

SPRING
2016

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AFA advocacy shines spotlight on agriculture

AGM highlights farm adaptability

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of Alberta Federation of Agriculture (AFA) took place in Red Deer on January 20 through 22 and highlighted new ways producers are managing change on the farm with the theme *Shifting Gears*.

“Agriculture producers are accustomed to change and are very adept at shifting gears,” says AFA President Lynn Jacobson, who farms near Enchant. “This meeting gave our members a chance to see what’s on the horizon and offered innovative ways to meet those challenges.”

Attendees heard a wide range of presentation topics from new farm technology and climate change

to the impact of Alberta’s farm safety legislation.

The AGM speaker highlights included:

- Lawyer David Myrol gave a legal perspective on Alberta’s farm labour legislation
- Shaun Haney from RealAgriculture shared the latest farm technology in the digital age of farming
- Markus Weber with AgEagle showed off drone technology and spoke about how it can impact profitability on the farm
- Premier Rachel Notley, unable to attend in person, sent video greetings from her office

Another guest speaker was the Hon. Oneil Carlier, Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, who provided a provincial update. He also participated in an interesting bear pit session with Olds College agricultural

students where he shared information and answered questions. The students attended our AGM to gain first-hand knowledge of policy development.

AFA delegates also re-confirmed the executive team for another year, with a mandate to engage in vital policy issues, raise awareness of the organization and grow the membership. The executive team for 2016 is: Lynn Jacobson, President; Keith Degenhardt, 1st Vice President and Humphrey Banack, 2nd Vice President.

Members also gathered to table, debate and vote on policy priorities for AFA in the year ahead. As a general farm organization, AFA deals with a variety of concerns that impact farmers and ranchers in the province. The 2016 resolutions showed the breadth of issues that AFA advocates on for farmers.

See all the resolutions passed at the AGM inside on page 2.



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2016 AFA Board of Directors (L-R: Bruce Burnstad, Grace MacGregor, Keith Degenhardt, Lynn Jacobson, Humphrey Banack, Tony Jeglum, Gerald Third. Absent: Marion Popkin.)

AFA 2016 resolutions

The following resolutions were carried at the AFA January 2016 AGM.

BE IT RESOLVED that Alberta Federation of Agriculture:

- advocate that when either the present federal or provincial government implements any new carbon tax or carbon credit program, that for all carbon sequestered in the past as well as in the future, compensation be credited to the active farmer and/or landowners as either an offset for carbon taxes or in cash.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that farm organizations explore a common strategy to ensure that growers are recognized and rewarded for removal and storage of carbon in the soil.

- research and communicate to its members the effects of the Alberta Carbon Plan on agricultural production.
- approach provincial and/or municipal levels of government to request that they devise a cost-effective method of compensating owners of property affected by destructive trespass.
- urge the federal government to commit to working with agricultural organizations, communities and concerned citizens in western Canada to re-open the Indian Head Shelterbelt Centre.
- lobby the federal government to retain a revenue cap on rail movement of grains and oilseeds.
- approach the Ministry of Environment and Parks to consider the use of incinerators to reduce the amount of waste in landfills and minimize the health risks posed by raw garbage sitting in landfills.
- continue to advocate that AFSC be required to find more equitable alternatives to the existing risk area boundary issue and institute changes to significantly reduce the inequities.
- lobby the Government of Alberta for AFA to be the delivery agent for future Alberta farm safety programs.
- lobby the federal government to legislate that the transitional check-off for varietal research become a permanent, mandatory, refundable check-off administered by Western Grains Research Foundation.
- approach the minister responsible for municipal affairs and strongly suggest that pooling and sharing linear non-residential assessment with urban municipalities would be unfair and an additional, unnecessary, burden to the rural taxpayer and rural municipal governments, and is therefore totally unacceptable.
- Board disburse to affected Regions sums to support regional activities at the specific request of Region(s), at the discretion of the Board, and initially from funds recovered from inactive Regions.
- request the Ministry of Finance to pre-emptively act to pay landowners their annual rentals on surface leases operated by bankrupt operators, where above-ground infrastructure still exists, before they have to apply to the SRB (Surface Rights Board) under Section 36 of the SRA (Surface Rights Act).
- request the AER (Alberta Energy Regulator) to utilize the LLR (License Liability Rating) process as it was intended, and collect LLR deposits that are due, so that the OWA (Orphan Well Association) has sufficient funds to fulfill its mandate of reclamation.

