

Advancing Women Conference



Be inspired.

AWC EAST 2025 • November 23, 24 & 25, 2025

Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON

Welcome to the Advancing Women in Agriculture & Food Conference

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 12th Annual Advancing Women Conference - a gathering dedicated to recognizing and advancing the exceptional contributions of women across the agriculture and food sector.

This year has been uniquely challenging. Economic pressures are affecting families, farms, businesses, and communities everywhere. In a time when many are being asked to do more with less, your commitment to being here speaks volumes about your resilience, determination, and belief in a stronger future for our industry. Thank you for prioritizing your growth and well-being.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all who have made this event possible - students, sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, and attendees. Each of you plays a vital role in shaping agriculture today and for the generations to come. I hope this conference provides the space to listen, learn, share experiences, and build meaningful connections with peers who understand the unique challenges and opportunities women in agriculture and food face.

As you participate over the next few days, I trust you will discover fresh insights, spark powerful ideas, and gain confidence to continue leading with purpose. I encourage you to take these conversations home to your networks - and to consider joining us again next year with colleagues, family, and friends who can benefit from the AWC experience.

Please mark your calendars:

AWC WEST 2026, March 8,9,10, 2026, Hyatt Regency Calgary, Alberta

We look forward to welcoming you again for another exciting and inspiring event.

Thank you once again for being here. I hope you leave feeling energized, supported, and connected - perhaps with an "aha" moment or a new friend to carry forward. Enjoy the conference, and we look forward to seeing you next year!



Iris Meck

*Host and Founder of Advancing Women Conferences
Iris Meck Communications Inc., Farms.com*



Conference Agenda

Sunday, November 23, 2025

11:30 am – 7:30 pm **AWC Registration Open – Level 3, Sheraton Fallsview**

12:00 pm – 5:30 pm **Cider Canada Tour – Transportation and Lunch included**

Depart Sheraton Fallsview Hotel lobby 12:00 noon

Return to Sheraton Fallsview Hotel lobby 5:30 pm

Registration needed at <https://advancingwomenconference.ca/2025east/>

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm **Table Talk 5.0 by FEAD, Great Room A, 3rd Level**



Table Talk with FEAD is a semi-annual mini-conference that is curated to create community and collaboration for food founders and leaders. Learn of resources, connections, and support programming to secure your economic future in Canada. Table Talk is run in partnership with Advancing Women Conference and is held at the same location as AWC.

Registration needed at <https://advancingwomenconference.ca/2025east/>

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm **Boots on the Ground: Helping at the next level, Great Room B, 3rd Level**



Lauren Van Ewyk, CEO, National Farmer Mental Health Alliance, Courtright, ON

What does helping someone really look like? This workshop is intended to give you the skills needed to have those tough conversations about mental health through an actions-based approach. Using case study, role-play and life application, participants will tackle the barriers to mental wellness and find ways to support others who may be struggling.

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm **New! Movie Time! Great Room C, 3rd Level**

Opening Comments: The Honourable Lisa M. Thompson, Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs, and MPP for Huron-Bruce

Special showing of the film:

We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of the Ontario Farmerettes

7:30 pm – 9:00 pm **Spotlite on Students: Student Sponsor Networking Reception, Fallsview Studio C, 3rd Level**

The Importance of Networking and Building Strong Relationships

All students and sponsors are welcome.

Check out **AWC Spotlite on Women Magazine:** advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlitemagazine/

