



# IN THE TRENCHES

September 2008

**"Drainage Doesn't Cost - IT PAYS!"**

[www.drainage.org](http://www.drainage.org)

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## From the President's Desk

Fellow members:

Here we are again in September, where did the summer go?! It has been a cooler and wetter summer than was expected; lately we have had a dry spell through out Ontario. Crops for the most part look really good. As I learned last week, what looks good from the roads is not always the case. It was brought to my attention that the corn in some areas has cobs that are only half matured. Where the rain was required during this critical stage of growth, it did not rain for a long period of time, resulting in high corn stalks with partially developed cobs.

We are also looking at federal elections both in the US and in Canada this fall. Of interest in the US elections is the Democrat's recent statement that they intend on reopening the Free Trade Agreement. It appears to me that Obama's camp want to further tighten restrictions on Canadian goods entering the US. This would include Canadian beef, pork and lumber, along with many other Canadian goods. Their intent is to protect those markets in US, which would not be favourable to the Canadian farmers. There is also constant lobbying from the US to have Canada remove their quota systems on the poultry and dairy industry, resulting in the US flooding the Canadian market with subsidized dairy and poultry products, making the Canadian farmers investments worthless.

We have to continue to lobby our politicians to see that our Canadian farmer's rights and investments are protected. We have to become more protectionists ourselves - we live in the best country in the world!! The Canadian farming industry has worked long and hard to build up their investments, and we should all be reminded how important the Canadian farmer is to each and every one of us, every time we sit down for a meal!!

LICO is continuing to be involved in the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. Both of these issues have a huge impact on the Canadian farmer. As a membership we have to continue to be active on these issues and any new issues coming our way. There are environmental groups that are lobbying the government, both provincially and federally, on a daily basis to make changes to what they believe will improve the environment. The largest impact of these changes will fall on the backs of our Canadian farmers and the drainage industry.

We have to have our voice heard. We have to have a say on all proposed changes to ensure it is fair to all parties, not just the parties that have the most money and clout with the politicians.

Thank you.  
Your President,  
Chris J Groot

## 2008/2009 Tile Loan Program

The *Tile Drainage Act* allows municipalities to "sell" debentures to the Province for funding private tile drainage projects. The following is a list of some of the requirements of the Tile Loan Program for fiscal 2008/09:

- A municipality may only offer to sell one debenture per month to the Province.
- The term of the loan is 10 years and the repayment is due annually.
- The interest rate for the loans issued under this Program will be at 6%, fixed for the 10-year term of the loan.
- Interest is compounded annually, and the loan can be repaid at any time without penalty.
- An individual farmer can receive a loan of 75% of the cost of the tile drainage work, subject to the loan limit policy below.

**LOAN LIMIT:** A Ministry policy limits the amount of loan available to a farmer each year. The policy reads as follows: *"The sum of all loans issued in any fiscal year, to an individual, as an individual, or in his role in a partnership or corporation shall not exceed \$50,000"*.

Therefore, farmers may obtain a loan for the lesser of: (a) amount applied for by the farmer; (b) 75% of the value of the tile drainage work performed; or (c) \$50,000.

**INELIGIBLE COSTS:** There are costs that cannot be included in a Tile Loan application. Any costs incurred off the farm property or any costs not related to the tile drainage system are not eligible for the loan. In addition, the cost of GST and work performed illegally by a tile drainage contractor that is not licensed under the *Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act* is not eligible for the loan.

### Armtec Signs Deal To Buy U.S. Concrete Division - Guelph Mercury, June 26, 2008

Armtec infrastructure Income Fund has signed a deal with Clearford Industries Inc. to buy the assets of its Brooklin Concrete division and shares of Boucher Precast Concrete Ltd. in a deal worth \$65 million.

"Our acquisition of Brooklin and Boucher expands the geographic scope of our successful precast business," president and chief executive Charles Phillips said in a statement Wednesday.

Brooklin, with four plants in Ontario, manufactures septic tanks and precast concrete products, including patio stones, retaining walls, transformer foundations, and switching chambers.

Boucher specializes in commercial tanks, bridges, box culverts, train boxes, barriers, transformer base and pads, electrical manholes, well tile, parking curbs, pump-chambers, concrete panels and segmental rings for tunneling projects.

