



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

Berry Creek Agricultural Society Dinner

**Friday, April 3, 2009
5:00 p.m.**

**Pollockville Community Centre
Cessford, AB**

Check against delivery

- Good evening, everyone...
- I would like to bring greetings on behalf of Premier Stelmach...
- ...My Cabinet colleague, Jack Hayden, the Minister of Infrastructure, who has also joined us this evening, and all my colleagues in the legislature.
- Thank you to the *Berry Creek Agricultural Society* for inviting me to join you this evening.
- I would like to congratulate the society for being Alberta's newest agricultural society...the first one formed in the last 16 years.
- In my mind, there are few volunteer organizations that share the dedication and commitment of the ag societies.
- Since 1947, agricultural societies have been... and continue to be... a vital and valuable part of Alberta's rural landscape.

- I'm always so impressed by the outstanding dedication and commitment of our ag societies...and your organization is certainly no exception.
- You should all be very proud of your organization's achievements that have helped your community to flourish...
- ...And this new community centre is a fine example of your society's outstanding efforts.
- This community centre will make significant contributions to rural development by helping to meet the needs of the community it serves.
- To me, rural development means a lot more than simply economic development...communities need to have strong social fabrics as well.
- The Government of Alberta remains committed to advancing both social and economic development in rural Alberta.

- The Rural Alberta's Development Fund (RADF) is a significant source of funding available to communities and organizations to advance innovative projects in rural communities...
- ...To date the RADF has committed over \$55 million to rural projects...
- ... And they will continue to support rural projects across the province.
- Your organization and many others are the backbone of our industry.
- The 295 agricultural societies throughout Alberta are the hub of many rural communities.
- They offer a broad network of facilities and programs to their communities...
- ...Every year...more than 25 thousand volunteers work hard to organize over 1,500 agricultural events and activities.

- These agricultural events help sustain rural Alberta by providing leadership opportunities to community members.
- And being at events like these reminds me of the important role rural ag societies play in promoting and facilitating community development.
- I also recognize the stresses that ag societies are experiencing.
- Insurance increases, staffing issues, expansion concerns, volunteer recruitment and retention...
- These are all challenges that every board faces or will face.
- Let me assure you that we're committed to ensuring that you receive the assistance you need to continue your important work.
- Once again, let me thank you for the commitment that bring to your boards and communities every day.

- Coming from a rural background, I have seen first hand the positive impact agricultural societies have in rural areas.
- You represent a vital thread in the fabric of rural communities across Alberta.
- As the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development... and as a rural Albertan myself...I want nothing but the best for our rural communities and our province.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you and visit your new community centre...
- I look forward to your questions.
- Thank you.