Workshop Schedule

Monday, November 24, 2025

All workshops will be held on the 5th Level of the Sheraton Fallsview Hotel

LOCATION	WORKSHOP NUMBER	STREAM A 8:00 am – 9:15 am	STREAM B 9:30 am – 10:45 am	STREAM C 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Strategy Room 5	1	Beverly Beuermann-King 7 Ways to beat burnout	Beverly Beuermann-King Stop letting that difficult person ruin your day	Megan Burnside-Poitras and Rebecca Posthumus Navigating Stress
Upper Fallsview Studio A	2	Ashley Nicholls Not That Gate, The Other Gate!	Ashley Nicholls Not That Gate, The Other Gate!	Sydney Mohr Level up Your Connections
Upper Fallsview Studio B	3	Rachita Rachita and Patricia Catallo Growing your small business	Lauren Van Ewyk Trauma: Helping Others Transform the Hard Things	Doreen Ashton Wagner Collaboration Over Rivalry
Strategy Room 7	4	Carole Spicer Excellence in Customer service	Rose Ray and Michelle O'Sullivan Financial Success	Rose Ray & Michelle O'Sullivan Financial Success
Strategy Room 3	5	Dr Gail Cunningham Don't Sweat it!	Dr Gail Cunningham Can I see your patch?	Megan Pedros Stand Out! Show up!
Strategy Room 2	6	Karla Congson AI, Agents and Reinventing the Future of Work	Azrah Manji-Savin From Spark to Start Up	Azrah Manji-Savin NO Dumb Questions: Beginner's Guide to AI
Strategy Room 1	7	Nafisa Mahabub and Domenique Mastronardi Zoom Out and Build Your Dream Life	Nafisa Mahabub and Domenique Mastronardi Zoom Out and Build Your Dream Life	Nicole Davis Navigating Working Life as Spouses



Conference Agenda

Monday, November 24, 2025

7:00 am – 8:00 am **General Registration, Continental Breakfast and Networking – 3rd Level**

8:00 am – 9:15 am **Stream A Workshops – 5th Level of the Sheraton Fallsview**

9:15 am – 9:30 am **Quick Coffee Break**

9:30 am – 10:45 am **Stream B Workshops – 5th Level of the Sheraton Fallsview**

10:45 am – 11:00 am **Quick Coffee Break**

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **Stream C Workshops – 5th Level of the Sheraton Fallsview**

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm **Lunch Buffet - Great Room A, 3rd Floor**

1:00 pm – 1:15 pm **Welcome – Great Room C**



Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

1:15 pm – 1:45 pm **GRIT: What is it? Why do we need it? Who has it? How to get it?**



Anne Miner, President, Dunvagen Group, Founder of Women with GRIT, Woodstock, ON

GRIT isn't something you're born with, it's something you build. Learn how passion and perseverance can fuel your success and help you achieve your long-term goals.

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm **The Multigenerational Advantage: Communicate, Collaborate, and Lead with Impact**



Kristin J. Pronschinske, CEP, Owner and Founder, LookUp, LLC, River Falls, WI

Explore how leaders harness generational diversity to drive innovation, engagement and results. Through strategic communication and inclusive leadership practices, unlock the full potential of multigenerational teams.

Check out **AWC Spotlight on Women Magazine**: advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlightmagazine/

2:15 pm – 2:45 pm



Leader Panel Discussion: Building Teams and Cultures that Stick

Culture doesn't just happen—it's built. Hear from leaders who are shaping workplaces where people feel valued, connected, and inspired to stay for the long run.

Nafisa Mahabub, Program & Operations, FEAD, Saskatoon, SK

Julie Dimitri, National Manager, Women in Enterprise, TD Business Banking, Toronto, ON

Lisa Charette, Director, Indigenous and Sector Diversity Policy, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa, ON

Samantha Klaver, Sales Engagement Manager, New-Life Mills, Cambridge, ON

2:45 pm – 3:20 pm



Rooted in Resilience: A Journey of Grit, Growth, and Mental Wellness

Carole Spicer, Founder and Owner, Spicer Facilitation, Pasadena, NL

Carole shares her powerful journey to mental wellness—an honest look at grit, resilience, and leading with authenticity and strength.

3:20 pm – 3:50 pm



Coffee and Networking Break – 3rd Level

Sponsored by FCC

3:50 pm – 4:25 pm



Blending the Demands: Finding Balance between Work and Life

Lauren Van Ewyk, CEO, National Farmer Mental Health Alliance, Courtright, ON

There is a constant demand for you to be for everyone else, who they need you to be. Setting boundaries, communication and practicing self-care ensures you are able to blend the most critical aspects into the life you desire.