To help fund the deal, the fund plans to raise \$37.5 million in a bought deal private placement Scotia Capital Inc and TD Securities Inc.

The fund said it has signed a nonbinding letter for the purchase a Western Canadian-based manufacturer of precast concrete products for \$50 million, however, the deal depends on a number of conditions.

"There can be no assurance that a definite agreement will be entered into," the fund said.

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If you have articles, events or notes of interest you wish to add to this newsletter, please send your submissions (not more than **225** words) to the following:

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## Lines from Lambton - Dean Hodgson

After a dry but cool April and May, Lambton County farmers finally got some needed precipitation. Then more and more and even more. When will it all stop?

However, with dry sunny skies all spring farmers were able to seed most of their early crops under ideal conditions. But the dry cool weather did not encourage growth and by the end of May many were beginning to worry about another drought year as in 2007. But June brought needed showers just as many livestock farmers began haying. The first cut hay crop turned into a nightmare with rain coming steadily every two to three days. By the end of June most areas of the County had received more than ½ a foot of rain. By the end of July the total had reached 10 to 12 inches of rain with even more in some areas. Most of the crops on well-tiled land thrived with all the heat and moisture. Many poorly drained fields were suffering from too much moisture and a lot of soybeans were replanted in the first couple of weeks in July. On July 16th a terrible hailstorm hit the Alvinston area in about a three mile radius. It shredded corn and soybean fields and hit the fall wheat just as harvest was beginning. It was a terrible setback for farmers looking forward to a bumper harvest with top prices. Most of the corn and soybeans are now slowly rebounding from the hail damage. Then in early August another devastating hailstorm struck the vegetable farmers in the Thedford bog and completely demolished many of their crops. Most of these vegetable crops were a total write-off. The weather has dominated the growing season yet again.

But somehow the farmers completed their wheat and first cut hay harvest and most seemed to be pleased with the results. In between all the thunderstorms the livestock farmers harvested a heavy crop of hay although quality is suspect. The wheat harvest, although not as great as many had once anticipated, had average yields of 75/bu/ac. and most farmers were smiling. The crop was good quality with no disease problems and there were stories of 90-100 bu/ac heard around the coffee shops. So everyone is happy with good prices and good yields although inputs keep rising rapidly. In mid-August we see many livestock farmers harvesting second and third cuts of hay. Seems there is always a bright side to every storm.

On the bright side, these record rainfalls have raised the water levels in Lake Huron and St. Clair River equal to last spring and are now nearing the long-term average. So much for global warming and worrying about who is removing too much water from the lake. All we needed was record rainfall and everything is back to normal. Why worry? Chairman of the Lambton Water Plant recently stated that more water flows down the St. Clair River every second than the Water Plant could pump out in a whole day. Quite a statement, some others seem to be more concerned. But it is good to see water levels back to normal and we even have water in most of our creeks. The higher water table is good for our wildlife, farmers and the environment.

After the wheat harvest was finally completed, Lambton County drainage contractors got back into action in a big way. Most contractors had not been pressured by too much work during all the fine weather in April and May. Just a lot of small jobs, patch and repair some drainage problems. But it is a different story now.

Down in Sombra, Don McGee is going full speed ahead as he has over 400,000' to install before soybean harvest. I found Rolly Nantaise working just around the corner on the Indian Creek Road. Wayne Wilbur was locating tile just over the town-line in Dawn Township. Bob Mater and Scott Wilson were also busy in the south of Lambton. In Enniskillen Township Allan Jardine was splitting drains on the Rick Racher farm along the 6th. I also found Ken Jaques working just across the road from his home shop. Ken and his crew had recently returned from a big job near Arthur where they drained a farm for a long-time friend.

While crop touring in north Lambton we found where Pro Drainage was just finishing a big job in Warwick Township. I could find no sign of Frank Rombouts or the Dupius Bros. but these contractors are always busy somewhere in the County. All in all it looks like a great year ahead for Lambton County drainage contractors.

However, with all the water lying in some fields one has to wonder about the future of our soils. A farmer like Allan Griffin in Sarnia still relies on some tile installed by his grandfather in 1899. Although he has split the existing drains, those old 3" clay tile are still in the system and doing their job after more than 100 years because of the way he farms his land. The farmer who abuses his soil with heavy machinery, poor crop rotation and working damp soil ruins a contractor's reputation when we see water lying in recently tile drained fields. Hopefully today's modern farmer will somehow learn to protect our soils for future generations, as tile drains can only do so much.

