



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

**Feeder Associations of Alberta  
2009 Convention**

**Friday, January 30, 2009  
Noon**

**Capri Hotel  
Red Deer, Alberta**

*Check against delivery*

- Good afternoon.
- It's great to be here today.
- I'd like to extend greetings to you all, on behalf of Premier Ed Stelmach and my colleagues in the legislature.
- As an industry, we are still facing tremendous challenges...
  - High feed and fertilizer costs...
  - Thickening of the US border due to protectionist inspection rules, mandatory country of origin labeling,
  - Australia, the US and other provinces...gaining market share within Alberta,
  - The industry losing market share in most of our export markets...
- Those are just some of the challenges.
- They aren't new...

- And I still believe we can overcome many of these...
- I also believe we **must** in order to have a viable industry.
- The Alberta government has provided significant support to livestock producers through AFRP II.
- There is **no other jurisdiction** in this country that has come even close to supporting their livestock industry to this degree.
- And we have a government that is willing to see this industry through to a profitable and competitive future.
- Alberta's livestock industry has incredible potential that has yet to be fully tapped...and I know producers feel that way also.
- In order to achieve that potential, we cannot continue doing what has been done in the past...
- Short-term ad-hoc funding is no longer an option...We must address the root of the problem.

- We all know change is not easy...and this strategy has been no exception.
- But we have turned a corner – industry and government have brought about some changes and we should all be proud of the hard work that has occurred.
- Livestock producers in this province are leading the way.
- Your commitment to the future of the industry has once again made you an example to your colleagues across the country...
- Saskatchewan producers, in particular, are watching the strategy as it unfolds and develops...
- Some producers and industry leaders have actually asked their Agriculture Minister to make age verification mandatory.
- Changing the way we do business is necessary for two key reasons...**first and foremost is food safety.**

- **Secondly**...market access...
- We all agree that the U.S. is Alberta's largest and most important trading partner on many fronts...and we cannot lose focus of the importance of that partnership.
- However, the U.S. does **not** seem to agree with an integrated marketplace.
- Asia is one of the most important opportunities for us ...and it is also one of our most challenging.
- To capture these opportunities, we must think differently.
- Advancing our beef trade was a specific goal of the last two missions to Asia.
- We asked what their industries and consumers want for their livestock and meat products...
- Their answers were clear...high-quality food products that are safe...

- And traceability measures that support and demonstrate that safety.
- We have heard time and time again from government and industry officials in Asia...
- Traceability, including age verification, is **not negotiable** with them...
- We simply must have it if we want to expand current markets and create new ones.
- If the Asian markets were to open tomorrow...those markets will come with conditions attached, such as age verification...
- And Alberta would **NOT** have enough animals to fill the demand.
- Producers tell me they want an immediate cash return...
- The return will be there in time...but you have to meet their conditions...

- What we will get is markets that trust our products and allow us to compete internationally with our competitors.
- The Alberta Livestock and Meat Strategy is intended to create an environment where success and opportunities will revitalize this important industry...
- And it can be adapted to become national.
- I spoke with Minister Ritz in November and he reiterated his support for our direction...
- He is hearing the same things from our potential markets.
- We have always intended to leave the business of producing livestock, processing meat and marketing livestock where it belongs ... with industry.
- I encourage you all to take an active role in advancing our industry.

- Through improved work with stakeholders, producers, industry associations, as well as the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency...we are using direct producer feedback as we implement the strategy.
- That is why industry participation is so essential.
- We all want to find our way through the issues and implement the strategy in a workable and common sense way.
- I want to thank the Feeder Associations for your ongoing participation, feedback and support.
- I would like to take a moment to talk about the computer program some of you are using for record keeping.
- We are working on new version of the Feeder Association Management System to meet **all** the day-to-day business needs of your associations ...

- Staff from the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency and my department's Traceability Division will be involved in developing the new system ...
- ... to ensure it incorporates the latest traceability technologies ... and is compatible with the Livestock Information System of Alberta and other strategy initiatives.
- Users of this new system will be involved in the consultation process around this initiative.

## **PAUSE**

- Alberta's competitiveness in the global market is critical to the success of our agriculture and food industry...
- We are an export-oriented industry...and we must do everything we can to sustain and build-on our international connections.

- I know that you, Alberta's livestock producers have the desire and the heart to show our customers and our global competitors...
- I am very encouraged by the producers' work on the age verification...the momentum is building and we are well on our way to securing new markets.
- Throughout the world, Alberta will continue to be known and respected as a leader of livestock and quality meat products.
- I look forward to continuing our work together...
- ...and wish you all the best for 2009.
- Thank you.