

## SALUTE TO FARMERS

The spring rush has Jakob focused on all things agronomy, so I've taken the reins on this month's Newsletter. I'm a bit of a history buff, and somewhat of a traditionalist, and since "Farmers' Day" is celebrated in June, I got to thinking, what's the history behind this day?

Farmers' Day is a long standing tradition in Alberta, dating back to the early 1900's. Of course at that time, agriculture was the foundation of Alberta's economy, and the primary industry in the province. The event was formally adopted by the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) in 1918, when they encouraged communities across the province to celebrate each year. At the time the UFA was a lobby group and later became a political party in Alberta.

As the event gained popularity throughout the province, lobbying took place around 1945 to have the government of Alberta grant provincial recognition of a fixed date to be observed as "Farmers' Day" where suitable functions would be arranged throughout the Province designed to recognize the importance of farming and the agricultural industry.

Finally in 1951, the provincial government under Premier Ernest Manning declared the second Friday in June to be Farmers Day as well as a province-wide school holiday.

THE ALBERTA GAZETTE, MAY 31, 1951

### THE SCHOOL ACT

#### DATE SET FOR FARMERS' HOLIDAY

Edmonton, Monday, May 14, 1951.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, by and with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to order (pursuant to the provisions of subsection (4) of section 152 of The School Act), that Friday, June 8th, 1951, be and is hereby declared a school holiday, the said day to be observed as Farmers' Holiday.

R. A. ANDISON,

Clerk of the Executive Council.

(O.C. 677-51)

735

Alberta Gazette Volume 47 1951

<http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/law/page.aspx?id=3064377>

Communities, all over the province held celebrations to show gratitude and acknowledge the important contributions made by farmers. From pancake breakfasts, to slo-pitch tournaments, to parades, the people of Alberta came together for some fun, and a short break after the demands of seeding had subsided.

In 1975 the school act was amended and the school holiday was no longer mandated by the provincial government. Individual school boards were now given the option to



Herb Hennig Petroleum Ltd. parade float, Stony Plain, 1966. Elmer Ray stands in the middle along with siblings and children from the community.

observe Farmers' Day as a holiday or not (and according to my research this option still stands).

While, it is no longer recognized as a school holiday, some communities in Alberta continue to celebrate Farmers' Day. Efforts have been made by various organizations to revive the day in communities where it has been forgotten. In an era of urbanization and convenience, and with all the distractions of modern life, it's easy to forget where our food comes from. Here at Ray Agro, we will continue to set aside this day to be mindful of the efforts required to bring food to our table, and to recognize the farmers behind it all.



Ray Agro participates in Farmers' Day parade in recent years