## **OFA Pushes Water Act Compensation** - Ontario Farmer, June 24, 2008

Although the ministry of the Environment has repeatedly stated that landowner compensation is not outlined in the clean Water Act 2007, nor is it included in the terms of Reference of the Source Water Protection Committees, OFA will immediately expand and intensify a province-wide lobby effort to have the MOE position reversed.

OFA board members unanimously approved a resolution from the Prescott Federation requesting compensation with reference to the establishment of Source Water Protection Zones and "restrictions placed on privately owned property that limit normal farming practices, reduce production opportunities or simply force land out of production altogether."

Prescott director Leo Imfeld urged all OFA members to "push" the Source Protection Committees to include compensation for affected landowners. The Plantagenet-area farmer noted that the agricultural representatives appointed to the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee had prepared a compensation model that includes the establishment of impartial tribunal to oversee a process that would determine a fair and reasonable compensation package to affected landowners. As suggested in the model, "remuneration could include a one-time lump sum, annual rent payments, tax exemptions or other means appropriate to the size-specific situation."

Imfeld said that it is important for farmers across the province to make their provincial and municipal representatives aware that Source Protection land-use restrictions without compensation are "unfair and unjust" to the property owner.

## **Update**

The battle in Eastern Ontario between a dairy farmer and the Cataraqui Conservation Authority reported in the June 2008 LICO Newsletter has been resolved. The farmer asked for the help of the OLA. A meeting of the involved parties was arranged at the farm and a solution was reached.

## **"Compensation" Included In One Source Water Proposal** - (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, September 2, 2008)

The Ausable Bayfield/Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee (SPC) approved terms of reference that note "Funding mechanisms for implementing land use policies on private land will be identified and included in the source protection plans."

"Financial implications including compensation, financial assistance, and incentives for land use restrictions will be researched by the SPC."

## **Monarch Flying Into Extinction** - (Excerpts from Guelph Mercury, September 5, 2008)

The Monarch butterfly could disappear from Ontario within 20 years unless action to protect the population is taken. The eastern North American population has been in decline in recent years. Illegal logging in the Mexican over wintering area eliminates the insulation that protects the butterflies from lethal winter storms. Widespread use of herbicide in contributing to the destruction of milkweed, the only plant monarch caterpillars will feed on. There is contradiction between the fact that milkweed is a noxious weed and the reality it's the only food source for a species at risk.

*Editor note: This is just the beginning of the impact of the species at risk legislation!*

## OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report – Sid Vander Veen

### *Water Management Engineer:*

After 39 years, Jim Myslik has retired from OMAFRA. Jim was involved in drainage activities for as long as he was with the Ministry and maintained a keen interest in LICO activities. So it was very fitting that his “swan song” with the Ministry was teaching the Advanced Drainage Course last winter. Although we miss seeing him on a regular basis, his strong interest in drainage remains, and so we still maintain regular contact with him.

Jim's position has been filled by Andrew Jamieson. Andrew obtained a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering from McDonald College of McGill University in 2000 and was part of the last class to be taught by Robert Broughton, Ph.D. He immediately continued his studies and obtained a Masters of Science from McGill, where his work focused on water quality in tile drains. In 2002, Andrew began working for OMAFRA in the field as a Rural Environment Engineer and later moved the head office where he worked, as an engineer, on government programs such as Nutrient Management Act, Farm Implements Act and the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. I'm sure you'll meet Andrew at the convention this winter.

**Tile Loan Program:** A total of \$1.52 million in tile loans has been processed or is on hand as of today. By comparison, at this time last year, farmers had borrowed over \$2.09 million and in the previous year, it was \$2.42 million. Although tile loan activity is up slightly from the past two years, the general indication is that there is lower tile drainage activity thus far in 2007.

