

## **Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada make their lobbying debut onto the Hill after 40 years**

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Courtesy of Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada  
Leah Olson, president of the Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada, expresses optimism about the group's lobbying push.

The Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada visited the Hill last week to speak with parliamentarians about their agenda and the importance of innovation and international trade in the agri-manufacturing industry.

"The response from the government was exceptional," Leah Olson, president of AMC, said in an interview with The Lobby Monitor.

"This was an eye opening experience for a couple of political representatives...when people think about agriculture they don't always think about agri-equipment manufacturers...Everybody that we met with was very engaged, they knew a bit about our industry and were excited about what we talked about in terms of how we help feed the world," she said.

AMC represents more than 400 manufacturers and associated suppliers across Canada, according to its website.

Its advocacy agenda hones in on agricultural innovation and international trade opportunities.

On its website, AMC describes its key function as lobbying on behalf of the agricultural manufacturing industry and "providing strong and effective advocacy for [their] membership against controversial legislation in a number areas to [their] industry, both provincially and federally."

The organization has been around for more than 40 years, but this is their first major foray into federal government relations.

AMC is registered to lobby under Jacqueline LaRocque from Compass Rose Group and among other issues, is set to lobby on agriculture, international trade, science and technology and small businesses, according its registration on the federal lobbyists' registry.

The registration has been active since Dec. 14.

Olson, who has only been president of AMC for a little over a year, comes to the table with significant experience, previously working as a chief of staff and senior policy advisor with the government of Saskatchewan, according to her LinkedIn page.

Olson mentioned that the group's focus on fitting in with the government's innovation agenda is "alive and well." She added that the membership looks at innovation and how it is developed with agri-equipment manufacturers in order to help serve farmers across Canada.

She noted that with the use of digital technology and electronics, it is possible to plant crops and seeds in ways that were never possible before.

"Seeders...or planters as they're often called in Ontario...can drop the seed at the same consistent depth each and every time," she said, "and so we're not missing out on planting opportunities [and] we're reducing the amount of spillover of potential fertilizers."

Olson added that Canada is fortunate to have some of the best agri-equipment and manufacturers in the industry, which has helped bring in international groups to Canada and foster trade activities.

"Growing conditions in Canada are harsh. Whether it's the lack of rain or too much rain, our terrain is not always easy for farmers," she said.

“As a result some of the best farm equipment is produced in Canada. Because if you can have the equipment made in a Canadian setting, it can be made pretty much anywhere,” Olson said.

From that perspective, she explained that manufacturers and farmers from other countries come to Canada, particularly to conventions and conferences, to see how the technology is used.

“They know that we have a leading edge there. So they will offer to do ventures with us, partnerships, and so in this area, we’re pretty unique and fortunate,” Olson said.

In 2015, Canada exported \$1.8 billion worth of agriculture equipment and implements, this was a decrease of \$203 million from the previous year, according to AMC’s website.

And those numbers could change, especially if the Trans-Pacific Partnership, to which Canada is a signatory, gets ratified.

With 65 per cent, or roughly \$33.2 billion, of current agri-exports destined for TPP nations already, the elimination or reduction of tariffs and further supply chain integration should serve as impetus to spur additional demand from trading partners, the Financial Post reported Tuesday.

The Lobby Monitor reported that according to registry statistics, agriculture groups representing supply-managed industries, automotive manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies were among the most active lobbying International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland, all of which had stake in the most headline-grabbing provisions of the TPP.

And as far as presenting the group’s members and its agenda to various MPs, Olson said “that was the assurance I got at these meetings...we can facilitate and pull together some of our membership to be at the table to explain to them how innovation is at work in their facilities...and so moving forward we’ll be engaged more than we have been in the past.”

*- with files from Alyssa O’Dell*

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