



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

Central Alberta Agricultural Society Gala

**Monday April 13, 2009
6:30 pm.**

**Lacombe Memorial Centre Main Hall
Lacombe, Alberta**

Check against delivery

- Good evening, everyone...
- It is a pleasure to extend greetings on behalf of Premier Ed Stelmach...
- ... and from my Caucus colleague, Ray Prins, your Lacombe-Ponoka MLA, who has also joined us this evening ... and from all my colleagues in the legislature.
- Thank you to the *Central Alberta Agricultural Society* for inviting me to join you tonight.
- First, I want to tell you a few good things about our new provincial budget ...
- This is a good news budget ... It will enable us to meet Albertans' priorities without major tax increases or drastic cuts to programs.

- We're increasing spending where we need to, and holding the line in other areas ... We have the flexibility to do so because of our past decisions, including setting aside almost \$17 billion in the Sustainability Fund.
- Budget 2009 will ensure government continues to provide the programs and services Albertans require and expect, with a focus on healthcare, education and helping those who need it most.
- Government continues to invest in infrastructure at a rate more than double the per capita average of what other provinces have been spending.
- We believe that investment in infrastructure is an effective way to support the economy during challenging times.
- In fact, every \$1 billion invested in public infrastructure supports 11,600 jobs across the economy.

- The \$7.2 billion we are investing in infrastructure this year supports more than 80,000 jobs.
- We also have a 4-point plan in place that will help put Alberta's economy on the road to recovery:
 1. Keeping a close eye on government spending;
 2. Drawing down our savings to protect the programs and services Albertans depend on;
 3. Continuing to invest in public infrastructure to support jobs and the economy;
 4. And promoting Alberta to a global market.
- *Budget 2009* will meet the needs of Albertans during challenging times while maintaining the lowest tax regime in Canada and among the lowest in North America.

- Overall, if we had the same tax system as other provinces, Albertans and Alberta businesses would pay the equivalent of between \$2,900 and \$5,200 more per capita in taxes each year.
- So, those are a few of the budget highlights ... a quick summary of the status of our provincial economy.
- An important component of our provincial economy has always been our agricultural sector ...
- Our government highly values this province's agricultural industry and supports the solid effort of organizations like the Central Alberta Agriculture Society ...
- In my mind, there are few volunteer organizations that share the dedication and commitment of our province's ag societies.
- Since 1947, agricultural societies have been... and continue to be... a vital and valuable part of Alberta's rural landscape.

- ... 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...
- One of your big annual events is the Lacombe Bull Sale ... and I am pleased to see this occasion will celebrate its centennial anniversary here tomorrow.
- Over the years, traditional breeds like Angus, Shorthorn, Polled and Horned Hereford breeds ... have been joined by more exotic breeds like Semmental, Gelbvieh, Charolais and Murray Grey ...
- So, I offer hearty congratulations on 100 good years of advancing Alberta's agriculture sector in such a positive way ...
- 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 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 also 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 more than 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 this 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 you 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 join you for this fine dinner ...
- I look forward to your questions.
- Thank you.

