



Don Shepert, APG Chair

CHAIR'S REPORT

MEETING SEASON IS UPON US

A tough harvest season has given way to a much-anticipated meeting season for Alberta Pulse Growers and most other crop producer organizations in the province.

“Anxiety” seemed to be the theme of the 2019 growing season, which unfortunately wasn’t over for some farmers at press time. The feeling was almost palpable at the annual Pulse and Special Crops Conference in Montreal in August. Everybody was worried about the crops and market access, and the strain just increased from that point on. It was followed by a very stressful harvest with many pressure points applied to us as farmers.

As a member of Team Alberta alongside Alberta Canola and Alberta Wheat and Barley, we called for aggressive action from governments on serious economic hardships facing farmers in a news release in November. The commissions were not exaggerating in characterizing this fall as “the Harvest from Hell.”

This third or fourth rough harvest in a row for many Alberta farmers just added to the stress brought on by major trade disruptions still blocking farm exports into important global markets, business risk management (BRM) programs that are ill-equipped to mitigate these issues and a federal carbon tax starting to be enforced on January 1, 2020.

In that news release, Team Alberta called for the federal government to offer an exemption from the carbon tax on all farm fuels used in operations for irrigating and grain drying which has added extensive costs during this difficult harvest. The federal government has already committed to exemptions on marked farm fuel under the carbon pricing backstop which started being applied in Alberta on January 1, 2020.

One positive that has come out during these times of extreme stress for agricultural producers has been the focus on mental health and helping out your fellow farmer. The Team Alberta news release, blogs on the APG app, Twitter and many other venues have encouraged frank discussions about the toll that feeling like you’re fighting an uphill battle takes on a person’s mental health and encouraging farmers to talk to professionals and to one another.

Many of us look forward to networking with colleagues we haven’t seen for a year or more, as well as learning from industry experts about the latest developments in best management practices and issues affecting our farms.

I was pleased to see so many producers were able to come out to their zone meetings in November and December. The meetings in all APG zones except Zone 1 were again held in partnership with Alberta Barley and Alberta Wheat Commission and branded as Next Level Farming. We hope that you found this to be a valuable use of your time and resources. If you have any ideas about how to keep

improving these meetings and their value to producers like you, please let us know.

Conversations at Agri-Trade and the Alberta Crops Breakfast often turned to the recent federal election, and I’m certain we are all looking forward to getting together for some interesting discussions at FarmTech January 28-30. As usual, the agenda is jam-packed with notable speakers and concurrent sessions. We look forward to visiting with members and other colleagues at the APG booth at FarmTech.

Be sure to attend the APG provincial annual general meeting on January 29 during FarmTech to hear what is new with your organization as it celebrates 30 years.

The APG annual report hit member mailboxes in December so that producers could read through it at their leisure and have the opportunity to ask questions at the annual general meeting. As you will see in the report, the last year was a very busy one for all areas of APG.

