



IN THE TRENCHES

December 2009

"Drainage Doesn't Cost - IT PAYS!"

www.drainage.org

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT

Gerald Neeb
(519) 656-2618
rothdrainage@sympatico.ca

PAST PRESIDENT

Chris Groot
(705) 434-0709
cgroot@armtec.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Glenn Cooke
(905) 889-3494
gcooke@crlcampbell.com

DIRECTORS

Phil Demaray
(519) 269-3233
Fax: (519) 268-2800

Greg Walker
(705) 340-5500
gwalker12@cogeco.ca

Erick Nooyen
(519) 674-2109
jillandErick@netscape.net

Secretary Treasurer

John R. Johnston
231 Dimson Ave.
Guelph, ON N1G 3C7
(519) 836-1386
Fax: (519) 836-4059
jjohnston@gto.net

Convention Coordinator

Franklin Kains
519-742-4591
Kains@golden.net

Environmental Advocate

Don Lobb
(905) 838-2221
dwllobb@xplornet.com

From the President's Desk

Fellow Members:

It is your Past President pinch hitting for your President. Gerald has asked me if I could fill in for him writing this article. It is December 2nd today with no snow. I love it! I live in the snow belt Barrie and last year at this time there was two feet of the fluffy white stuff in this area. We have had one of our best Novembers in a while. I believe records will show at the end of the year that more tubing will be installed in November than in October. Although the days are shorter and it is a little cooler, we have had more days to work in November compared to October.

It looks like another good year for our members. There tends to be more work than we can handle, with 2010 also looking very good. Costs of inputs for many of the agriculture crops, mainly fertilizer, will be lower next year. We have also had another year with lots of precipitation which helps keep drainage at top of mind with the farmers.

The economy, "depending on what you hear in news everyday" seems to be slowly improving. The housing market in Canada, specifically in Ontario, has been booming. Re-sales are at all time highs in many cities across the country. Very low mortgage rates and the threat of the HST coming into affect next year has people buying now. How long will it last? Who knows !!

The big news the last couple of days involves Tiger Woods, come on is this a bunch of baloney or what? Everyone's wondering what happened. 2:45 am on a Saturday morning he wipes out his SUV in his own driveway. He is wearing t-shirt with shorts and no shoes and his lovely wife is standing over him with a golf club in her hands yelling "Fourrrrrrrrr you SOB". It is a good thing the police arrived when they did, otherwise Tiger would have had a permanent handicap. Oh I wonder what happened. Tiger was caught playing in another fairway. He should have stayed with his home club!!

The year has flown by again, just over a month from now it will be conference time again. Please make plans to attend, as we have a wonderful program in store for you.

Also please take time to enjoy life. We all work very hard, but you have to have some fun too, for you never know when life throws you one of those curveballs and your life is dramatically changed.

Signing off and I hope we see you in January.

Your Past President
Chris Groot

Lines from Lambton - Dean Hodgson

The whole year of 2009 has been a series of ups and downs weather-wise. Poor weather has dominated, but in Lambton we were lucky enough to get some pockets of good weather at the most opportune times for both seeding and harvesting. Beautiful weather through late August and early September brought most of the bean and corn crops up to speed and everyone began anticipating a bumper harvest. However, the weather changed again, wet and cool, just as the soybean harvest was to begin. But a stretch of sunny weather arrived in mid-October and those giant combines and seed drills were in the soybean fields. When November arrived, 90% of the soybeans were harvested and 75% of the anticipated wheat acreage was in the ground. Although all this huge machinery compacting our fragile soils does not agree with my perception of sustainable farming, we must reluctantly admit they have saved the day several times in the past few years.

