

# Our Speakers

## **Blois, Kody**

Born and raised in Kings–Hants, Kody grew up in a working-class household. The first member of his family to attend university, Kody completed degrees in commerce, law and public administration, which sparked his interest in serving his community. Before entering politics, Kody was heavily involved in the community through volunteering with non-profit organizations, coaching amateur sport, and working as a lawyer with McInnes Cooper. Since being elected in 2019, Kody has been a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and was elected committee chair by his peers after being re-elected in 2021. In his first term as Member of Parliament for Kings-Hants, Kody served as chair of the National Liberal Rural Caucus. Through these roles, Kody has met hundreds in the agriculture and agri-food sector, including farmers and producers from across the country, to better understand the issues and opportunities in the industry. Kody now serves as chair of the Liberal Atlantic Caucus, representing the region at the National Caucus table.

## **Brown, Ben**

Ben Brown is a para-canoe athlete who has been in the sport for over two years after making the switch from a 12-year career in para-athletics. Over 17 years ago Ben was training for an ATV motocross race where he unfortunately made a miscalculation while warming up which resulted in a spinal cord injury. After a week Ben realized he will never walk again. Motivated he wanted to show the world that just because he uses a wheelchair, he is the only person who can decide what he is capable of doing. Please welcome Ben as he shares his story of Get After It.

## **D'Entremont, Gerard**

Gerard d'Entremont is the community innovation lead for the Nova Scotia Community College Kingstec and Annapolis Valley campuses. With 26 years of experience, he links client needs with customized training-based solutions, helping organizations increase organizational effectiveness. He is currently a doctoral candidate in the Community College Leadership Program at Old Dominion University located in Virginia. His research interests are focused on the development of micro-credential programs. He has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics, a Bachelor of Education degree from Mount Allison University, and a Master of Education degree in educational administration from the University of New Brunswick.

## **Fageria, Manphool**

Born and raised on a family farm business in India, Manphool completed his undergraduate, masters, and PhD in sustainable crop production and has over 25 years of experience as an agronomist. He is the manager of McCain's Farm of the Future located in Florenceville-Bristol, N.B. At the farm regenerative agricultural practices and innovative technologies are tested to show their economic viability and regional scalability.

## **Gillis-Madden, Rosalie**

Rosalie started working in knowledge mobilization with the University of Vermont Extension in 2009, working predominantly with dairy systems and field crops. Joining Perennia Food and Agriculture as Nova Scotia's vegetable specialist in 2015, Rosalie became the On-Farm Climate Action Fund Technical Project Manager in 2022, supporting farmers and agronomists in NS and NL.

in sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gases through improved nitrogen management, cover cropping, and rotational grazing. Joining the Farmers for Climate Solutions team in August 2023, Rosalie strives to support farmers and the agriculture industry in being environmentally and economically sustainable. She is passionate about soil health and supporting informed decision-making to enable the adoption of beneficial management practices that are suitable to each farm and business model.

### **Keddy, Philip**

Philip was born and raised on his family farm, Charles Keddy Farms Ltd., in Lakeville, Nova Scotia. In 2005, he graduated from the former NS Agricultural College with an agriculture business diploma. With the urge to learn more, he received an agriculture technologist diploma in plant science in 2007. Philip is also a graduate of the Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM) program. He has been actively involved through the years on boards such as Farm Management Canada, Nova Scotia Young Farmers; he is a current board member of the Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada, and past president of Horticulture Nova Scotia. Today, Phil manages the farm where the primary crops include inspected nursery plants, strawberries and raspberries, as well as other types of bare root nursery crops. In 2006, the farm diversified into sweet potato production and is now the largest sweet potato producer east of Ontario.

### **Lewis, Sue**

Sue is the director of market development at the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA). She joined CPMA in 2012; under her leadership is the market development team responsible for membership, annual convention and tradeshow, corporate networking, communications and consumer outreach programs including Half Your Plate and the Freggie™ children's program. Sue represents CPMA on the International Alliance for the Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables.



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**Lohr, The Honourable John**

Minister Lohr was first elected in 2013, re-elected in 2017 and again in August 2021 when the PC party formed a majority government in Nova Scotia. He was sworn in as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, he is responsible for Military Relations, the Emergency Management Organization, and the Office of the Fire Marshal. In addition to his widespread community, sport, church and agriculture involvement, Minister Lohr has co-owned and operated multiple businesses with his wife, Heather. The couple live in Port Williams and have three grown sons and three grandchildren of whom they are very proud.

**MacLean, Dustin**

Dustin has been the horticulturalist and field plant pathologist with Perennia Food and Agriculture since February 2022. Previous to this, he was the provincial plant pathologist with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture. Dustin completed his BSc (Agr) in 2013 from Dalhousie University in plant science where he received the University Medal in Plant Science and his MSc in 2016 at the University of Saskatchewan, also in plant science. Dustin has published 13 peer reviewed journal articles on the topics of plant pathology and plant science and has received a number of prestigious scholarships and awards over the years including an NSERC PGSD, NSERC USRA, Western Grains Research Endowment Scholarship and a MITACS Accelerate placement.

