



**Honourable George Groeneveld
Minister
Agriculture and Rural Development**

**Growing Forward
Alberta Launch Event**

Friday, April 24, 2009

**Shaw Conference Centre
Edmonton, Alberta**

Check against delivery

- Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Government of Alberta and Premier Ed Stelmach, to Alberta's Growing Forward launch.
- It is great to see so many members of our agriculture industry could join us...after all; this is about your future.
- As we celebrate the strong federal/provincial partnership that has made this announcement possible, I'd like to pass along regrets from Minister Gerry Ritz who is unfortunately unable to join us today as planned.
- However, I know he shares our excitement as we launch Growing Forward in Alberta.
- Over the last couple of years, Minister Ritz and I have had some great discussions about the future of agriculture in Canada...
- ...it is a real pleasure to work with him ...and I greatly appreciate his leadership and commitment to this industry.

- I also want to thank my Parliamentary Assistant, MLA Doug Griffiths...
- ...and I want to recognize the many individuals from *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada* and our own staff at *Agriculture and Rural Development*.
- I know you are all great champions of our agriculture industry.
- Today we celebrate that shared commitment.
- We know the future of agriculture is important to the future of Canada...and in particular – Alberta.
- The agriculture industry makes an important contribution to Alberta's economy and rural communities...
- It is worth billions of dollars to this province.
- It feeds and employs Albertans...it is the centre of rural life...and its reach extends far beyond the borders of our province and our country.

- Agriculture is a part of who we are...and that is why the government of Alberta is committed to your success.
- We are pleased to partner with the federal government to be a part of the Growing Forward initiative...
- ...it is creating an industry bench-strength across Canada which makes Alberta more competitive globally.
- That is why...we are investing \$109 million to support Growing Forward programs in Alberta.
- And with the federal commitment...\$273 million is being dedicated to your future success.
- Both government and industry have looked forward to this day...it is a milestone that we have reached together.
- I think we all understand it takes time and thoughtful collaboration to develop meaningful programs.

- That is why industry's participation in the Growing Forward consultations was so valuable.
- No one could provide more insightful feedback than the very people who will be using these programs.
- And *Growing Forward* gives us the flexibility to focus on the type of agriculture in our region.
- As a result we have programs that are more effective and responsive to local needs...while still achieving the national vision.
- We are confident you will find the new Alberta model a very strategic approach to supporting your business development...
- We have focused on a strong value-chain that *thinks locally – and grows globally*.
- By helping both producers and processors we can position Alberta's industry for long-term success.

- To be specific, we have 21 programs that fall into 12 areas...that range from...
 - Business Management Skills and Tools,
 - Food Safety,
 - Product and Market Development,
 - Traceability, and
 - Water Management.

- As an industry, I know you will take advantage of these great programs and be a leader in your own success.

- Albertans have always been known for their innovative can-do attitude.

- And when I look at our strategic focus as a government, I see proof that our industry and the province are moving in the same direction.

- Our new business plan is designed to ‘*Build on our Strength*’ ...and that is exactly what Growing Forward does.

- There is an old saying... ‘*strong enough to bend*’ ... in business, the ability to be flexible will help us survive and thrive.
- For agriculture that means adapting to new markets and consumer demands...responding quickly and effectively to an animal disease...investing in new, efficient technology...and embracing new agriculture practices.
- We need to anticipate and innovate so we can weather an ever-changing global environment.
- I encourage you to take this opportunity today to explore the expertise and resources that are being made available to you...
- Thank you.