

Chair's Toast

...on to the toast!!

Many of you will know the Indigenous fable of the hummingbird and the forest fire. All the larger animals are overwhelmed by the scale of the emergency, yet a tiny hummingbird is flying back and forth from the river to the fire with single drops of water. The other animals question this micro effort, but the little bird replies: **"I'm doing everything I can."**

No citizen movement can flourish without a flock of wee hummingbirds bringing their individual gifts, talents, and varying capacities to the cause. Each little drop adds up!

We can't begin to individually name everyone who has contributed to the forward motion of this cause over the years. But we will **TOAST**, in no particular order, the categories of activities that kept our advocacy...and our board of directors afloat!

Please join me in a wholehearted toast to...

- The supporters who sent donations of all sizes... every single dollar counts
- The petition writers...and the petition sponsors
- The news trawlers and the researchers
- The fact-checkers, the writers, and the editors
- The op-ed writers
- The remarkable politicians at every level and of every party who over the years, listened, advised, worked with us, and for the cause
- The scrutineers of council reports, agendas, and minutes
- The council delegation makers
- The movers of motions...and those who voted to support them
- The local media who found thoughtful ways to report this story, and every new campaign
- The aviators who shared their invaluable expertise
- The bakers and the chefs...we know that, for years, many of you came to the AGMs exclusively for Marty's date squares!
- The crafters and the sewers

- The artists and the mapmakers
- The songwriters and the musicians
- The storytellers
- The archivists
- The event volunteers and *stuff* schleppers
- The hosts for political meetings, rallies, parties, and strategy sessions
- The social media followers and the influencers
- The troll fighters (and sometimes the trolls themselves, who unwittingly helped us refine our game)
- The local businesses who allowed themselves to be showcased as exciting examples of agricultural entrepreneurship
- The graphic designers
- The webmasters
- The photographers, the videographers, and the documentary makers
- The parade marchers and the costume makers
- The sign makers and sign installers
- The booth helpers
- The popcorn makers
- The cheerleaders and the pep-talkers
- The readers of our Update newsletters and those who faithfully shared them (79 issues to date!)
- The teachers and the students who invited us into their classrooms
- The collaborators and the partner organizations
- The Ag Study consultants and the endorsers
- The AG-vocates for food security and food justice
- The conference organizers who gave us a seat at the table
- The growers and the farmers who tell the story of the past, the present and who have helped share the vision for the future!

- The farm-seekers who explained the challenges of finding affordable land and who helped us refine the call to action
- Our youth wing and the children of the Lands who implored the Minister of Youth (who also happened to be Prime Minister Justin Trudeau!) to bring the Pickering airport era to an end. And he did!
- The long-haulers and joyful warriors who never lost hope
- The little board of directors that could...and did...and cannot quit yet!
- And our family members who nourished us, consoled us, celebrated with us, and generally held ample space for all the beautiful chaos from which progress emerges.

So cheers to you, *our* hummingbirds and proud Canadians who fought for what was right, and honest, and inspired for soooooo long!!

[THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!!!! (led by Mary)]

But! We're not done yet! Before we let you go, we need to ask you to keep investing in the work ahead. Just like POP always passed a hat or a bucket, we still have our jar (Hold it up!) and we are asking you to please keep supporting us.

If you live cash-free, you can scan the QR code on the posters around the hall to access our PayPal page.

We're asking everyone here today to contribute \$5 to help keep the work going through the lengthy Parks Canada consultation ahead.

Your donation helps cover things like insurance, meeting-room rentals, website fees, and printing costs. Rest assured, we remain 100% volunteer-driven.

Thank you so much for coming, and congratulations!!!

March 1, 2025