**Maguire, Christian**

Christian has many years' experience working in both the private and public sectors and has been with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency since 2015. His various roles with the agency include working as an industry training consultant covering all trades along the South Shore, to his current role as a senior industry consultant focusing on the industrial manufacturing and service sectors. His role oversees different aspects of industry engagement, including working with industry representatives towards the designation of new trades and helping partners to build capacity. Christian currently lives outside Mahone Bay with his wonderful wife and daughter. The son of a tradesperson, Christian grew up on a hobby farm and has an appreciation for the hard work that people do in the agriculture sector.

**McCavour, Caitlin**

Caitlin has a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture from Dalhousie University. She completed her Master of Science at Dalhousie University in earth and environmental science. Caitlin has been the soil specialist at Perennia Food and Agriculture for two and a half years working with producers around the province on soil-related issues. Before working at Perennia, she performed research with Christmas trees, wetland restoration, forest site management, and river ecology throughout Nova Scotia, with soil science being her focus on these projects. Caitlin is passionate about soil and aims to help improve soil health in agriculture throughout the province.

**Mikkelsen, Rob**

Dr. Rob Mikkelsen serves as the director of agronomy for Yara North America. He has many years of experience in soil science and plant nutrition, having worked as a researcher for the U.S. government, a professor of soil science in the U.S., vice president of the non-profit International Plant Nutrition Institute, and director of the African Plant Nutrition Institute. Rob has worked with many global cropping systems but is especially proud to be part of the development of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship concept that has been adopted around the world.

**Morcom, Tim**

Tim Morcom is the vegetable specialist with Perennia. He holds a BSc in plant science and carried out MSc work on nutrient-enriched biochar as an organic slow-release fertilizer. The focus of this work was to repurpose industry waste streams into effective farm inputs. Prior to working for Perennia, Tim worked at Dalhousie in a number of capacities from horticulture to cereal and oilseed research. During this time, he also maintained a successful market garden growing vegetables, small fruits, and cut flowers for a CSA and local market. Tim is a professional agrologist with passions for innovative farming techniques, biointensive production, and soil health.

**Nelson, Peter**

Peter is a graduate of NSAC. He has been with FCC for 13 years and is the senior district director of the Atlantic region. He has been a specialized agricultural lender in all four Atlantic provinces over his career with FCC, and previously with RBC in Sussex, NB where he lived for six years. He currently lives in Hubbards, NS. While he is responsible for FCC's business in all of Atlantic Canada, Kentville is his home office.

**O'Kane, Jamie**

Jamie O'Kane grew up in New Brunswick and currently resides on the North Shore. He graduated from Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture in 2015 with a diploma in business management. He is also one of the first certified farm technicians in Nova Scotia. Jamie has a passion for agriculture in the province and loves to talk farming. He currently operates a small mixed-produce operation and is interested in expanding into berry production. Jamie has a personal interest in farm safety and is eager to work with farmers and their staff on keeping everyone safe.

**Peres, Natalia**

Dr. Natalia Peres is a professor of plant pathology at the University of Florida Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC). She has an active applied research and extension program focused primarily on the development of integrated management approaches to manage fungal diseases of strawberry and to reduce losses to strawberry growers in Florida, but recommendations from her program extend across many regions, including strawberry nurseries in other states and worldwide. She has developed the widely adopted web-based Strawberry Advisory System, which provides recommendations for strawberry growers on the need for fungicide applications based on weather conditions and a rapid DNA test for diagnosis of strawberry diseases.

**Peill, Matthew**

Matthew Peill currently works at Perennia as its molecular biologist, primarily performing molecular testing for plant pathogens. Matthew has a Bachelor of Science in biology from St. Francis Xavier University (2016), and his Masters of Science in biology at Acadia University (2021). His master's work focused on strawberry aphids and their role as the primary vector of strawberry decline disease associated viruses. Previously, he was a horticulture specialist with Perennia and worked with small fruit and vegetables producers throughout Nova Scotia addressing production issues. Recently, he has been working on the provincial nematode survey after receiving nematode identification training in British Columbia.

**Plaskett, Talia**

Talia's role at Perennia provides support for protected crop production across the province. Her extension activities include responding to farm inquiries, contributing to commodity blogs, fact sheets, and YouTube channels, as well as organizing and hosting workshops, tours, and webinars. After graduating from the University of Guelph in 2015, Talia spent five years working at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, where she was able to gain experience in plant pathology, breeding and production. She joined the Agri-Services team in June 2020 and has spent the last few years understanding the scope of protected production here in Nova Scotia. Talia is excited to continue to strengthen the resource bank, knowledgebase and community surrounding protected production across the province.

**Raymond-Gardner, Carrie**

From 2007 to the present, Carrie has held the position of program coordinator with Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S.). From 2003-2006, she was responsible for program operations. She oversees all facets of the daily operations at F.A.R.M.S. including worker application processing and changes, employer/worker issues and works closely with the government agents involved. Carrie's background includes a degree in office administration and software support specialization. F.A.R.M.S. is non-profit, federally incorporated in 1987 to facilitate and coordinate the requests for foreign seasonal agricultural workers. This program is a trilateral international agreement between Canada, Caribbean & Mexico (government & worker representatives) and Canada farmers.

