

Board Highlights: December 9-10, 2020

Market Hog Backlog

Since late October, the pork industry experienced slow downs in production at processing plants in Ontario and Quebec, related to both the COVID-19 pandemic and plant breakdowns. Ontario processors continue solving their individual backlogs and reduce carcass weights in advance of the holiday season. Processing capacity will continue to be tight during the remainder of December and at the start of the new year. Ontario Pork appreciates the efforts of provincial leaders, processing and transportation partners and producers who have stepped forward to help the industry navigate the challenging times ahead.

Update on the New Research Facility Project

The Board of Directors was briefed on the progress of the new research facility project, which is in the construction document stage and about to enter the bidding stage. The external design committee, consisting of representatives from Ontario Pork, University of Guelph and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, has been meeting to finalize design concepts within identified research requirements and financial parameters. RFP's for equipment have been issued and the tendering process for the balance of the project is underway. The Board approved additional funding to include viewing areas as they have been a discussion point for Ontario producers since this project was envisioned. Breaking ground on the new facility is currently estimated in spring of 2021. Ontario Pork is working on furthering the financial support ask of the federal government for a new swine research facility.

Association Annual Meetings

Board members discussed options for local pork producers' associations' meetings during the COVID pandemic and assistance that they may need from Ontario Pork. Currently, presidents and secretaries are consulting with their association members to decide between holding a virtual or an in-person meeting. In 2021, elections will be held in zones 3 and 4 for the purpose of voting in delegates and substitutes for three-year terms. Only elected delegates can be nominated to run for a Board position. Ontario Pork staff will be assisting presidents and secretaries of local pork producers' associations in preparing and running meeting and elections. Board members will attend each of these meetings to ensure a comprehensive discussion with producers in their constituencies.

Agriculture and Food Advocacy Project

For roughly two years, an agriculture and food advocacy initiative has been under development through the Presidents' Council. Under the tagline "Grown From Home," the initiative is focused on building public trust among urban and suburban consumers, using food as a point of connection that can link back to farming practices. As a member organization on the Presidents' Council, Ontario Pork has been asked to make a commitment to funding the implementation of this strategy, which has a scalable year-one cost of between \$600,000 and \$1.5 million. The Board voted to support the project proportionately with other agricultural groups, dependent on the level of commitment from other organizations, and to review future commitments on an annual basis.

COVID-19

Ontario Pork's office remains open and services continue to be provided to producers. The office density was decreased by offering staff the option to work from home. The limited number of employees working in the office follow the physical distancing rules. Meetings are held by tele- and videoconferences.