

# HMGA News

The newsletter of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association - Volume 2 - November 2009

## Wondering how the Royal went?

As you get this, the Holland Marsh Growers' Association is once again embarking on a partnership with the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair – held this year from November 6- 15. In case you missed the dates on the signs around the Holland Marsh proper, that is. The association has worked on this partnership because CONSUMERS, at the end of the day, are the measure for moving our food. Get to the consumers – and the consumers will gladly talk about what is grown in the Holland Marsh all day to retailers, restaurants, food service, and anyone else that can influence the decision-makers. Volunteers, of course, are always welcomed to see what the fuss and muss is all about – but one thing is guaranteed, it truly is a fun event for the whole family. This year, the Duchess shall be visiting the Holland Marsh booth as part of her tour of the Journey to Good Health – but she's just one of an expected 250,000 people who will be in the area throughout the Royal's duration. Again, as was the case last year, the HMGA will be handing out carrots, talking about the marsh, and letting people know that the farmers in the Holland Marsh are truly second to none. We are the organization bridging the rural-urban gap – because we can.

On that note, we'd like to thank all those involved in packing into the one-pound Holland Marsh Gold sample bags: Smith Gardens, Carron Farms, Gwillimdale Farms, and Bradford and District Produce Ltd. You have the thanks of all the farmers wanting to show our end users, today's customers, what the taste of a real carrot is. This is an event that has showcased much of what the Holland Marsh has to offer – through the multiple times we are on stage as well. This year, the HMGA will have a speaking stage role nine times in the 10-day show; Avia Eek and Jamie Reaume will be doing a cooking demonstration at different times, and we're manning the "Ask the Expert" booth for a while. In addition, video footage from this past year will be running as part of the on-going screen presentation. And, several of our farmers were contacted by the staff at the Royal for product that will be used in a number of meals served during the event. For more information or to participate, call 905-251-6786.

As always, we wish those participating in the Royal's vegetable competition the very best of luck. But, because you grow it in the marsh – luck won't be needed. The results, as always, show for themselves.



Fancy meeting you, part deux . . .

Several members of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association Board of Directors recently met with Tim Hudak, the Ontario Progressive Conservative leader and the Official Opposition Leader, and Julia Munro, our local MPP. Their decision to visit had been sparked by meeting with farmers at the October 7 Queen's Park Holland Marsh Day. They visited, despite the time pressures on October 22 when the government was releasing its Economic Update – announcing a \$25-billion deficit. It is an opportunity to make their party understand the unique needs of

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the Holland Marsh and, more importantly, the impact that legislation, rules and regulations, have upon farmers in the area. The Holland Marsh and area is the most heavily regulated body of land within the province, falling under a multitude of regulations – from the Greenbelt Act to the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and ministries – from Natural Resources to Municipal Affairs and a minimum of 13 other ministries. Again, it's a little thing but a reminder that agriculture, and specifically farmers, are a dynamic and important part of Ontario – and reminding politicians of the ever-increasing financial burdens through regulation (water-taking, hydrological studies, etc.) that are not recouped from the marketplace are important first beginning steps to undertake. The Holland Marsh Growers' Association is very grateful for the time Mr. Hudak and Mrs. Munro took from their busy schedules to not only visit the Holland Marsh and hear about the good things we do and grow, but to follow up on a concern we've had pressing for the past year.

## Lights, cameras, ACTION . . .

Prepare for 13 NEW episodes of a new show called The Fresh Life being showcased on SunTV and the Men's Network as early as December of this year. Done with celebrity foodie Marty Galin – the clown prince of all that is food and lifestyle – it will feature 11 Holland Marsh farmers and their families doing what they do best, the business of farming. It was shot over three days in mid-September and the response was exceptional, to say the least. Marty (see the item on soup-a-licious) was thrilled with the reaction from farmers and their families and employees.

These one-hour television spots will continue the hard work and effort of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association to turn the spotlight onto this area and its

unique land and farmers. All crops were represented as much as possible – and fun was had by all doing the interviews. This television program, which will likely run into syndication for years – and the spots with the farmers, which are owned by the HMGA – will be used to further promote the Holland Marsh. This is in addition to the wide-ranging print, television, radio, and internet media that has realized that the Holland Marsh does, indeed, exist as Ontario's Salad Bowl – and maybe more. Some, clearly not all, of the media stories are listed on our website at [www.hollandmarshgold.com](http://www.hollandmarshgold.com).

