



Growers'
Association

A FAMILY BUSINESS DIVERSIFIES WITH AGRI-TOURISM

Doug Van Luyk is a third-generation grower based in the Holland Marsh area, with about half of his operations in the organic muck of the Marsh and the additional fifty percent in the Highlands, better known for its mineral soil. Since his grandfather started the business with 80 acres, Holland Acres Inc has since grown to 500 acres, with the primary crops being carrots, onions, beets and parsnips.

This family owned and run business has maintained their focus on growing, making significant investments in equipment to support future growth. Doug commented, "There are huge opportunities in vegetables; healthy eating with a focus on fresh produce is a growing trend for the future. But with growth, comes cost." Recent investments include a massive irrigation system on 200 acres, new harvesters, and sustainable initiatives like solar panels on the roofs of barns.



Doug has been joined in the daily operations by his adult son Brad who farms, and his wife Kim who manages food safety. They store their vegetables on-site until ordered by a local packer, who cleans and sells to the major retail chains. Orders are typically trailer loads full, such as 60,000 pounds of onions at one time. Despite an optimistic outlook, new land acquisition for continued growth is a challenge in an area that's already developed and has experienced significant urban development. An opportunity to diversify the business and get his daughters involved presented itself when Holland Acres purchased a farm with a century barn, built in 1906. After extensive renovations, "The Barn 1906" is now offered as a beautiful wedding venue suitable for parties with up to 200 guests.

This agri-tourism venture is one way to protect the integrity of the local agricultural community, and connect in a meaningful way with urban neighbours. Experiences at, "The Barn 1906" help to instill the importance of farming and agriculture to the economic well-being of Ontario, and the supportive role that farming plays for urban areas. And as Doug commented, "You can't buy the atmosphere on a good night." Kim to send me a link or more info about the wedding venue.

For more information about The Barn 1906, visit www.thebarn1906.com