

Something to be proud of

Andrew McClelland, Advocate Managing Editor

For the *Quebec Farmers' Advocate*, the year 2014 was dedicated to growth, stability and dedication to our standard of excellence. The paper has done this thanks to increased ad sales, having better content and setting a high bar for agricultural journalism in Quebec.

Ad sales up!

Advertising is perhaps the single most important fact about the *Advocate*. Our ads pay our bills and allow the newspaper to stay afloat. Thanks to a closer working relationship with *La Terre de chez nous* and a great effort on the part of our sales team, ad revenue was \$87,122 in 2014, compared with \$85,168 last year.

This is a great achievement, particularly when put into perspective. In 2011, the *Advocate's* ad revenue figure was \$71,378; in 2010, ad sales reached \$66,232. **In other words, the Advocate's ad sales have grown by nearly \$21,000 in five short years.** That cannot be said for most print publications in these tough times. We deserve a pat on the back.

Subscribers and members

Since the *Advocate* is the main method for the QFA to communicate with its members, all QFA members are, in a sense, subscribers to the newspaper. As of October, we have 523 "paid in full" member/subscribers.

As you know, the *Advocate* is also sent to UPA members who have checked off "English" as their preferred language of communication with the union. This means that 880 English-speaking producers in Quebec receive the *Advocate* without paying a QFA membership. However, the fact that these non-members read the *Advocate* boosts the prices we can charge for our ads, as advertisers see that great numbers of Quebec farmers continue to read our publication.

Finally, we also have 40 subscribers who are not QFA members. Institutions, such as MAPAQ, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, or schools like the *Institut de technologie agroalimentaire* in La Pocatière, know that the *Advocate* is a valuable resource and have ordered subscriptions.

A new look!

The most notable change to the *Advocate* in 2014 was undoubtedly its new look. **We started the year off by giving the paper a makeover:** our team changed some of the fonts that we use, made the overall appearance more compact and modern, and changed the design of the banners on all our interior pages. However, we didn't touch our distinctive "*Quebec Farmers' Advocate*" masthead on the cover. We wanted to liven the look of the paper up a little, without tampering with a great product.

Throughout the year, we received plenty of positive comments about the change—and exactly zero complaints.

We also added a gifted **new columnist** to the paper, arborist Leilak Anderson. An entrepreneur who runs his own eco-friendly tree-care service in the Outaouais, Leilak has published six articles so far this year, on topics ranging from chainsaw safety to harvesting pest-infested trees. We hope you like it.

We've also started running **more articles on farm safety**. Our agreement with Heritage Canada calls on the QFA to publish five articles on the topic per year, but we run these stories because statistics reveal that Canada still has a long way to go in accident prevention on the farm. So far in 2014, we have published seven feature articles on farm safety—one for every month except March and October. Most of these are 700- to 900-word articles where producers who have suffered an on-farm injury share their stories of recovery.

Awards

Once again, the *Advocate* won top honours in the category of “Best Agricultural Story” at the Quebec Community Newspapers Association (QCNA) awards. An article I wrote entitled “Minister wants to fight land-grabbing in Quebec” beat out 22 other publications to win first prize in the category. This marks the third time I've won first prize in the category in 10 years, and the fourth time the *Advocate* has won (that fourth first placing was achieved by none other than our executive director, Ivan Hale).

For a small, specialized paper, the *Advocate's* showing at the QCNA awards is unparalleled: **in the past 10 years, we've won 16 awards**, including two in the “Best Column Writing” category (thanks to our writers Paul Meldrum and Cynthia Gunn), one in “Best Overall Newspaper (Specialities)”, and 12 in the “Best Agricultural Story” category.

Put plainly, the *Advocate* is something to be proud of.