



Succession Planning & Leadership

I'm pleased to be able to welcome Marusha Kostuk, District 4, to the Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) board of directors. Her experience in the sheep industry will further broaden the perspective of an already diverse board that has the expertise and desire to move the industry forward.

It's important that the OSF has a full slate of Provincial Directors and even more important that the directors have the support of their districts; especially since the OSF board has been spending time over the past few months focusing on leadership, how to develop it, and how to ensure effective governance.

For the OSF board, the decision to begin the leadership work was introspective. It started with a recommendation from the non-profit organization Health Check that the Chartered Professional Accountants completed in October 2017. The review covered strategic planning, internal controls, human resources, financial management, tax compliance, information technology, governance and fraud, and management override. The report found that overall OSF is functioning very well, with the only area that requires immediate attention being succession planning.

To tackle the issue of succession planning and leadership, the OSF wanted to build on its successes and break new ground for board structure and governance. And the question was asked, how do we create the best environment around the board table to engage producers and make the positions of Provincial Directors appealing.

Expanding on this thinking, it is important to the board that appropriate governance processes are established so that the leadership structure ensures the right personnel and talent are assembled to navigate the ever-changing and increasingly complex working environment.

It has only been through my experience around the OSF board table that I have come to really appreciate the need for good governance. It may sound counter-intuitive but good governance does make the organization more efficient and productive. Everyone knows their roles and responsibilities;

the board has its focus on the horizon and what needs to get done to position the industry for success; and the staff focuses on executing the board's decisions. Good governance provides the framework for the board to be able to effectively set direction, get the work done and monitor performance (accountability to our farmers).

The need for strong leadership and good governance is underpinned by the pressure that all boards are under to evolve to reflect changes in production, and to adapt to innovative technologies different business models, and frequent changes to the makeup and demands of the marketplace.

With all of this in mind, the OSF acknowledged the importance of developing and implementing a strategic leadership and governance process with a focus on leadership development and succession planning to best position the sector to take full advantage of future growth potential and to adequately respond to any policy and regulatory reforms impacting sheep production.

This work resulted in a series of recommendations to the board ranging from enhancing its communications strategy to restructuring its committees and formalizing district mentorship. Some of these recommendations will have budget implications and they cannot all be implemented at once. However, the board is committed to working through the recommendations, prioritizing them and building strong leadership throughout the industry.

The recommendations stemming from the work have been shared with both the Farm Products Marketing Commission and Minister Hardeman. The Minister was supportive of the work and is looking forward to seeing how the implementation of these recommendations will benefit Ontario's sheep industry.

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