**Ritz, Cheryl**

As the HNS climate change adaptation coordinator, Cheryl is a dedicated professional specializing in coordinating climate information, facilitating knowledge sharing, and managing projects to aid farmers in strategic decision-making for adaptive practices. She ardently advocates for collaboration, recognizing cross-sectoral efforts as pivotal for effective adaptation. Raised on a horticulture farm in Manitoba, Cheryl possesses practical insights into vegetable and fruit production from her family's business. Her commitment to environmental stewardship led her to earn a renewable resource management diploma and a BSc in environmental sciences. Additionally, Cheryl brings expertise in food safety on farms through consulting and auditing roles, underscoring her holistic approach to supporting sustainable and resilient agricultural practices.

**Roy, Matthew**

Matthew has been farming for 28 years and holds a B.A. in ecological agriculture from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with an added credential in sustainable food and farming from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture. He also holds a certificate in permaculture design



through Colby Sawyer College. Matthew serves as president of the Yarmouth/Shelburne County Federation of Agriculture and serves on the boards of multiple organizations, including the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and Organics Nova Scotia. He is a member of the first cohort of Nova Scotia journeymen to provide students with apprenticeship opportunities in the province's new farm technician program. An avid student of climate science since the 1990s, Matthew advocates for agricultural preparedness to mitigate the impact of extreme weather events.

### **Sangster, Amy**

Amy is the manager of animal and crop services with the NS Department of Agriculture. She works with the plant and animal lab, which analyzes soil, tissue, soil amendments, water and feeds. Her responsibilities also include working with the pest and regulation group, which attends to various acts and regulations including the Bee Industry Act, the Dairy Act, and the Weed Control Act. Amy has over 25 years' experience working in the agricultural industry and is grateful for the years spent doing her small part in talking care of the ground that sustains us.

### **Silver, Danny**

Danny is a professor in and former director of the Jodrey School of Computer Science, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS. He is the founder and former director of the Acadia Institute for Data Analytics and leads the Lifelong Machine Learning and Reasoning research group at Acadia. He completed a Ph.D. in computer science from the University of Western Ontario in 2000. Danny's research focuses on advanced methods of machine learning and their application in data analytics, intelligent agents and adaptive systems. He has authored over 75 refereed journal or conference papers, 40 industry project reports and delivered associated talks in Canada, USA, Mexico, Europe and Asia. From 2007-09, he was the president of the Canadian AI Association (CAIAC), and was past-president until 2013. In June 2016, he received the CAIAC Distinguished Service Award and was made a CAIAC Fellow. In 2011 he received the Science Champion Award from the Nova Scotia Discovery Center for his work on youth robotics and the advancement of STEM education. And from 2014 to 2018 he was a honorary colonel in the RCAF attached to 415 Squadron of 14 Wing Greenwood, in Nova Scotia.

### **Stolberg, Rachael**

With over a decade of experience in the field of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), and currently leading national product sustainability at Sobeys Inc., Rachael's focus is on collaboration with suppliers, and increasing the availability of environmentally responsible products for Canadian consumers. Working with all players across the supply chain to collaboratively address the threats of climate change within the Canadian food sector, Rachael has a track record of driving positive change and a passion for creating a more sustainable future.

### **Watson Libsack, Emily**

Vice president of marketing at J.C. Watson Companies, Emily's deep connection to generational agricultural roots brings a blend of tradition and innovation to corporate leadership within her companies; she manages a lean sales & marketing team and oversees forecasting, production, and distribution. As a vital member of the Watson family, she embraces her deeply rooted connection to her 100-year agricultural legacy, applying a unique blend of tradition and innovation from her corporate roles as a North America crop sales manager for Bayer Crop Science. Emily excelled in introducing new varieties, fostering key customer relationships, and drawing inspiration from her family's agricultural roots, and in managing teams across Canada, the United States, Mexico, and

Central America. Today, Emily instills a sense of tradition and commitment to quality while simultaneously driving innovation into her team of sales, marketing, and agricultural specialists at J.C. Watson. Emily's husband Colbie has been the crop manager for Watson Agriculture for nearly 15 years and together have two daughters Harper (7) and Quinnley (4).

**Wentzell, Jeff**

Jeff transitioned from the role of senior agricultural representative in the western region to Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) coordinator. In this role, he monitors and evaluates program delivery and provides extension support to the industry on the adoption of beneficial management practices. RALP helps improve the environmental resiliency of agricultural landscapes by accelerating the adoption of on-farm land use and management practices that maximize benefits for the environment and society (<https://novascotia.ca/programs/resilient-agricultural-landscape/>).

Jeff graduated from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in 1989 with a B.Sc.(Agri.) in plant science and from the Centre for Geographic Sciences, NSCC Lawrencetown, in 2000, studying geographic information systems and business geographics. Jeff is located in the regional office at the Kentville Agricultural Centre.