The corn harvest has been delayed by high moisture content of the crop. By late November the corn crop was causing a lot of anxiety as the moisture is still near 30% but most farmers are waiting for 'Mother Nature' to dry down their corn. Our sugar beet farmers have had some difficulties coping with the wet fields but slowly and surely they are completing a difficult harvest. High world sugar prices have these farmers anticipating their most profitable year since the sugar beet crop returned to Lambton several years ago. November brought beautiful weather to Lambton County and everyone has been busy catching up on all the fall work delayed in October. During this extended 'Indian Summer' we notice many farmers ploughing and cultivating fields throughout Lambton County. Although about 50% of the land is left for no-till, it would appear many farmers are not too concerned about the high cost of fuel.

Tales of an on-farm plot yielding 75 bu/ac of soybeans near Mitchell's Bay in Kent County perked up many farmers' ears in our area.

It has been another good year for tile drainage contractors in Lambton County in spite of all the adverse weather conditions. During the wet periods many of our contractors caught up on some of their small jobs as many farmers let them go through the crops. Most contractors say they are overbooked for the first time in years. We see many big jobs in progress this fall. Allan Jardine has completed some large projects this summer and was just finishing a job in Sombra Township with perfect conditions in late November. I see Frank Rombouts was finishing a huge job in Adelaide Township with his big Bron Plough. Ken Jaques is always busy and has been working all over the County. Don McGee was busy working along Esterville Road in Dawn Township and the Dupius Bros. were working in Plympton Township. Roy and Ken Elliott installed over 30,000' with their Buckeye '302' in September. Roy still loves digging in tile even though he is past 80 years and recovered from heart surgery. Hard to stop an old tiler! Wayne Wilbur said he is not taking on any big tiling jobs but concentrating more on farming these days. Wayne still does drain repairs and helps farmers solve drainage problems on their own farms, often not of his doing. Even though all the drain contractors have lots of work, they must still contend with the weather and the rising cost of doing business in Ontario, as it seems there are more rules and regulations being enforced every year.

Lambton County lost another member of our drainage community when Ross McFarlane passed away on Nov. 24 /09. Ross and Velda operated the Forest Tile Yard for many years and were admired by all who worked with them. Their son Ron McFarlane is still very active in the drainage business.

We notice in the September issue of 'In the Trenches', President Gerald Neeb is concerned about the source of Canada's food supply. All farmers and their suppliers, such as tile drain contractors, should be concerned about all this imported food in the grocery stores. Where have all the Canadian manufacturers gone? Once there were canning factories, abattoirs and creameries supplying jobs and paying taxes in our small rural towns. "Buy local" is becoming more popular and should be supported. It is a true "Free Market" where price is determined by supply and demand. But our government keeps throwing up more and more roadblocks. Are all these imported foods manufactured under the same strict regulations being

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Lines from Lambton – (Cont'd. from page 3)

enforced on our producers? We must all learn more about where our food is coming from and let your government representative know we want a level playing field.

News accounts say the Essa Township Council in Simcoe County wants to put a limit on the powers of the Conservation Authorities in Ontario to collect funds from municipalities. Ian Cumming reports in the Ontario Farmer that the CA's are out of financial control. It was probably a good idea in the beginning to organize the Conservation Authorities to protect our rivers and streams but these 'cash cows' have far outgrown the job of protecting the environment. These bureaucrats spend their time building their 'Ivory Towers' rather than protecting our streams. They have been given too much authority but have not accepted responsibility for their actions. Thankfully, someone is finally calling for an investigation into the money trail of these bureaucrats. When these CA's deliberately delay drainage projects just to flaunt their power, they are leading to more and more imported food on our grocery shelves.

It almost seems Canadians are our own worst enemy.

Algae Blooms Could Prompt Tighter Rules for Farmers to Reduce P Use - (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, September 29, 2009)

Farmers in the Grand River watershed are likely to be hit by stronger measures to reduce phosphorous escaping into rivers and streams.

Algae blooms continue to plague the mouth of the river near Dunnville, and about 12 kilometers east along the shoreline of Lake Erie and three kilometers out into the lake. Soil erosion from spring runoff in March and April is the main culprit.

