

# Saugeen River CSA

## June 2018 Newsletter



Hello everyone,

This is going to be quick, since it is now in the heat of planting season, but some news is necessary.

Many of you already know, the farm's lead horse, Molly, passed away of a stroke on Victoria Day. She was 22 and had a great life, she was however still a needed work mate for tasks on the farm. It has made it necessary to search for and purchase a new horse. This is of course happening at the busiest time of year for the farm, so everything needs to be done fast while also trying to get beds prepared and plant...!

The farm is not in the greatest financial situation, and some members have approached me about helping to fundraise for the purchase of the new horse. The horse with delivery is going to cost around \$1,600.

This leads me to want to discuss the role of the Capital Contribution as part of the share price.

But before I do that, I need to disclose some of the farm's financial records for the past couple of years. I had prepared the 2017 cash flow summary during the winter, but did not post it. It is up now. I will admit, the reason I didn't post it is that this past year placed me in an existential funk in terms of the future of the farm. The 2017 season saw the lowest CSA membership numbers since starting in 1997. Last year's growing season was also one of the most difficult weather-wise I have experienced in the last 20 years, on top of that I had a perfect storm of apprentice mishaps and ended up with no full time help here for the season.

As the cashflow summary states, there was significant income loss so that after having to work harder than other years, my personal farming income for 2017 was \$66.78. Yep, that's for the whole year! I would not be able to survive on this, obviously, without the income from my winter teaching. The winter shares sold quite well, and this season there is already more members, so maybe last year was a fluke year... so I am optimistic, however...

I never wanted to farm for the money, but I just cannot continue the way things have gone. I have already accepted taking on an additional course to teach next winter. I am trying to explore other income sources, but need to change more of the farm to free myself up to even pursue anything else.

This coming season will carry on as in the past, however the biggest change I will be making for the 2019 season is that I will no longer be coming to the Owen Sound Market. This is a very hard decision, especially since there are a number of members/friends who have been getting vegetables from me there for many years. There could still be a contingent who takes turns coming to the farm next year (as happens with the winter shares) but I need to redirect energy. We will be exploring a roadside market next year on Friday afternoons to take advantage of the fact that we are right on the highway. I will still be providing CSA shares for people who pick-up at the farm on Tuesdays.

I'm divulging this before talking about the Capital Contribution, since this is usually thought of as looking to the future, and I felt I could not ask Owen Sound members to contribute more knowing that I was not going to be there next year (I will not refuse a contribution, but I wanted it to be in full knowledge of the farm's intention).

The Capital Contribution is discussed on the farm's CSA Economics webpage. A more detailed description can also be found in the January 2015 newsletter. You will notice on the Economics page I wrote in 2015, laying out 3 year projection of Capital needs of the farm, I was thinking of repairing a tractor in 2016. Once I looked into the details of this, it turned out that fixing the old tractor didn't make sense, as it would be a very expensive major repair on a very old tractor... As I looked into purchasing another one I found prices had gone so high that I would have been the owner of another used tractor in probably the same shape as my old one for more than \$15,000. When I found the very good used tractor for \$22,000, I went ahead and jumped on it since I was approved for the loan. I am still paying around \$350/mo. towards that loan. So any Capital contribution from 2016 and 2017 has been going towards this purchase/loan payment. You will also notice on that Capital projection that I estimated that I would need a younger team of horses. This has now come up to the front of the farm's needs.

As of today, the Capital Contributions from members for the 2018 season sits at \$760. There are 41 members currently signed up for the main season share. If 32 people were able to contribute an additional \$50, that would cover the cost of the horse and delivery.

There are many other details about this whole concept and situation, but I have to get back out and keep planting, so if anyone has any questions, please feel free to email me...

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Thank you so much, Cory