



**MINUTES AND HIGHLIGHTS - International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI)  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Video Conference, December 4, 2020**

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**IMSI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES - ZOOM MEETING DECEMBER 4, 2020, 09:00 TO 11:00**

PRESENT **Jim Adamski** - CDL Wisconsin, Roth Sugarbush, **Fred Ahrens**, *Ohio Maple Producers*, **Steve Andersen** – *Andersen's Maple Syrup*, **Brian Bainborough** – OMSPA, **Bruce Bascom**, *Bascom Maple Farms*, **Nicolas Bell** – LB Maple Treat, **Nadine Beloin**, Maple Industry Officer, Agriculture Agri-Food Canada, **Mark Bigelow** – Industry Consultant, **Nathan Bissel** – Bissell Maple Farm, **Ray Bonenberg** - *IMSI Past President and Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association*, **Roger Brown**, Slopeside Syrup, **David Campbell** - *IMSI Treasurer*, **Mark Cannella** – *University of Vermont Extension*, **Jacques Couture** - *Couture's Maple Shop*, **Peter Christopher** – *Maple Grove/B&G Foods – Vermont*, **Geneviève Clermont** – *Centre Acer – Quebec*, **Daniel Dufour** - *Conseil de l'industrie de l'érable*, **Martin Désilets** - *Dominion & Grimm*;; **Dale Forrester** – *Michigan Maple Syrup Association*, **Pamela Green** – *President, IMSI*, **John Goldberg** – *The Normandy Group*, **Mark Harran** - *IMSI Past President & Connecticut Maple Syrup Producers*, **Allison Hope** – *Vermont Maple Sugar Maker's Association*, **Katharine Hopkins** - *Maple Consultant*, **Mark Isselhardt** - *University of Vermont*; **Gregory Jelliff** - *Pennsylvania Maple Syrup Producers Council*, **David Lalanne** - *CDL*; **Jean Lamontagne** - *IMSI Executive Director*, **Jason Lilley** - *University of Maine Extension*, **Betty Anne Lockhart** – *Maple Producer and Writer*, **David Marvin** – *Butternut Mountain Farm – Vermont*, **Emma Marvin**, *Butternut Mountain Farm – Vermont*, **Lyle Merrifield** - *Maine MSPA* , **Lyle Merle** - *New York State MSPA*, **Dave Kemp** – *New Hampshire Maple Producer's Association*, **Emma Marvin** - *Butternut Mountain Farm*; **Richard Norman** - *Norman's Sugar House*, **Les Ober** - *Ohio State University Extension*, **Mary Jeanne Packer**; *Mapleland Farms*, **Martin Pelletier** – *Centre ACER*; **Mary Jeanne Packer** - *IMSI Bookkeeper*, **Louise Poitras** - *Association acéricole du Nouveau-Brunswick - New Brunswick Maple Syrup Association*, **Stu Peterson** – *Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association*, **Mike Rechlin** - *Future Generations University*, **Andy Schmidt** – *Winsor Hill Sugar House*, **Steve Selby** - *AEC Specialty Products*, **Daryl Sheets** - *Pennsylvania Maple Producers Council*, **Helen Thomas** – *New York State Maple Producers*, **Jeff Smith** – *Leader Evaporator – Vermont*, **François Sylvestre** – *Citadelle coopérative de producteurs de sirop d'érable*, **Simon Trépanier** - *Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec (PPAQ) – Quebec*, **Abby van den Berg**, *University of Vermont*, **Adam Wild** - *Cornell University*, **Mathew Wilkinson** - *Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut (MSPAC)*, **Tom Zaffis** – *1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President IMSI & Turkey Hill Sugarbush*.

REGRETS – **Philippe Breton** – *Lapierre Equipment - Les Équipements Lapierre*, **Dave Chapeskie** - *IMSI consultant*, **David Kemp** – *New Hampshire Maple Syrup Association – New Hampshire*, **Mike Farrell** – *The Forest Farmers*, **John Garwood**, *Maple Consultant, Consumer Research*, **Mike Girard** – *Massachusetts, Pa Maple Producers Council*, **Daryl Sheets**, *Pennsylvania Maple Syrup Producers Council*, **Eric Sorken** – *Runamok Maple*, **Mathew Wilkinson** - *Connecticut Maple Syrup Producers*



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IMSI meeting, 0900hrs – 1100hrs, December 4th, 2020.

CALL TO ORDER: A video conference board meeting of the International Maple Syrup Institute was held on December 4th, 2020. The meeting convened at 0900 by President Pam Green. A roll call was carried out.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Zoom IMSI Board Meeting, September 25th, 2020. ***A motion to approve minutes by Mark Harran seconded by Ray Bonenberg carried.***

TREASURER’S REPORT – ***A motion to approve the treasurer’s report by Daniel Dufour was seconded by Mark Harran***

