and professional development opportunities.
3. **Value chain relationships.** To focus on the needs and challenges of the industry and build strategic relationships that support growth.
4. **Governance and operations.** To focus on continuous improvement and organizational excellence.

It is exciting to get this point; where the feedback we have received from such a vast cross-section of the industry is starting to take shape and become a plan that the OSF can allocate its resources against. Where we can start to see how we can align our activities with your business goals. I'm sure there were times over the past few months where you, like me, have wondered if, or how, we'd get here. Although, to be honest, I never imagined a time where I would think strategic planning, or strategic plans, were necessary, or exciting.



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By following the path you've created, we have diverged a bit from where I thought we were heading. Over the last few months, you have told us that there is a need to not only think about how we can support a growing industry, but that we must expand the conversation to including talking about how the industry will be governed and, perhaps more importantly, how it will ensure sustainable, effective, efficient, leadership that is rooted in trust, transparency, and inclusiveness. Thank you. This is exactly the kind of critical thinking and input that we wanted from our Crossroads Challenge. As a board we know firsthand some of the challenges with our current governance structure and we are concerned about leadership succession. Its reassuring to know that is on your minds as well.

Therefore, we've gone out to you with a second round of townhalls specifically on governance. I appreciate that some of you were anticipating and wanting to see a draft strategic plan to comment on. However, taking the time to address governance and leadership, alongside the development of a new strategic plan, is necessary and smart. As I write this, we are heading into our second Governance Townhall, and I am excited to see what comes from these discussions.

Despite this divergence, we are still on track to have a complete, draft, strategic plan out to the industry by August. I would like to also take the time to acknowledge the courage and leadership of the board to engage, support and participate in this process. They are risking criticism and devoting their own time and efforts for the possibility of doing better for the industry. This is leadership in motion – something to acknowledge, celebrate and build upon.

I look forward to being able to talk to you about the plan, and to continue to follow your lead.

Regards,

Marc Carere
OSF Chair

