



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

**Think Tank Session –  
Institute for Agriculture, Forestry  
& the Environment**

**Friday, February 6, 2009  
8:00 p.m.**

**The Rimrock Hotel  
Banff, Alberta**

*Check against delivery*

- Good evening.
- It is an honour to welcome you on behalf of Premier Ed Stelmach and the Government of Alberta.
- My Cabinet colleague, Ted Morton, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, who has also joined us this evening, extends his welcome to you.
- I know we have guests from near and far...and it is our pleasure to offer you some warm hospitality.
- I have to admit, I hope the cook served up what nutrition experts call ‘brain food’ – because we are really depending on all the big brains in this room to deliver some great ideas.
- The old saying is – two heads (or brains) are better than one – and we have something like 50 here, so I know we are going to accomplish a lot in a few days...
- ...but seriously...we greatly appreciate your expertise and your participation in our think tank.

- Thank you for joining us.
- I also want to thank the Chair of our Think Tank, Vic Adamowicz [Adam-ov-ich] and all the members of the Organizing Team led by Daphne Cheel from Advanced Education and Technology.
- Together you have developed an impressive event.
- I am sure you will agree – the discussion framework provides thought provoking information and very direct questions that must be inspiring insightful dialogue.
- We are very fortunate to have top-notch leadership driving *Alberta's Institute for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment*.
- I hope you have all had a chance to meet Dr. Ken Nicol, the Chair of our Institute.

- Dr. Nicol brings a unique blend of expertise and experience...his knowledge of government, agriculture and business brings together key disciplines integral to the work at hand.
- Sincere thanks go out to Dr. Nicol.
- I would also like to thank the Institute board, three of which have joined us tonight...
  - Jurgen Preughaus [Yurgen Pri-chus]
  - Robert Nichol,
  - And Terry Young.
- Each of you offers an incredible wealth of knowledge and wisdom with your respective backgrounds in the forestry and agriculture industries.
- As I mentioned, the Alberta Government is benefitting from the tremendous leadership behind the Institute – and this is critical...
- ...because when it comes to setting policy that will help us ‘*green our growth*’, we will be standing on their shoulders.

- We are depending on the Institute to provide thoughtful advice and propose directions that can have a real and positive impact on our industries, our economy, society and environment.
- To frame how important their job is, let me share with you our government's vision statement...
- We envision – *“An innovative and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a high quality of life built on vibrant communities and a healthy environment.”*
- To add to that...two of our government's five priorities are *‘creating opportunity’* and being *‘resourceful and responsible’*.
- Yesterday evening Dr. Stelfox provided you with some background on ‘the Alberta landscape’ – economic and environmental history, some trends, and major policy frameworks that are relevant to your discussions.

- So I expect you are aware that Alberta's population and industrial base is growing rapidly and putting pressure on our natural resources.
- We have a population that has grown over 50 percent in the past 25 years...
- And we have enjoyed significant economic growth the past 10 years – not withstanding the current economic challenges facing the entire globe right now.
- Given the cumulative effects of all this activity – and our vision for Alberta, we need to advance how we balance our economic and environmental goals.
- That is why our Premier directed the establishment of the Institute for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment.
- The Institute is closely aligned with and adds value to other government environmental initiatives, such as the Land-use Framework, Climate Change Strategy, and Water for Life Strategy.

- As an example of this, the Institute has been given the responsibility for developing the Strategy for Conservation and Stewardship on public and private lands...just one of the seven key strategies in the Land-use Framework.
- The Institute also brings together the two largest working land managers in the province.
- The agriculture and forestry industries manage approximately 80 percent of Alberta's landscape. They are in a unique position to influence the health of our environment.
- We recognize that these industries have been good stewards of the land.
- However, we also recognize that there is always room for improvement...
- ...and government has a role and responsibility in that.

- We must ensure that Albertans are able to enjoy clean air, clean water, and biodiversity...now and for generations to come.
- Albertans have a deep respect for the environment...
- ...they also have a drive to succeed and prosper.
- In the face of a rapidly expanding global economy, we need to be more competitive.
- And that is the heart of the challenge...we must support the environment...but we must also support our economy.
- However, we firmly believe we do not have to sacrifice one for the other. We can integrate environmental stewardship with sustainable development.
- The wise man knows – where there is a challenge ...there is also opportunity.

- The Institute is a new business-focused approach to environmental stewardship.
- It is about finding integrated solutions for complex environmental issues to improve productivity and market share.
- It is about putting in place the policies and processes for documenting our environmental integrity...
- ...this will demonstrate to the world that Alberta and its resource industries are environmentally responsible...
- ...and we will be recognized as leaders for our innovation in environmental stewardship.
- Consumers and businesses are actively seeking products and services that are more environmentally friendly.
- They are ready and willing to support companies that are demonstrating an environmental conscience.

- Knowing that, we are confident industry will embrace solutions that are a smart investment in their own future.
- The Alberta government is committed to helping shape a business environment that further supports positive changes.
- We know it will take careful consideration, and innovation – and it will take cooperation.
- With input from industry – our education and technology sectors, government can set the stage for greater success.
- The Institute is acting as a catalyst for change...
- ...it is helping us transform the focus of environmental responsibility.
- If we get this right, we can effect a change in attitudes.

- We can move away from a perception of cost – to see the benefit and potential profit behind environmental goals.
- As a government, we understand that the cost of doing business is a huge concern for our renewable resource sectors.
- On one hand, the agriculture and forestry industries are struggling with high input costs...
- ...and on the other hand, market access, trade issues and growing competition are affecting their return on investment.
- These challenges make it even more important to stand out from the crowd...to take bold steps that link environmental excellence to business success.
- A wonderful example of this is Alberta's new Livestock and Meat Strategy.

- The Strategy's priorities identify several goals that complement the mandate of the Institute, these include:
  - Develop an environmentally sustainable livestock industry that supports the production of ecological goods and services,
  - Support existing carbon offset programs to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
  - Develop policy recommendations for the Bio-Energy Strategy that supports adopting biogas technology, and
  - Use branding and certification to differentiate livestock products developed through environmentally sustainable practices.
  
- I know earlier today you were working on the question of how to make a *public* good a *private* good.
  
- Everyone here understands that market-based instruments can provide powerful incentives to adopt environmental practices and products.
  
- Appropriate compensation is clear encouragement.

- I know many forestry companies, agriculture producers and agri-businesses are already adopting environmentally sound practices and developing goods and services that support this global movement.
- And when it comes to innovation, we know that those who are early to the party enjoy bigger rewards.
- We can be stronger competitors in the global market.
- With the right framework of policies, tools and measures in place, the environmental and economic benefits can be profound.
- The Alberta government is committed to the environment.
- We understand that ultimately, the success of our agriculture and forestry industries will be measured by more than just economic activity – but also our commitment to the environment.

- The Institute for *Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment* is a key part of greening Alberta's growth – and branding Alberta as an environmental leader.
- Your contributions to this think tank will help us shape our approach to using market based instruments for preserving, supporting and enhancing Environmental Goods and Services in our province.
- I look forward to learning what ideas, strategies and tactics you identified which could enhance our long-term economic prosperity and sustainability.
- Once again, on behalf of the Alberta government...and all Albertans...thank you for participating in this very important and valuable event! Your contributions are helping to secure Alberta's future.