

# PRESS RELEASE | THE 2024 OAAS CONVENTION



Monday, March 4, 2024, by [Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies](#)

## OMAFRA FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT and OAAS CONVENTION ATTENDANCE EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

### For Immediate Release

**March 4, 2024 – STIRLING ONTARIO** – Over 1,000 delegates participated in the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) Convention and Annual Meeting from February 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in Richmond Hill. Past conventions have enabled the OAAS to provide leadership, education, resources and networking for our over 210 agricultural societies, and this convention was no exception. The OAAS celebrates its 178<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

The OAAS was pleased to have Minister Lisa Thompson bring greetings and congratulations at our official opening on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Her announcement of \$836,250 in funding for the new OAAS *Building Community Leaders* program and ONCA workshops was one of the highlights of the Convention. She encouraged agricultural societies to continue to host the *OMAFRA Agri-Food Careers Initiative* at their fairs again this year. We thank Minister Thompson for her continuing support for the OAAS and our member agricultural societies.

Marla Calico, President and CEO of International Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (IAFE) was the Keynote speaker at the official opening with her thought-provoking talk *Life Is Full Of 'Ifs'*. In her tenure with IAFE, Marla has been a frequent and popular presenter and speaker at the OAAS convention. The OAAS Board presented her with the special *OAAS Meritorious Service Award* to recognize her service and friendship to the OAAS and our membership over the years.

The 6 OAAS - *Central Canada Exhibition Association Scholarship* recipients were introduced at the annual meeting. A new *Outstanding Youth Recognition Award* was announced to enable agricultural societies to recognize outstanding youth volunteers in their societies. We were extremely pleased to have over 70 Fair Ambassadors participate in our annual Ambassador Program.

The OAAS Convention offered delegates the choice of 5 pre-convention workshops, over 40 educational seminars and roundtables, family showcases, and 3 evenings of entertainment showcases. Over 70 businesses and organizations participated in the vendor and ag-awareness tradeshow.

The annual meeting was held Saturday afternoon with over 450 people in attendance. The OAAS was pleased to have been joined by Senator Rob Black, bringing greetings, congratulations, and pledging his continued support to the OAAS and their member agricultural societies.

The 2024 OAAS Executive are Glen Syme, President; Heather Owens, 1st Vice President; Grace Pearson, 2nd Vice President; and Liz O'Gorman-Smit, Past-President.

For more information on the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) and our Ontario agricultural societies and their fairs, visit [www.ontarioagsocieties.com](http://www.ontarioagsocieties.com)

Contact:  
Vince Brennan, OAAS Executive Director  
P: 613-395-2465  
E: [vince@oaasfairs.com](mailto:vince@oaasfairs.com)