The Grand River is carrying 400 tonnes of phosphorous into the lake every year. That's 40 per cent of the total entering the Eastern end of the lake; almost all of the remaining 60 per cent comes from the U.S. side. 9,500 tonnes per year come into the Western end of Lake Erie.

During the spring runoff, phosphorous levels already exceed provincial standards by the time the river reaches West Montrose, which is where the area of intensive farming begins. From there to Bridgeport the phosphorous load skyrockets to 26 times the provincial standard.

As the river continues to flow downstream, the phosphorous level stabilizes, but the percentage of soluble phosphorous increases as the river takes in effluent from the sewage treatment plants of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. Where the Nith River enters near Paris, phosphorous levels again increase. Whiteman Creek also contributes more phosphorous from farmland.

At the bottom end of the river, algae take in phosphorous, so the readings in the river water actually decline a bit.

The impacts on farmers will become clearer when the new Source Water Protection Committee gets further into its mandate.



OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report – Sid Vander Veen

License Renewals:

We recently sent out the forms for the renewal of the machine licenses and the machine operator licenses. Because we had some inquiries about the business license renewal, I've decided to repeat some of the information I had included in the last LICO newsletter:

Changes to the Regulations: Some changes have been made to the regulations under the *Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act*. The purpose of these changes was to clarify the regulations and to make it more convenient or responsive to the individuals and businesses being licensed under this Act. If you would like a copy of the revised regulations, please contact me at 519-826-3552.

One change that was made affects the business license. The business license has always expired on December 31 which is an inconvenient time of year for businesses that are still active in early winter. The expiry date for business licenses has now been changed to March 31. Here's what this means to tile drainage businesses in Ontario:

- Your 2009 business license states that it expires on December 31, 2009, but for this year only, this license is considered to be extended to March 31, 2010.
- Business license renewal forms will be sent out to you in early February.
- In order to renew your license for April 1, 2010, the renewal application form and fee (\$250) along with the tile records must be submitted.
- Machine and operator licenses still expire on December 31.

Courses:

Due to declining enrollment, we have decided to offer the *Primary Drainage Course* and the *Advanced Drainage Course* together every second year. Both of these courses were offered in January/February 2009, and therefore, we did not intend to offer any courses this winter. However, a significant number of people have expressed interest in attending the Primary Drainage Course this winter, so we have decided to change our plans. We have begun to make arrangements for the Primary Drainage Course and will send out details early in 2010.

Tile Loan Program:

As of December 1, 2009, we have processed \$3.84 million in tile loans. A further \$200,000 is currently on hand to process as January 1, 2010 loans.

I want to wish all of you and your families a "Merry Christmas" and hope that you have a joyful and safe New Year's celebration. See you at the convention in January.



"Christmas - that magic blanket that wraps itself about us, that something so intangible that it is like a fragrance. It may weave a spell of nostalgia. Christmas may be a day of feasting, or of prayer, but always it will be a day of remembrance - a day in which we think of everything we have ever loved."
~ Augusta E. Rundell

The 52nd LICO Annual Convention; Jan 19-21, 2010; Lamplighter Inn, London - Franklin Kains

Safety and our Drainage Industry

On Tuesday there are two pre-conference workshops. The first is a session on the legal aspects of drainage. This will deal with two aspects of the law. The first is common law and how it shapes what a farmer can and cannot do in the way of draining water from his farm. The second is on contracts and contract law – what goes into a good contract, what you will or will not be responsible for and how to avoid future litigation.

The second pre-conference session as is held every year will be the Ontario Red Cross First Aid Course and Recertification Course.