### *Courses:*

Although many of the details have not been finalized, we have some preliminary information on the courses that will be offered this winter:

- *Primary and Advanced Drainage Courses:*

This year, both the Primary and Advanced Drainage Courses will be offered. The enrolment numbers still don't justify holding the courses every year, so our current plan is to offer both of these courses every second year. So if you miss the courses in 2009, they will be offered next in 2011. And, although Jim Myslik retired, he agreed to lead these courses again, assisted by Andrew Jamieson and Andy Kester. Here are the preliminary details:

Primary: January 6 to 16, 2009

Advanced: February 3 – 13, 2009

Location: Marden Community Centre, Marden (5 minutes north of Guelph)

For further information, contact Mary Van den Borre, OMAFRA Fergus

Tel: (519) 846-3392 Email: [mary.vandenborre@ontario.ca](mailto:mary.vandenborre@ontario.ca)

- *Agricultural Erosion Control Structures Course:*

When: March 2 noon- March 6 noon and March 9 noon-March 13 noon, 2009 (8 days total)

Location: Marden Community Centre, Marden (5 minutes north of Guelph)

For further information, contact Robert Stone, OMAFRA Brighton

Tel: 613-475-5428 Email: [bob.stone@ontario.ca](mailto:bob.stone@ontario.ca)

- *Drainage Superintendents Course:*

When: March 2 – 6, 2009

Where: Conference Room, 1 Stone Road West, Guelph, ON

For further information, contact Sid Vander Veen, OMAFRA Guelph

Tel: (519) 826-3552 Email: [sid.vanderveen@ontario.ca](mailto:sid.vanderveen@ontario.ca)

## **Winchester Company Fined \$100,000 – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, July 8, 2008)**

Weagant Farm Supplies Ltd. pleaded guilty and was fined \$100,000 in the Ontario Court of Justice.

On September 13, 2006, an employee had been assigned to prepare a forage harvester for delivery. The worker had installed the crop processor and engaged the power to run it. The feed rolls were in motion. They were not shielded by an attachment. The worker's arm became entangled in the moving mechanism, resulting in massive fatal injuries.

Ministry of Labour concluded that the incident could have been prevented had the employer taken the necessary steps to ensure all motion on the harvester that could endanger a worker was stopped and blocked to prevent movement before and during maintenance, as required by section 75 of the Regulation for Industrial Establishments.

In addition to the fine, the court imposed a 25-per-cent victim fine surcharge

## **Henry of Pelham's Greener Vineyard – (Excerpts from Niagara This Week, July 11, 2008)**

Henry of Pellam Family Estate Winery vineyard is working with the Niagara Conservation Authority to create a greener environment for the vines.

Most of the vineyards in the region are densely under-drained to take away excess water and it all feeds into a large pond or lagoon.

At Henry of Pellam, they expanded the banks out to create a shallow wetland area, installed a dispersion sandwich or underground filter made of wood chips and it actually cleans the water. In fact, any water running on the Henry of Pellam property will be cleaner when it left the property than when it entered.

Surface microbes on the underground filter do half the cleaning job (eat the phosphates), while the filter itself does the rest. Between the filter and the deep lagoon is a shallow wetland area where they've planted bulrushes and other wetland plants that thrive in one foot of water.

Speck is experimenting with a drip irrigation system in a section of the vineyard. The drip emitters are tiny and very sensitive. The slightest bit of dirt in the water and they plug. The new filters in the lagoons will ensure a clean supply of water for an efficient irrigation system.

## **Armtec Acquires Oxford Plastics - Guelph Mercury, August 22, 2008**

Armtec Infrastructure Income Fund said yesterday it has signed a deal to buy the corrugated tubing equipment of Oxford Plastics Inc. for \$5.7 million.

Under the deal, the building products fund bought Oxford's equipment used to manufacture and distribute corrugated tubing as well as its existing inventories in Embro and Chatham in south-western Ontario.

Based in Embro, Ont., Oxford is a manufacturer and supplier of high-density polyethylene pipe drainage tile for the agricultural market and building trades sector.

Armtec is a manufacture and seller of drainage pipe and engineered concrete girders.

## **CA Seeks More Control of Wetlands** – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, July 15, 2008)

The South Nation Conservation Authority (SNC) has sent letters to some municipalities within its area, asking for a reply, granting SNC, “the ability to regulate activities within wetland boundaries and lands adjacent to a wetland.”

Councilor Tammy Hart has serious reservations that this SNC request, “gives them too much power.”