Solar rebate for farmers

In 2015, AFA members told us that solar energy was an important issue for them.

To this end, AFA Directors met with Agriculture Minister Oneil Carlier and former Agriculture Minister Verlyn

Olson in 2015 to share the AFA policy resolution: “Be it resolved AFA lobby the provincial government to change the rules to encourage small electrical generators to produce energy to sell into the grid at cost effective value.”

In February this year, AFA welcomed the Alberta Environment Minister’s announcement that made a rebate program available for farmers and ranchers who installed solar panels on their operations.

Government grants are based on an eligible system’s nominal wattage, up to a maximum percentage of system cost, up to \$50,000 per applicant.

Producers can apply for the On-Farm Solar Photovoltaics – On-Farm Energy Management Sub-Program through the Alberta Government Growing Forward 2 website: www.growingforward.alberta.ca.

Update on AFA water project

Under AFA's management, a team of world-renowned hydrologic and climate change scientists are building a unique computer simulation model that will be used to identify risks and impacts of overland flooding, heavy rainfall and drought in agricultural areas.

The three-year hydrologic project began April 1, 2015. Since that time, the research team has been compiling decades' worth of precipitation, soil and sub-soil data to integrate with the most up-to-date information on land surface features. These constructed data sets will be used to verify the model's ability to describe the frequency and geographical extent of known water-related events from the past.

Once that test-phase is complete, AFA can showcase the model's ability to estimate present day events, predict the impact of future events and assess prevention and/or adaptation strategies. No model currently exists that integrates and can test such a wide variety of water events in one tool. Once developed, team lead Rick McConnell says that the model's information could be used to build agricultural insurance products.

AFA's involvement with this project complements our mandate of addressing agricultural issues beyond the scope of a single commodity or sector.

AFA strengthens government connections

When the Government of Alberta opened the spring legislative session on March 8, AFA's VP Humphrey Banack was invited to attend the event. AFA was the only agriculture group to attend the ceremony. Banack feels this invitation shows AFA has developed a solid working relationship with the Government over the last nine months.

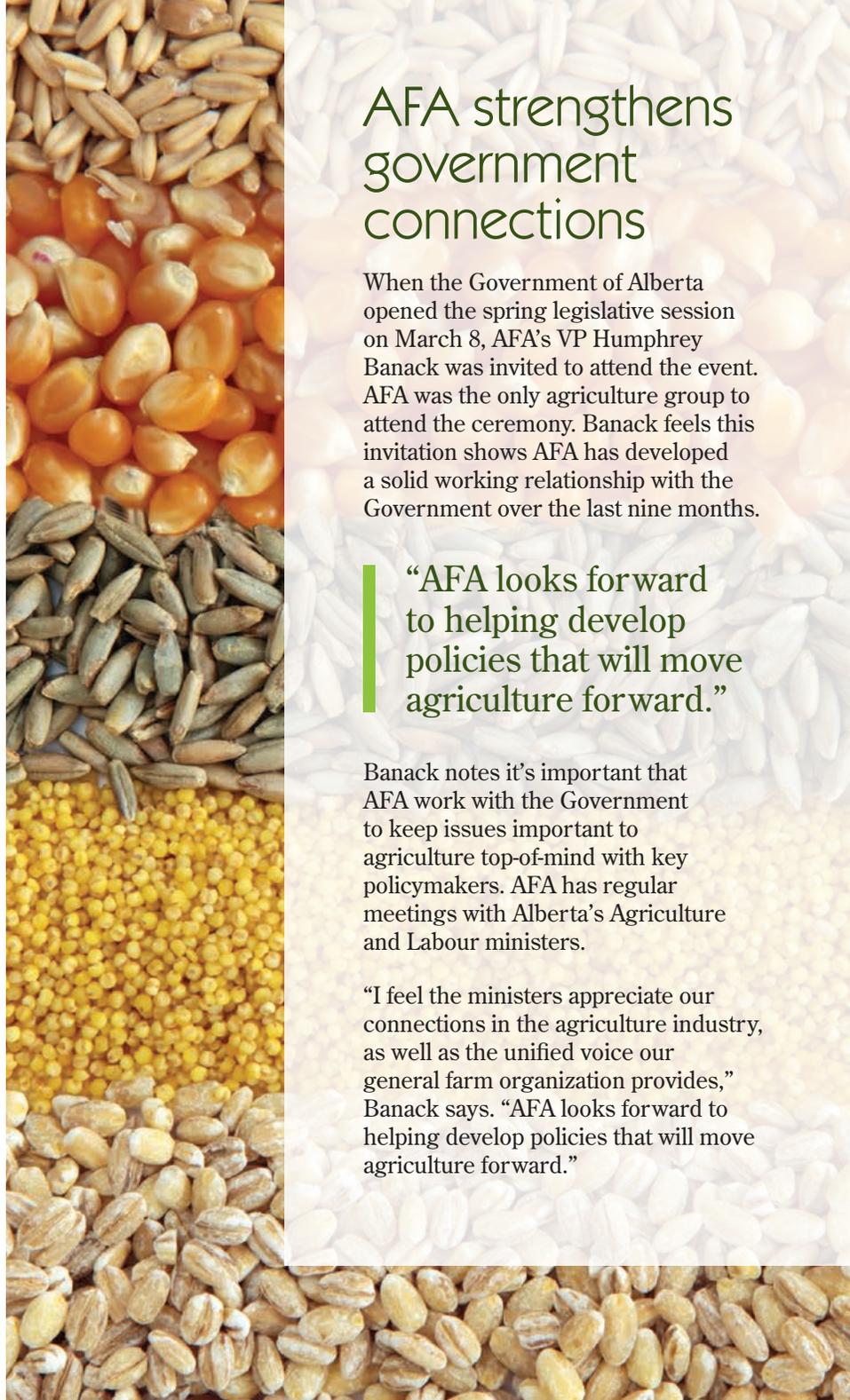
“AFA looks forward to helping develop policies that will move agriculture forward.”

