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Deputy Minister
Agriculture and Food**

AgChoices 2008

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**Red Deer Lodge
Red Deer**

Check against delivery

- Thank you Wes ...
- I'd like to start by bringing greetings from Minister Groeneveld and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food
- It's a pleasure to be here at AgChoice 2008
- I've been asked to speak about government's vision ...
- ... For building a strong and sustainable agriculture industry ...
- ... A vision that will enable the growth of a globally competitive ... sustainable ... agriculture and food industry.
- It's not, of course, a singular vision ...

- ... But rather, one that sees both farmers, and government working closely together for the benefit of this industry
- From a governmental perspective, I'm proud to say, that this past year, we've made some real headway in working towards this vision
- Briefly, then, I'd like to update you on some of our accomplishments.

BioEnergy

- In the growing field of bio-energy ...
- ... We've been able to craft a very simple yet effective policy ...
- ... That's based on sustainable solutions.

- Instead of exporting grain to the US as a fuel source, we can create our own bio-energy here.

- And to do this we will need to
 - **develop** new market for our agriculture commodities
 - **diversify** agriculture operations
 - **advance** the science, and
 - **keep** the byproduct as feed for Alberta livestock

- All of this will require a lot of work ...

- ... And, of course, investment ...

- But, in the long run, we will reap the benefits.

Marketing Choice

- This year, we've also been a major supporter of the federal government's efforts to remove barley from under the single desk of the CWB.
- It can't happen soon enough ...
- ... Because each day that the CWB's monopoly continues means another day of lost opportunities for Alberta's producers.
- We've heard from producers ...
- ... And they've told us loud and clear ...
- ... Choice matters.
- I know that federal Minister Ritz is working hard to see this happen ...

- ... And we – along with Saskatchewan and BC – will continue to support him in this fight.

Missions

- Minister Groeneveld has also had the chance to represent our producers internationally ...
- ... In the fall I was able to travel with him to Asia to, among other things, strengthen our trade relations...
- Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China are priority markets for Alberta's agriculture and agri-food products.
- As you know, livestock isn't the only commodity that Asia is interested in ...

- Canola, wheat, barley, processed potatoes and dried peas also provide huge opportunities in these countries.
- A few weeks ago, the Minister traveled with the Premier and SRD Minister Ted Morton to Washington DC ...
- ... There were some very encouraging conversations with key decision makers.
- The Minister stressed the importance of reconsidering their proposed Farm Bill.
- And looking at less production and trade distorting forms of support ...
- ... Like whole-farm income support.
- In the long run, however, the best way forward in terms of global agriculture is through WTO negotiations.

- Of course ... in the case of these trips and many of our agriculture initiatives this year...
- ... The real results will be measured in the months and years to come ...
- In the form of a strong agriculture sector both at home and internationally.

Growing Forward

- We continue to work hard to finalize the new APF ...
- ... These Growing Forward programs need to be responsive and effective to the needs of producers.
- We're anxious to finalize the new suite of cooperative programs

- Our position is that CAIS has been helpful – but it's not perfect
- Therefore, we will continue to push for improvements as CAIS evolves into the new AgriStability
- National and regional consultations are planned for early in the new year
- We'll make sure there's advance notice, and a smooth transition

Challenges

- As we all know ...
- ... It hasn't been very easy year for producers.
- Grain and oilseed producers have had to deal with diseases like clubroot and Fusarium Head Blight...

- But it's been even more difficult for livestock producers...
- ... With skyrocketing input costs ... and a high Canadian dollar.
- The Government has been able to respond with initiatives such as the Alberta Farm Recovery Program ...
- ... But we've also asked industry to respond with plans of their own.
- And this is where I really want to stress this government's vision for a strong and competitive agriculture industry.
- Because in order to be competitive, industry cannot rely on the government to survive.

- If old markets aren't responding ... then industry needs to find new ones.
- If your business model is outdated ... then update it.
- That's always been the strength of this industry ...
- ... The ability to adapt and respond to change.
- Because in agriculture ... if there's one constant ...
- ... It's that there's always going to be another challenge
- But it's challenges that keep us sharp ...
- ... And push us to innovate ... to create ... and adapt.

- I'm proud to say that, in Alberta, we're doing a great job ...
- ... And the future does look bright.
- There are things, to be sure, that need to be fixed
- But with people such as yourself ... I'm confident.
- I can see great things for the future of agriculture in Alberta ...
- ... And we're looking forward to continuing to work with you ...
- ... To build on our successes ...
- ... To overcome our challenges ...

- ... And to make Alberta agriculture even more competitive on the global market.
- Alberta has always been on the leading edge of agriculture in Canada ...
- ... I don't expect that to change.
- Thank you.