It takes land use control out of the hands of elected officials and puts it under the control of a publicly funded, unelected body whose sole purpose is environmental protection.

Municipalities will be approached down the road by the CAs for money relating to 170/06 and “will have a hard time saying no” if the CAs can wave a letter saying we requested it.

Also, if an individual landowner, like a farmer, is no longer allowed to farm because his land is adjacent to a wetland, then with this requested letter the CAs “can steer his frustrations towards council”, which will be powerless to help him.

The process involving CAs in regulation 170/06 cannot take place without “a municipal resolution, plus the board of directors from the CA.”

O’Grady points to the shrinking of the Alfred and Moose Creek bogs as two examples of vital wetlands under threat.

## **Conference to Examine Pesticides and Cancer** - (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, August 19, 2008)

The Canadian Cancer Society is to host a November conference that will focus on agricultural pesticide use and cancer risk.

Experts from around the world will make presentations on the cancer risks of pesticides used on agricultural crops.

Aaron Blair of the U.S. National Cancer Institute will talk about occupational exposure of agricultural workers who work with and apply pesticides. Mary Ward of the NCI will discuss the impact of pesticides on adults who live near sprayed fields while Peggy Reynolds of the Northern California Cancer Centre will talk about the impact on children.

Other presentations will include a talk on how to weigh and express the scientific evidence related to pesticide use and cancer risk.

*Editor's Note: When you read this think about the paper "In Balance With Nature" printed a few years ago. We are 3/4 of the way to the end!*

## **What's in a name?**

The famous Olympic skier, Picabo Street (pronounced Pee-Ka-Boo), is not just an athlete...she is now a nurse, currently working at an Intensive Care Unit of a large metropolitan hospital. However, she is not permitted to answer the hospital telephones any longer. It caused too much confusion when she would answer the phone and say, 'Picabo, I.C.U.'

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 20 & 21, 2009

LICO Conference

Best Western Lamplighter Inn

591 Wellington Rd., London, Ontario  
N6C 4R3

January 12 & 13, 2009 (Tentative)

Michigan LICA Annual Meeting

Lansing Best Western, Midway, MI

[www.michiganlica.org/events.htm](http://www.michiganlica.org/events.htm)

January 14 - 18, 2009

ILICA Annual Winter Convention & Members Meeting

President Abraham Lincoln Hotel,  
Springfield, IL

<http://www.illica.net>

February 11 - 15, 2009

LICA 2009 Winter Convention

Embassy Suites - Airport, Nashville, TN

<http://www.licanational.com>

## Congratulations!!

Congratulations to our President, Chris Groot, on his recent promotion to the position of Agriculture and Building Trade Sales Manager for Ontario at Armtec.



## Municipal Drains Will Now Require MNR Agreement - (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, September 2, 2008)

Municipal drains in Ontario will now require the input of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), who were granted this new power under the new Endangered Species Act.

Any municipal drainage projects now underway that were started after June 30, can be done without MNR input and approval, providing they are completed by the end of September.

“The Act prohibits any activities that injures the lives and habitats of endangered species. An endangered species is any living being that is at risk of extinction and disappearance from the province.”

Some activities, like municipal drains, are allowed through a permitting process, “the permitting process can be limiting and restrictive.”

With word spreading from eastern Ontario municipal councilors to their farmers as to the future involvement of MNR after September, creek cleaning, leveling bush land and tile drainage are being done at a torrid pace in the area.

## Phone Repair

A Kansas farm wife called the local phone company to report her telephone failed to ring when her friends called - and that on the few occasions, when it did ring, her dog always moaned right before the phone rang.

The telephone repairman proceeded to the scene, curious to see this psychic dog or senile lady. He climbed a telephone pole, hooked in his test set, and dialed the subscriber's house.

The phone didn't ring right away, but then the dog moaned and the telephone began to ring.

Climbing down from the pole, the telephone repairman found:

1. The dog was tied to the telephone system's ground wire with a steel chain and collar.
2. The wire connection to the ground rod was loose.
3. The dog was receiving 90 volts of signaling current when the number was called.
4. After a couple of jolts, the dog would start moaning and then urinate.
5. The wet ground would complete the circuit, thus causing the phone to ring.

Which demonstrates that some problems CAN be fixed by pissing and moaning.

Thought you'd like to know