The theme of the convention itself is safety as it applies to our land drainage industry. On Wednesday morning, Demitry Kurilsky of the Canadian Safety Association of Ontario will talk about the importance of maintaining a safe work place, your legal requirements as covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the steps to developing a culture of safety within your company and on the job site

There are two other presentations on safety. The first is on noxious weeds – specifically Giant Hog Weed which is becoming more common in Ontario fields and can cause some serious health issues if handled improperly. Dr. Francois Tardif of the University of Guelph will tell us of the dangers, how to identify it the field and what you need to do to protect yourself. The other presentation will be on hearing loss – what causes it and what to do to reduce your exposure to it.

Rounding out the Wednesday program will be presentations on licensing of floats, a review of the new erosion control design software from OMAFRA and the grant programs for erosion control projects that are available to farmers through the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association.

On Thursday we have two presentations related to fuel and oil standards. These have changed in recent years and will change again. Terry Harkness of Toromont and Craig Reed of Case and Drum Oil will discuss these changes and their implications to your machines.

On Thursday afternoon our tour will take us to Steelway Building Systems in Aylmer to see their fabricating plant and hear the story of the development of the one of Ontario's premier steel building manufacturers.

The presentations this year, particularly the ones on safety, are directed not only to owners but also to your employees working in the field. We encourage you to bring them along that may hear the same story and can help you to improve the safety environment in your company. This year babysitting services can be arranged with the hotel (it needs to be pre-booked) for Thursday evening to encourage members with young families to come to the banquet.

We look forward to seeing you at the convention.

We make a Living by what we get. We make a Life by what we give.

God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.

"Good friends are like stars.....You don't always see them, but you know they are always there."

Sick Leave

I urgently needed a few days off work, but I knew the boss would not allow me to take a leave. I thought that maybe if I acted 'CRAZY' then he would tell me to take a few days off.

So I hung upside down on the ceiling and made funny noises. My co-worker (who's blonde) asked me what I was doing. I told her that I was pretending to be a light bulb, So that the Boss would think I was 'CRAZY' and give me a few days off.

A few minutes later the Boss came into the office And asked 'What are you doing?' I told him I was a light bulb.

He said, 'You are clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days.' I jumped down and walked out of the office.

When my co-worker (the blonde) followed me, the Boss asked her "And where do you think you're going?"

She said, "I'm going home too, I can't work in the dark!"

Be naughty..... save Santa the trip!!!



LICO would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family all the best for the holiday season and the year to come.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 20 - 21, 2010

LICO Conference

Best Western Lamplighter Inn
591 Wellington Rd.,
London, Ontario N6C 4R3



Passings

With regret, we report the passing of Almeda Halbert, spouse of Past President and Honorary Life Member Fred Halbert. Details as follows:

Almeda Christine HALBERT of Listowel, formerly of Markdale on Tuesday at Listowel Memorial Hospital in her 90th year. Beloved wife of the late Frederick Halbert. Sister-in-law of Lawrence Thompson, Ethna and Nelson Hill, Joyce and John Nickerson and Hillis and Korleen Halbert. Missed by friends Paul and Marj Krauter and Ella and Harold Stewart and numerous nieces and nephews. Predeceased by sisters Evelyn Thompson, Lucille Whyte and Phyllis Thompson. A memorial service was held at the May Funeral Home, Markdale on Monday, December 14th.

Township Backs Down on Culvert - (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, December 1, 2009)

A potential landmark court case for Ontario over who is responsible for municipal drains - the township or the Conservation Authority - remained unsettled after the municipality of South Stormont recently dropped its challenge against the South Nation Conservation Authority and agreed to abide by its rules and costs in a pre-trial settlement.

At issue was a damaged culvert in the Fly Creek municipal drain that was flooding surrounding farmland. South Nation Challenged the township's right to do the work without its consultation and fees.

After several postponements and rising legal bills, council decided it couldn't justify five-figure legal expenditures to the taxpayers.

South Nation agreed not to push costs for this case on the township, "if the township conformed".

Local Farmers should be aware that South Nation has released its charges to their municipalities for such future work and "the fee for removing an obstruction has just doubled."

