



# *Spinoфф*

ROTARY CLUB OF WEST OTTAWA

Marcia Armstrong, President  
May 7, 2024 Reporter: Don Butler

**This meeting was hybrid**  
(In-person at the Queensview Cafe )

**Program:** Jon Lomow: Fieldless – farming without fields

In-person: 30 members- 2 guests  
Online: 19 members – 3 guests

**Meeting Video** <https://youtu.be/-VVGvkPwHBs>

### **We open:**

**President Marcia Armstrong** welcomed us to 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Rotary Year was, as usual, on the traditional land of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people, She noted that the indigenous peoples understand, as all of us must, that the land needs care if it is to care for us. President Marcia recognized guests Jon Lomo our speaker, prospective member Nancy Cairns, regular guest Tony Watkins, Debra Scarpelli, friend of new member **Linda Roehrl**

O Canada was again the lively video of the Du Bay Band rendition with Canadian scenes.

### **Presentation**

**Jen Broad** introduced our speaker, Jon Lomow, as a multiple entrepreneur who has spent his career developing innovative ideas to solve complex commercial, societal and environmental problems. He has provided

leadership on projects in sectors including agriculture, food and beverage, clean tech, fintech. Marketing, communications and public policy. Jon is currently CEO and cofounder of Fieldless, a company working to advance food sovereignty and sustainability based in Ottawa and Cornwall.

Jon took the mic and told how he had started as a computer programmer, realized he wanted to be his own boss, founded a company at age 19, which he sold to Dragons Den investor, Arlene Dickinson, and helped guide its growth for a few years. Wanting to be more mission driven he got into climate technology, and then climate policy. However, his main interest had always been food which let him into the initiative which has become Fieldless. He showed us pictures of the former warehouse in Cornwall, which has now become one of the Fieldless farms. Plants grow at several levels and are moved around robotically. Fieldless farms currently grow 6 products including lettuce, spinach, kale (Jon says his kale is the best we'll ever taste), mushrooms and they are experimenting with strawberries with support from the Weston Family Foundation. Jon said his vision for Fieldless was as a modern food company delivering food sovereignty, sustainability, and joy. Joy is really important because without it people will not buy the products. Fieldless products are carried currently by Farm Boy and Real Canadian Superstore.

Fieldless realized they would have to get out of plastic as much as possible, and though lettuce is very hard to package without plastic because customers want to see that it's fresh they have managed to reduce the plastic in their packaging by 90%

Looking forward population growth means that Canada will be competing on the global stage for food hence Fieldless focus on food sovereignty. Canada is in the world top 10 both as a food importer and a food exporter, but we have an enormous trade deficit in food. This deficit is particularly in leafy green so that is where Fieldless focusses and it is competitive with imports. As the technology improves, it will be economical to grow other crops indoors.

With slides to illustrate Jon then talked about agriculture in general and its intersection with the climate and the environment. Including agriculture, the food system as a whole accounts for about 1/3 of greenhouse, gas emissions. Transportation and electricity production are major parts of that and their greenhouse gas emissions are now trending down. Technology will improve, As an example. Jon mentioned development in the 30s of the Haber Bosch process to produce ammonia which feeds fertilizer production supporting food for about 40% of the world's population. (Ed note: Google the process). He reviewed the advances in productivity in agriculture and food production through gradual modernization, motorization the green revolution and now, "Agriculture 4.0," which he calls the era of control: precision in use of chemicals and other inputs : tissue culture, fermentation and decoupling the food system from the natural processes we are now destroying.

Jon is optimistic and listed a number the areas where he saw technical developments. He pointed out that this technical evolution is exponential and happens faster than we think.

## Q&A

**President Marcia** asked about pest control and use of green roof and sun or wind energy. Jon answered that growing indoors diminishes the possibility of disease organisms from animals and birds. Traps can be used against insects and animals like lady bugs or nematodes control other pests. They are not allowed to use pesticides.

Answering **Ron Doll**, Jon said that their products are cost competitive on Farm Boy shelves

To Debra Scarpelli on how Fieldless products compare in nutritional value with commercial products often grown on depleted soils Jon said that field less plants are given the exact nutrient mix they need for healthy products He added that primary products like his do not need a nutritional label, but if one is supplied, the nutrient mix shown will be from a general database not from the produce in the package..

To **Sucha Mann** on selling tomatoes and peppers with less plastic packaging Jon said that unpackaged produce becomes waste more often. Also, for tomatoes and the like they would first have to produce competitively with imports and greenhouses and then think about packaging.

### **Thanks**

**Jen Broad** then thanked Jon saying she was inspired by his demonstration that you can be innovative and a contribute to society and be profitable as well. We would donate to Rotary End Polio to mark his visit.

**Past Presidents' draw-** Run by **Graeme Fraser**. Won by **Barbara Hill Holland**

**Birthdays Ron Doll**, on behalf of the Club foundation, expressed best wishes to members born in May and challenged each to give one dollar for each year of their new age to the Club foundation

**Soc and Rec: Ron** continued with a reminder of the Club day at the races on May 9 and looked forward to seeing us at 3 PM

**District Conference May 3-5. President Marcia** told us DisCon site Clayton, New York was a charming little town and showed us pictures of the town and of the Club members who had gone there with her. She had had the pleasure of accepting the EnviroClub silver level award and hoped for gold next year. Susan Dienen had again been a recognized as a major donor. Speakers have been inspiring on subjects including mental wellness and the use of social media to recruit and retain members. Some of the group had done the Foundation Walk in the drizzle. Next year the Club may sponsor five new members to go to the conference to get an impression of what Rotary is all about.

**Visitors Day 28 May. Gaye Moffett** reminded us to think now about who we might invite. Fix someone you think might be a good club member. There

will be displays showing different aspects of the Club. It will be at St Elias Centre.

### **Happy Dollars**

-**Jim Maxwell** celebrated 64<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary So \$64 to the Club foundation.

-**Robert Eagle's** first grandchild turns 18. A "big man" at high school. He is now off to University of Vermont

-**Ron Baker** happy about partner **Barbara** winning the PP Draw

-**Bob Harrison** saw **Len Baird** at the Parkdale United Church celebration of its 93<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. **Len's** recent birthday was his 94<sup>th</sup> so **Bob** thought congratulations were in order but **Len** was surrounded by well wishers

### **Meeting ends**

**President Marcia** said **Len** has no internet or zoom so she would phone him and tell him what **Bob** had said

She told us about next meeting and adjourned

### **Calendar winners**

<https://rcwo.org/>

### **Next Meeting - Hybrid**

**Tuesday, May14 2024**

The Queensview Café, 2650 Queensview Drive,  
Doors open: 12:00. Meeting proper starts @ 12:30pm

Program: John Curry-Honouring Indigenous People

Intro & Thanks: **Bob Harrison**

Spinoff: **Don Butler**

For log on info for Zoom see invitation