The HMGA Board of Directors would like to thank all of the participants for the television program, and those farmers that took part of the media interview blitz that kept most busy throughout September and October. If there is a moment, check out the Globe and Mail video from Rick Horlings as it was a nice addition to the two-page story that was in the Globe and Mail on Saturday, October 10. Again, the HMGA continues to explore all venues possible to get the name of the Holland Marsh back into the mindset of politicians, retailers, and – most importantly – consumers.

## Are they up yet? . . .

One of the things that will mark the rise of the Holland Marsh is a highway sign or two that mark the location for Ontarians as they drive up and down Highway 400. We promised – and waited, but finally have word that the Ministry of Transportation wants to put the signs in before the frost makes it impossible. With that in mind, look for signs announcing that drivers are “Entering the Holland Marsh” on Highway 400 (north and south) and on Highway 9 (both sides of the marsh). This is the first set of signs – with others planned for next year as well. Again, this is about building a profile of the area – something that builds a groundswell of support.



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## Holland Marsh Queen's Park day . . .

On a cold, grey morning (when haven't they been – let's be honest, but that's how this piece begins) – nearly 25 HMGA members, with their families, bundled themselves off to an early morning breakfast as part of the Holland Marsh Queen's Park Day. Joining them were Bradford-West Gwillimbury Councillor John McCallum and King Township Councillor Jack Rupke – for a three hour visit to one of Ontario's oldest institutions on one place that most never get to visit: Queen's Park. It was an opportunity to have breakfast with the province's political decision makers, to chat over locally produced food, to share coffee and more with people who are often only images on a television screen.

For the board of directors at the HMGA, the mandate was clear: talk with MPPs about local food, life of a farmer, how many we feed, and farming practices in the Holland Marsh. With many MPPs present the HMGA was able to discuss with them the Marsh and each individual farm operations; including what is grown, who and what the market is, struggles this season due to weather, and general discussions about agriculture. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, made a point of talking to all the members and reiterated the importance of the Holland Marsh and the agricultural jewel that it is. Julia Munro (MP for York-Simcoe) and Tim Hudak (PC leader) also spoke about the importance of the Marsh and what the growers are doing to provide the province with fresh produce. Mr. Hudak took the time to speak one on one with HMGA member and discuss what their farm was about, their challenges and opportunities they have had. With so many HMGA members and their families, the morning was a positive step in the right direction.

This step was slightly overshadowed by one situation that was completely out of the hands of so many at Queen's Park – the resignation of now former Health Minister David Caplan. As a matter of fact, Mr. Caplan was expected at the breakfast. Anyone who has every seen the hustle and bustle of Queen's Park on a normal day was likely unnerved by the buzz of activity taking place about the resignation – just nine hours before the Holland Marsh event.

However, there are now meetings set up with other MPPs interested in the Holland Marsh including with the NDP, whose leader, Andre Horwath, was doing the television circuit that morning.

It was noted by all MPPs that this event was astoundingly professional, had representation from all four major Ontario parties (the Green Party was there as well), and, as several noted – reflects a “new direction in leadership in agriculture.”

Congratulations to all who attended on behalf of both the HMGA – and the farmers of the Holland Marsh. This was a collective effort – and one that struck a resounding cord of approval from your fellow Ontarians and politicians. It should also be noted that the head chef at Queen's Park was so thrilled to be working with locally grown, Ontario (Holland Marsh) product, that he has expressed his desire to use more Holland Marsh product for his meals in the future. It's a start.

The Ontario Liberal Fund would like to get more involved with the Holland Marsh and feature its produce at future fundraisers. We did one event in September for the Premier's fundraiser – a \$1,000 a plate draw in the backyard of a prominent supporter and more opportunities exist with all parties down the road. As always, more to follow on this file.



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## Holland Marsh Soup-a-licious . . .

On a cold, grey morning (you've heard this part already, correct?), a couple of thousand fellow Ontarians dropped by to visit the Holland Marsh – specifically for the Holland Marsh Soup-a-licious, a reminder that if you make it to eat, they will come.

The weekend-long event (October 23-25) is a partnership between a number of parties, including the townships of King and Bradford-West Gwillimbury, Compost Council of Canada, and the HMGA.

“This is a food lover’s event,” said Marty Galin, well-known food and lifestyle personality, in a press release about the event. “It’s a nostalgic taste of home, complete with freshly-made soups, hot and piping on a crisp autumn day, filled with memories of yesteryear and the promise of better tastes for tomorrow.”



