



NEWS RELEASE

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Four Industry Leaders to be inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame

Guelph, February 4, 2020 - In 2020, four agricultural leaders, whose influences range from agricultural banking and crop science to farm equipment technology and advancing the role of women in agriculture will be inducted into Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame. The late John Curtis, Dianne Harkin, (William) Brian Little and the late (William) Murray Mills have all been selected by the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association as worthy candidates based on their life-long legacies to Ontario's agriculture.

The four will be recognized at the Hall of Fame's annual induction ceremony on June 14 at Country Heritage Park in Milton, bringing the number of inductees in the gallery to 233.

To qualify for this prestigious recognition, inductees must have demonstrated visionary leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the advancement of agriculture in Ontario.

"At the December meeting, our Board of Directors spent significant time discussing the merits of each applicant," said John Core, President of the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association. "The four inductees for the coming year were chosen from many worthy candidates, each of whom had made significant impacts to Ontario agriculture. While all were worthy of their nominations, these four were considered the most advanced in terms of their lasting contributions to this industry."

Inductees for 2020 and their nominators include:

John Davis Curtis (1935-2019)

John Curtis's contributions to agriculture were in the areas of education, research and marketing. His most significant legacy was his work in establishing corn as a major field crop in Eastern Ontario. He also led the way in testing early maturing corn hybrids and early soybeans – both of which became mainstay crops in the area. He was Principal of the Kemptville College of Agriculture Technology, helping to develop the college as a major agriculture and food centre that educated thousands of graduates. Curtis was a founding director of SeCan which became Canada's largest supplier of certified seed.

John Curtis was nominated by inductee Ken Knox, Kemptville College Alumni and Kemptville College Foundation.

Dianne Margaret Harkin (1934 -)

Dianne Harkin's contributions to provincial and Canadian agriculture cover three broad areas including the official recognition of the contributions of women to Ontario agriculture; the systemic acknowledgement of the importance of sustainable agricultural systems and the role of agriculture extension in the promotion of sustainability and the growing awareness by governments and consumers to the importance of Ontario's agriculture and food sector.

Harkin established the organization "Women for the Survival of Agriculture" in 1975 which saw the amending of the Canadian Income Tax Act and the Canada Pension Plan to enable farm women to claim a salary for their work on-farm. Through the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, she led the organizing of the first National AgriFood Week (which became Ontario Agriculture Week in 1998). She was also a well-known media commentator on agricultural issues.

Dianne Harkin was nominated by Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

(William) Brian Little (1946 -)

Brian Little has committed decades to serving the agricultural industry and has served in three main areas including the promotion of agricultural education, agriculture finance and major fundraising for the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), University of Guelph, 4-H and other agricultural organizations.

He served on the OAC Alumni Foundation for more than 20 years and was key to the 2012 and 2017 "Planning for Tomorrow" studies which documented the gap between the supply of graduates from agriculture programs and the demand. Since the studies were instigated, enrolment in OAC programs has grown by 50% and will help ensure that the agri-food sector has enough human resources to drive growth and development. This inductee also served in the RBC's agriculture division for 33 years and has played leadership roles in the Canadian 4-H Council, Canadian 4-H Foundation and Ontario 4-H Foundation.

Brian Little was nominated by inductee Bruce Christie, Ontario Agricultural College, Ontario 4-H Foundation and RBC Royal Bank of Canada.

(William) Murray Mills (1931 – 2018)

Murray Mills' legacy to agriculture around the world was in the ongoing development of harvester combines. At a time when farmers were managing ever-increasing acreages of corn, soybeans and grains, he helped to develop the rotary threshing and grain separation design with high speed cutting systems and stripper heads. This enabled growers to combine larger acreages efficiently and with less loss. He also designed self-propelled combines and completely re-designed operator cabs with electronic controls, better lighting and improved operator safety. Today, the Waterford Heritage and Agriculture Museum has established an archive in his name which houses drawings, diagrams, manuals and pictures of the many agricultural implements and combines which he had a hand in designing.

With his mechanical knowledge and ability, he leaves a legacy without which the field crop sector could not have improved and expanded as it continues to do.

Murray Mills was nominated by OAC 1955 and inductee Art Bolton.

The 2020 induction ceremony will take place on Sunday, June 14, 2020 at Country Heritage Park in Milton. Details on how to purchase tickets are available on the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame's website at www.oahf.on.ca

It is the mission of the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association to acknowledge, record, and preserve the contributions made by leaders to the growth and development of Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry. To date, 229 worthy candidates have been inducted into the Hall of Fame gallery. The gallery is located at 100 Stone Road West, Guelph.

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