OPEN ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION - ***Pam Green*** opened meeting to a discussion. Pam mentioned that her efforts to sell online are successful and making up in a large part for lost sales. ***Lyle Merle*** mentioned that for his farm’s experience in western New York, value added product sales are down significantly however sales to locals and online are up. Lyle sees more demand for bulk purchases coming from small producer neighbors because some have used up their own crop. ***David Marvin*** of Butternut Mountain Farm mentioned that demand from their retail customers in were strong, slowed down a bit in the warm summer but saw an uptick again with colder weather – a normal pattern. Sees future continuing strong with more people working/staying at home. ***Nicolas Bell*** of Maple Treat mentioned volume has been up 26% in retail sector however the tourist sector is dead. Pandemic sales are stabilizing now at 10-15% over pre-pandemic and predicts this level will persist. Nicolas mentioned that equipment and packaging supplies are stretched, and prices have increased for items like containers, labels, bottles, caps, etc. ***Peter Christopher*** of B&G Foods agrees with previous comments about retail segment and agrees future in 2021 will stay strong. Peter did wonder whether those financially worsened by the economic fallout will reduce their maple purchases and affect overall sales. ***Simon Trépanier*** of the PPAQ mentioned that sales are significantly higher than last year. For example, March 2019 to February 2020 sales are 127 million lbs while the same period this year is already at 138 million with 3 months to go. This far exceeds previous trends, which said sales increases are tied to economy expansion. Exports are going very well. Simon agreed with previous speakers that consumer habits are changing in maple syrup’s favour. ***Francois Sylvestre*** of Citadel sees same trends also. In his previous role at a cookie manufacturer, more luxurious items with chocolate and other “indulgent” ingredients were up while snacks people bought to take to work such as breakfast bars were way down. ***Daniel Dufour*** of the CIE mentioned that yes sales up, but competition is strong, keeping margins tight and grocery chains are squeezing manufacturers and packaging materials are evermore costly. ***Alison Hope*** of the Vermont Maple Sugar Maker’s Association mentioned that – Vt sales as Pam says are strong at the individual retail producer, especially online sales. They are trying to position maple as a pantry staple and get folks to use as a natural sugar and substitute other sugars. ***Allison*** mentioned that the Vermont virtual



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conference starts Sunday, and they have very good registration counts so far. **Mark Isselhardt** of the University of Vermont Extension noted that the sessions will be recorded for future viewing. **Helen Thomas** of the New York State Maple Producers entertained everyone with a defective microphone that altered her voice to sound like squeaky mouse. Helen sees same individual producer results in NY as Vt, but sales seem especially strong this fall, those partnering with Christmas tree growers are seeing record sales. Ray Bonenberg of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association sees larger percentage of Ontario producers selling their crop bulk now.

IMSI ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS – Executive Director Jean Lamontagne presented an annual review of the IMSI activities by email, prior to the meeting.

SOI UPDATE – The FDA petition was reviewed and is now ready for a vote. The executive director will explain the revisions and ask for a vote in the coming weeks.

NUTRITION, ADDED SUGARS, SERVING SIZE REVIEW – **Jean Lamontagne** presented a Power Point exposé of the current trends in added sugar consumer attitudes and consumption and government public health policy and public health authorities’ actions to reduce added sugar consumption and thus reduce the incidence of obesity and the poor health outcomes that ensue. He also explained the strategies that food companies are taking to reduce added sugars. This summarized a document sent to members explaining in these topics in more detail as well as the FDA’s guidelines for changing the serving size, a strategy that many companies are using to reflect less consumption per eating occasion and reduce the large calories number on the label as well as the % daily value. Also discussed were the possible threats to pure maple syrup sales if consumers consume less products with added sugar and food and syrup manufacturers launch and promote more low-calorie syrups and blended syrups that increase their market share in the sweetener and topping category.

Some comments after presentation were as follows. **Mark Harran** mentioned that a change in serving size is going to be perceived as gaming the system to beat the calorie count. He feels we need to target the corn syrup consumer and take market share in that segment. **Nicolas Bell** mentioned that the war on sugar will eventually hit maple syrup. We need to have a strategy. He questioned whether reducing the serving size will really help or do is it better to push and promote other aspects. We do have to acknowledge consumers will slowly tend to reduce sugar based on the information on the nutritional facts panel. **Jean Lamontagne** mentioned that there’s things folks can do right now like build their local brands and de-commoditize their packaging that often looks generic. Also innovate with new offerings, seasonal in-&-outs to reenergize and produce a sense novelty and excitement in the category. **Emma Marvin** said we should educate people on calories and what you get with them. The challenge is that honey and maple serving sizes are different. Emma emphasized that consumers use that label to make a split-second decision, and that they rely on that total calorie number, they don’t take time to



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read the whole label. **Jean Lamontagne** agreed with Emma adding that the bottle does not only live on the shelf, it's on peoples table and cupboard and it is noticed and discussed in those settings too. **Simon Trépanier** explained that in European countries the serving size is the same for all products – every food serving size is based on 100 grams, so maple syrup calories are higher but so are all the nutrients. Regarding low-calorie type syrups, they become a multi-ingredient food – single ingredient pure maple syrup product is its strength. **Pam Green** wrapped up discussion by calling for more work on market promotion. **Mark Harran** *motion to plan on a funding initiative for marketing with the US Alliance, seconded by David Campbell carried.* All agreed we need to continue discussion on how to refocus marketing.

The full agenda was not covered du to time constraints although some of the items were addressed indirectly during the discussion.

The following item will remain on the agenda for the next meeting.

2021 Areas and Items of Focus:

- a. Marketing: Funding especially in the US and the war on sugar
- b. Environmental
- c. Governmental
- d. Others: Bylaws Review. Policy Book? Committees or Task Force

NEXT BOARD MEETING: A poll will be conducted to find the date that accommodates the most board members. It will then be announced.

MEETING ADJOURNED: A motion to adjourn the meeting proposed by Ray Bonenberg and seconded by Simon Trepanier carried.

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