4:25 pm – 5:00 pm



How to Succeed in a Male-Dominated Space

Mariah Moen, Director of Agriculture, Uniking Canada, Saskatoon, SK

Mariah will give her perceptions on empowering women to advocate for themselves in agriculture – from sales to business to everyday life.

5:00 pm – 5:15 pm



Day Recap

Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB



5:15 pm – 7:00 pm **Reception and Networking - 3rd Level**



Sponsored by TD

7:00 pm – 10:00 pm **Banquet – Great Room C**



Opening Comments

Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

MP John Barlow, Conservative Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food, Ottawa, ON / Foothills, AB

Denise Faguy, Director, Marketing and Operations, Farms.com, Guelph, ON

Iris Meck, Founder of AWC, Iris Meck Communications Inc., Farms.com

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

7:00 am – 8:20 am **AAFC Roundtable – Private Event, by invitation only – Fallview Studio A**

7:30 am – 8:30 am **General Registration Continues and Continental Breakfast – Great Room A**

8:30 am – 8:45 am **Welcome Message – Great Room C**



Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

8:45 am – 9:30 am **Branding Queens: The Five C's of Building a Brand**



Kim [Derrick] Rozdeba, Author, Rozdeba Brand & Company, Calgary, AB

Discover how five branding powerhouses built lasting legacies through the Five C's—Commitment, Construct, Community, Content, and Consistency—and learn how to make your own brand truly resonate.

9:30 am – 10:15 am **Rooted in Respect: Strategies to End Gossip and Grow Trust**



Beverly Beuermann-King, CSP, Mental Health and Resiliency Expert, R 'n' B Consulting Corp -Work Smart Live Smart, Little Britain, ON

Gossip spreads fast—and it can quietly destroy trust. Learn how to stop it, rebuild connection, and lead with respect and clarity.

Check out AWC Spotlight on Women Magazine: advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlightmagazine/

10:15 am – 11:00 am **Coffee and Networking Break**



Sponsored by Bunge

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **Bridging Tradition and Innovation: How Women Are Shaping the Future of Agriculture in Ghana**



Nelly Elinam Kurd-Marckay, Quality and Food Safety Manager-West Africa, Bunge, Tema, Greater Accra, Ghana

Discover how Ghanaian women in agriculture are blending traditional wisdom with modern innovation to drive change—and how resilience helps them lead and thrive.

Anne Sarfo, Founder/CEO, Annes Perfections, Tema, Greater Accra, Ghana

Anne shares how women-led enterprises are transforming agriculture—from field to finished product—by blending tradition, innovation, and entrepreneurship to build stronger, more inclusive food systems.

12:00 pm – 12:10 pm **Morning Recap**



Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

12:10 pm – 1:45 pm **General Lunch & Student Sponsor Lunch – Great Room A**



Sponsored by FEAD

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm **Finding confidence and building confidence in others: Life Lessons Managing a Strawberry Farm**



Jordan Eyamie, Farm Manager, Webster Farm, Cambridge, NS

This talk will highlight my learnings while managing a medium-scale farming operation.

2:15 pm – 2:45 pm **You're outstanding in your field, but you don't have to be out there by yourself.**



Courtney Stevens, Owner & Chief Creative Officer, Wilmot Orchards, Newcastle, ON

You're amazing at what you do, but you don't have to do it alone. I'll be sharing from my experience how building the right support into your business you'll be able to focus on your zone of genius.



2:45 pm – 3:15 pm



Coffee and Networking Break

Sponsored by Cargill

3:15 pm – 3:45 pm



Smart Strategy: How AI is Powering the Business of Agriculture

AI is transforming every corner of agri-business—from logistics and forecasting to marketing and finance. In this panel discussion, women leaders share how they're using AI to streamline operations, spark innovation, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry.

