



Time for Reflection

A lot has happened in the near decade since I began my role as provincial director, and as our organization shifts gears to implement a new strategic direction, the timing couldn't be better for me to step back into more of a supporter role.

Serving our provincial sheep industry has been a rewarding experience for me. I encourage producers to become involved in their Districts, take the opportunity when you can to join your District committee and executive. Aside from having input and gathering information this will develop the foundation for those of you that become interested in joining the OSF board of directors.

As I write my last column as Chair, I've been reflecting on my experiences at the provincial board level and would like to take this opportunity to share some of my reflections.

The importance of governance is paramount. I've seen firsthand how setting a structure and defining operations can make a difference. Governance gives us structure and processes to follow, holding us accountable for our decisions, while at the same time, providing a professional setting to make informed decisions. Good governance is a skill and, like all skills, requires practice and coaching. I'd like to thank Deb Stark, our board advisor, for being our coach and ensuring we follow processes and continue to hone our skills.

I must confess, I used to despise strategic planning. It was often an uninspired process of sitting in a board room with board members putting sticky notes on the wall, lacking industry engagement. But with Crossroads we chose to strategic plan differently. We engaged with and took the time to listen to the industry. And, this time, the process was interesting and, yes, at times it was even fun. The strategic plan that we will be releasing is responding to what the industry has told us they need and will set the course of the OSF over the next few years, allowing the board and staff to align resources with strategic objectives and deliver results. Thank you to all our members and industry representatives who took the time to participate. This is your strategic plan. This process would not be the success it is without the skills and disarming demeanour of Michael Keegan and John Snobelen. Thank you for walking us through the process and ensuring we get this right. We could not have done this without you.

One of the most important observations over my time serving on the board is that attitude is everything. A good dose of humility and willingness to learn is always a good place to start. I've learned the ability to come to the table with an open mind and learn from your fellow producers is what makes being part of a group like the OSF board of directors so meaningful. A willingness to be surprised also goes a long way too. This allows individuals to listen with an open mind, especially to issues or discussions some may be hearing or seeing for the

first time. Leadership positions offer so many opportunities if you allow your beliefs and ideas to be challenged and open your mind to change. Believe me, you will be rewarded.

My last thought is really kind of ironic - there's so much more to the Ontario sheep industry than producing lamb. We don't always realize or understand all the moving parts of our sector. The reality is, we work in, and are a key part of a complex environment where there is a need to be nimble, to take in and think about not just what's happening on our own farms, but what's going on with our processors, retailers, and other commodity organizations. We are part of a bigger picture. And remember, there is plenty we can all learn outside of agriculture too. Given how complex issues inside and outside of agriculture are, we can all benefit from having diversity around the OSF board table and inviting people with varying degrees of skill and knowledge to sit around the table.

How do you say thank you, when thank you is not enough?

To the OSF staff, for their commitment and dedication to their work, and to our producers for their interest and commitment to our industry

To the OSF board, it has been a pleasure to work alongside you this past year I appreciate the frank and open discussions we've had with a focus on building an exciting future for the industry.

Leadership is a team effort. It has been a particular pleasure to share the challenges and successes with the executive team. The added workload and pressure that come in these roles needs to be recognized. Vice Chairs John Hemsted and Ed Post; thank you for your thoughtful calm, reasoned approach. The industry is well served with your knowledge and participation.

I would be remiss if I did not specifically mention our General Manager Jenn MacTavish. I have had the pleasure of working alongside Jenn for 9 years and very closely for the last three. I can attest that Jenn's knowledge of and commitment to our industry is second to none. Always prepared, organized, enthusiastic and professional she sets the bar high and keeps us all, and me more specifically, prepared, informed, and focused. I recently had an executive member of another organizations tell me "You have a real gem in Jennifer". I couldn't agree more. Thank you Jenn.

When I reflect on the above I recall the saying that "the sum of the parts are greater than the whole." In my mind that what makes OSF the respected organization that we are and can all be proud of.

In closing, it has been a pleasure to play my part and as Chair of this organization for the past three years. I offer my most sincerely and humble thank you for the opportunity and your support. I wish you all continued success. **OSN**