

# from the EDITOR'S DESK



**BY PAUL MAHON**  
Publisher and editor-in-chief,  
Ontario Farmer Publications  
paul.mahon@sunmedia.ca

## Democracy at its messy best

In 2008 the provincial government enacted Bill 150, otherwise known as the OSPCA Act.

The Act was mostly designed to handle the hot button issue of animal protection without any cost or risk to the government. So the OSPCA was given more powers, obligations and responsibility to look after animal welfare in Ontario, which as an afterthought, included all farm animals.

It was never going to be easy, and by 2010, things went too far. A functioning dairy herd in eastern Ontario - the Robinsons - became the flashpoint for all that would appear to be wrong with the Bill and its implementation.

Anyone having issue with the way that the OSPCA acted had recourse to the Animal Care Review Board, which was a quasi-judicial government tribunal that really, was underprepared for what was sent its way.

The conflict on several fronts was extraordinary. It would take a lot of words to describe all that has gone on - court cases, appeals, rallies, campaigns, and attempts at changing the legislation.

But I was reflecting the other day on how much HAS changed, incrementally, since 2010.

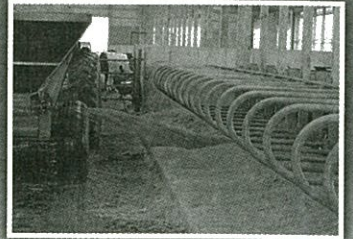
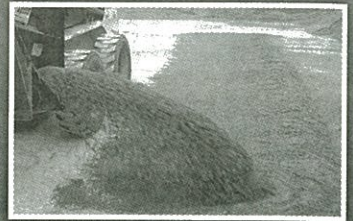
- The Robinson dairy herd is gone.
- The Robinson charges were dropped and a lawsuit by them is before the courts.
- A Charter challenge of the OSPCA Act is before the courts
- Major livestock groups have negotiated memorandums of understanding with the OSPCA, such that investigations into active commercial

herds are done jointly.

- The animal industry has adopted widespread change in its updated codes of practice, most of which had already been underway
- The provincial government has quietly increased funding to the OSPCA and part of that money is ear-marked for better inspector training
- The Animal Care Review Board was quietly moved to the Ministry of the Attorney General. Farm groups had wanted this move.
- The review board chair was not re-appointed
- AgCare, the umbrella farm organization for animal care issues, was renamed and retargeted into Farm & Food Care Ontario.
- The lawyer who spearheaded the pivotal court cases, Kurtis Andrews, while still involved, moved on to a different law firm. He also spends time advocating to farm kids that they consider farm law as a career - a direct offshoot of the cases.
- A new animal welfare organization has set up in Ontario, which might be making the OSPCA a good example of 'better the devil you know'.

The file, when looked back on over several years, tells me that responsible decision-makers on all sides WERE listening to what was going on. It may not have been possible or political for anyone to take radical action, but a series of smaller moves on all sides have made things better. I see it as democracy in messy, slow, sometimes painful action.

### How Do You BED

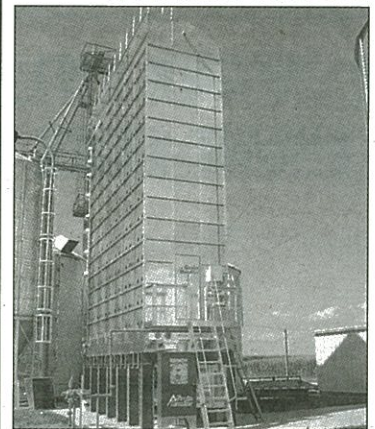


PH 519-84  
FX 519-84

7818 Wellington RD 12

www.ontariof

## Grain Handler



You can have it all w

Serving all of

C&A Distributin



Committed To C



**Call Now**  
- Save \$50  
- Free Shipping  
Until May 31st only  
(limited supply)



### Estrus Detector

IT DETECTS THE BEST MOMENT FOR MATING OR INSEMINATION

**Know PRECISELY When to Breed.**  
**Estrus Detection for the Most Successful Breeding.**