Friday featured a tour throughout the marsh with a number of locations for people to stop and take in – a chance to showcase the diversity and marvel that is the Holland Marsh. Saturday was an all-day event

with soup-tasting, a well-run local farmers’ market (again, highlighting diversity within the Holland Marsh – and a mighty thank you to all that participated and/or helped with produce), and musical entertainment throughout the entire event. Sunday was dedicated towards a Harvest-like event, soup ran out (actually both days), but highlighted by the pumpkin cannon booming throughout the afternoon.

This event attracted attention far and wide – political members visited and stayed for sometime (thanks to MPP Julia Munro and federal Minister of Public Safety – a role akin to being the head of the FBI, the CIA, Homeland Security – and local MP Peter Van Loan) and included a rare treat: former NHL great Bryan Trottier – of the New York Islander Stanley Cup championship days. For those Leaf fans still out there – he was part of a dynasty when the pictures of Stanley Cup winners are in colour. The media coverage of the event was excellent – and even HMGA board member Avia Eek had her soup highlighted in *The Star* following the event. Winner of the soups, locally, was Jason Verkaik for his Purple Carrot soup.

Congratulations – and again, thanks to all farmers who participated in one fashion or another. As well, a big thanks goes out to Marty Galin for his role; Jamie Smythe, the King Township Economic Development Officer; Michael Disano – in the same role with Bradford-West Gwillimbury; Susan Antler, the Executive Director of the Compost Council; and especially to Colleen Bator – who co-ordinated and brought it all together. She was the glue holding the pieces together.

“This is what harvest time in Ontario is all about – an opportunity to see what our province truly offers in terms of food, restaurants, and the fantastic region in and surrounding the Holland Marsh.



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## More Updates . . .

As mentioned in the previous issue, the HMGA and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority are working on issues surrounding ALL muck soils used for farming in the Holland Marsh and area. A recent working tour with LSRCA and farmers was exceptionally beneficial and will go along way to ensure that everyone is working off the same sheet. This is a partnership that HMGA has formed because it was essential for all stakeholders to work on this file and understand how legislation can, indeed, impact upon the farmer both in a fiscal manner and judicially.

More information about what is taking place will be released at this year's HMGA AGM in December. Should you encounter a situation with the LSRCA, as a marsh farmer, contact both Jamie Reaume (905-251-6786) and Beverley Booth, LSRCA, Manager, Planning at 905-895-1281. Either can assist you with your questions or concerns dealing with the Conservation Authority.

## More Updates . . .

Over the past few weeks, the Holland Marsh Growers' Association has been very active within the community on a number of issues, not the least of which was representing a member at the Drainage Commission Tribunal in mid-October. The three-day session, in which the member was done in two, was watched by the HMGA in order to ensure fairness to our farming membership. In addition, the HMGA has spoken to King Township twice – once in regards to taking a stand opposing the peaker plant construction on both principle and practical reasons and the second in regards to the release of the Holland Marsh Economic Impact Study.

The HMGA will be speaking to all area municipalities – including York Region and Simcoe County councils – over the next couple of months about this study. The study is available through Jamie Reaume, on a CD, and is roughly 200 pages detailing a review of the Holland Marsh based upon the area/region and is not crop specific. It was given out to MPPs during the Queen's Park and is a very intensive look at the value provided by farmers to the area, the municipalities, and the province. It goes without saying, but the farmers who participated in the study are to be thanked for the time, honesty, and dedication. As well, the HMGA has written three items regarding changes needed to the Official Plans of York Region, Bradford-West Gwillimbury, and East Gwillimbury – highlighting how a generic restriction is not applicable to the Holland Marsh. Like the association's decision to speak to Bradford-West Gwillimbury about their fire bylaw and burning issue, which would have severely restricted the ability of farmers in the marsh to burn refuse, the HMGA was obligated to act on behalf of ALL farmers, regardless of membership, to make an improvement that would have been costly if there had been no action taken.

As a reminder, the HMGA sits on a number of community and area boards, including as a director on the Bradford Board of Trade; a guest with the Greater Toronto and Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) and with other governmental agencies as related to agriculture and, specifically, the Holland Marsh. We are keeping dealing with marsh issues and bringing them to the table wherever we are.

FINALLY, the HMGA – as in its constitution – will be holding its Annual AGM on Thursday, December 3, 2009 at 1 p.m. at the Bradford Community Centre (same location as last year).

More information will follow shortly.