Banack notes it's important that AFA work with the Government to keep issues important to agriculture top-of-mind with key policymakers. AFA has regular meetings with Alberta's Agriculture and Labour ministers.

“I feel the ministers appreciate our connections in the agriculture industry, as well as the unified voice our general farm organization provides,” Banack says. “AFA looks forward to helping develop policies that will move agriculture forward.”

Year in Review showcases advocacy

The AFA Year in Review is now posted on our website, and outlines activities taken throughout 2015 when advocating on behalf of Alberta's farmers and ranchers. Visit afaonline.ca and click on 'News & Events', then 'Newsletters' to view the PDF online. If you want a copy mailed to you, call the AFA Office at 1-855-789-9151 or email info@afaonline.ca.



Noteworthy agriculture activities

AFA attends many industry events and meetings throughout the year to ensure Alberta's farmers and ranchers have a voice in the creation and review of policy. In addition to attending the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's AGM in Ottawa in February 2016, here are other projects active in the AFA portfolio the last few months.

New research shows labour shortage growing

The current gap between labour demand in primary agriculture and the supply of domestic employees who want to work in agriculture is 59,000. Projections indicate that by 2025, the Canadian agri-workforce could be short workers for 114,000 jobs.

This finding is part of the newly-released Labour Market Information (LMI) research by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC). The research was presented during the 'Growing the AgriWorkforce Summit' in Winnipeg, which was attended by AFA's VP Humphrey Banack.

The research, based on 2014 figures and examining only primary production, also noted:

- annual farm cash receipt losses to Canadian producers due to job vacancies are \$1.5 billion, or 3% of the industry's total value in sales and production
- primary agriculture still has the highest industry job vacancy rate at 7%

More information on the LMI results can be found at www.cahrc-ccrha.ca.

Canada Transportation Act Review

The recently released *Canadian Transportation Act Review Report* has several prairie farm groups, including AFA, concerned about its recommendations. At issue is both the recommendation to phase-out the Maximum Revenue Entitlement for railways, and the recommendation to phase-out the 160-kilometre inter-switching provision.

The Government is currently reviewing the *Report*, and as updates become available, AFA will post these on our website, on Twitter and in future newsletters. A copy of the *Report* can be found at: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/ctareview2014/canada-transportation-act-review.html>.

2015 farm waste pick-up successful

In October 2015, CleanFARMS spearheaded an industry-led agricultural waste stewardship program for collecting obsolete and unwanted pesticides and livestock medications throughout southern Alberta.

During the CleanFARMS collection, 70,737 kilograms of obsolete and unwanted pesticides and 2,162 kilograms of livestock and equine medications were collected and disposed of safely.

An obsolete collection program will be scheduled for north of Red Deer, Alberta in the fall of 2016. Details will be posted on the CleanFARMS website (cleanfarms.ca) by late summer 2016.



Alberta's voice for general farm issues since 1959.

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