Karla Congson, CEO, Agentiiv, Toronto, ON

Azrah Manji-Savin, Co-Founder, Syzl, Toronto, ON

Karen Rossit, Foodservice Sales Director, Bunge, Oakville, ON

Lindsay Toth, Membership and Marketing, FEAD Canada, Saskatoon, SK

3:45 pm – 4:15 pm



Voice · Value · Credibility: Leading from Any Seat in Agriculture

Nicole Davis, Strategic HR Consultant, UnCommon Farms, Calgary, AB

Leadership resilience isn't about stamina—it's about strategy. When you lead with authenticity and a clear sense of your own value, you earn trust, influence outcomes, and create meaningful, lasting change.

4:15 pm – 4:45 pm



Why Me? Why Not Me? Why Not YOU!

Mayor Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Mayor, Township of Lucan Biddulph, Lucan, ON

She never planned on a career in politics—but found purpose and strength along the way. In this inspiring talk, she shares the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned on her unexpected path to leadership, and reminds us that your voice matters more than you think.

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm



Closing Comments

Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

As the conference wraps up, we hope you leave with new friends, fresh perspectives, and a spark of inspiration to take back to your work and communities. Thank you for making this gathering so memorable!

Check out **AWC Spotlight on Women Magazine**: advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlightmagazine/

Advancing Students

Meet agriculture's next generation

STUDENT & UNIVERSITY:



Melody E. Agbedanu
University of Guelph



Sarah Bowman
University of Lethbridge



Christina (Yi-Ting) Chua
Niagara College



Hope Chumbwe
University of Manitoba



Lotte Evelyn Fontijn
Dalhousie University



Alexis Fudge
College of the North Atlantic



Jyssica Heiss
University of Guelph



Subhiksha Jayakumar
Dalhousie University



Kiran Khurshid
University of Alberta



Swedha Madhu
Dalhousie University



Sajida Noor
University of Guelph

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STUDENT & UNIVERSITY:



Wenwen Peng
University of Guelph



Melyse Renwick
Olds College



Joshita P S Senthil Kumar
Dalhousie University



Prerana Upretree
University of Saskatchewan



Ericka Van Dongen
Olds College



Maryam Vazin
University of Guelph



Kirsty Yates
University of Guelph



Ishrat Zahan
University of Guelph

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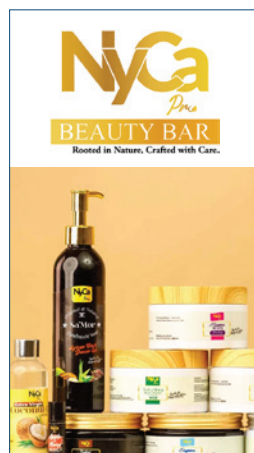


A big thank you to the amazing students who brought their enthusiasm and ideas to the conference—and to the sponsors who made it possible for them to be here. Together, you're growing the next generation of leaders in ag and food!



Advancing Entrepreneurs

Meet our Marketplace Exhibitors



Check out AWC Spotlight on Women Magazine: advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlightmagazine/

Advancing Women in Ag & Food

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TODAY!

Advancing Women

In Agriculture & Food Conference



*Listen, learn,
network and grow!*



If you are a woman in farm operations, an entrepreneur in ag and food, a student, or working in agri-business, join us at AWC!

AWC WEST 2026

*March 8, 9 & 10, 2026 at the
Hyatt Regency, Calgary, AB*

AWC EAST 2026

*November 2026, at the
Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON*

Hear expert speakers that will motivate and inspire, and network with women passionate about ag.

- *Learn new skills to help you excel*
- *Manage your well-being and build resiliency*
- *Nurture and grow your passions*
- *Meet, network and support other women*

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get growing.

