

# THE *Western Producer*

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## Youth see challenges over policy

When young producers join the New Brunswick Young Farmers' Forum, they are taught about how farmer organizations operate and the mature farmers who control them.

Cedric MacLeod, general manager of the farmers' forum, told MPs on the House of Commons agriculture committee May 11 that farm groups and boards are dominated by older farmers who sometimes are not receptive to proposals for change.

"We're trying to educate our members about board governance and how to challenge mature farmers set in their ways," he said. "I really think there is a big challenge," he said. "Young people are looking for new solutions or innovative ways to look at issues but my experience is that their ideas are not always welcome."

The tension between younger entrants and older farmers who own the farm or control farm organizations was an undercurrent in the testimony MPs heard as they crossed the country.

At a hearing in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council youth director Gwen Donohoe argued that aspiring young or new entrant farmers need some targeted policy attention and positive encouragement.

She said the fact that most farm leaders are older and most young farmers are too busy to engage in farm politics creates a problem in the farm policy debate.

MPs noted that the most negative comments often came from older producers who bemoaned the state of the industry and programs lost and said they would discourage their children from becoming farmers.