Call Iris Meck for details: (403) 686-8407

AdvancingWomenConference.ca/2026west

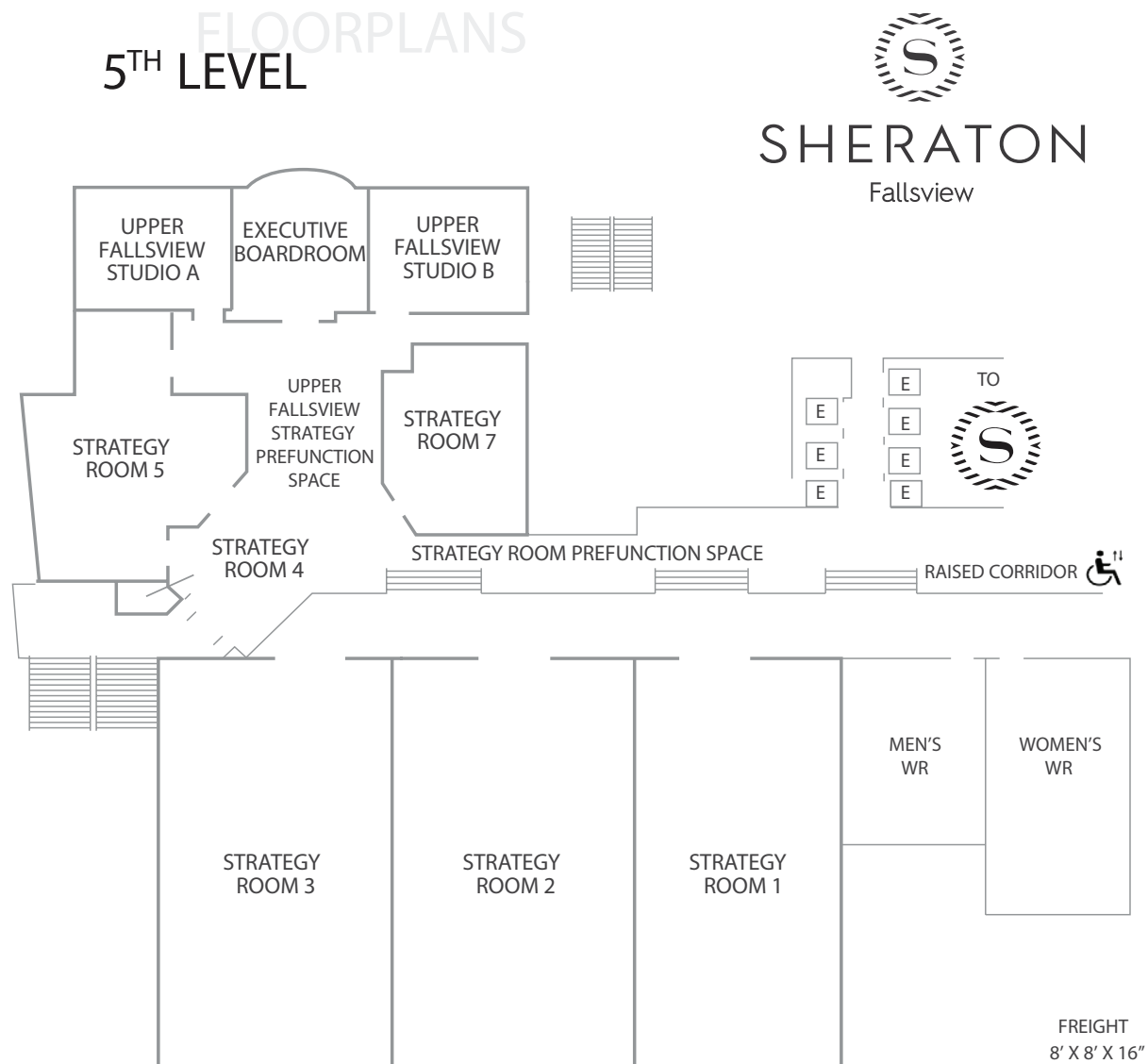
Advancing Women Conference

Location map: 3rd Level



Advancing Women Conference

Location map: 5th Level



Check out **AWC Spotlight on Women Magazine**: advancingwomenconference.ca/spotlightmagazine/

SAVE
THE
DATE

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