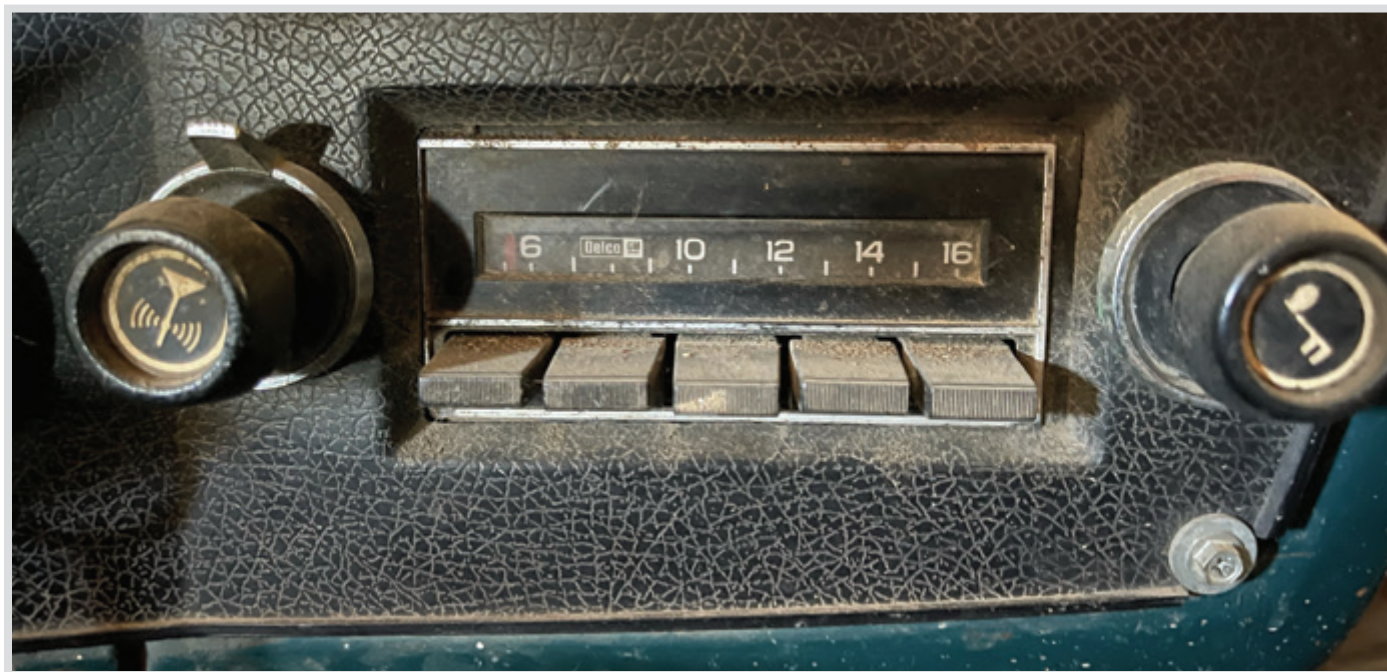




TURNING UP THE VOLUME IN AGRICULTURAL ADVOCACY



By Nevin Rosaasen, APG Policy & Program Specialist

One might be surprised to hear the number of farm groups across the country that either represent you, or claim to be your spokesperson. Team Alberta, Crop Sector Working Group, Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta, Alberta Plant Protein Alliance, Pulse Canada, Agriculture Transport Coalition, Grain Growers of Canada, Canada Grains Council, Canadian Agriculture Free Trade Alliance, Biological Carbon Canada and Soy Canada are either groups where Alberta Pulse Growers is a direct member or a member by association!

Add the other commissions of the crops you grow including wheat, barley or canola, add oats, throw in potatoes and sugar beets and the chain of national organizations they are members of and the list grows and grows. Add a few membership ag groups such as Western Wheat Growers, Canadian Federation of Agriculture or National Farmers

Union voices to the mix and it is no wonder elected officials are not sure who to listen to, or which frequency to dial into. We will leave livestock and supply management out of this conversation as to not open a portal to another dimension.

It is no wonder that messaging is sometimes inconsistent and in cases doesn't reach the intended audience. How can we ensure that we are speaking in unison and with coherent, consistent messaging? How do we ensure policy makers are tuned into the right frequency, our frequency, and that they aren't dismissing the ag voice as noise? It takes a whole lot of elbow grease and hard work. It takes communication, cooperation and then coordination to truly reach the goal of true collaboration.

We often hear the importance of speaking with one voice in the agricultural policy world. This can

not be overstated. Political parties have in the past sowed division amongst farm groups, and this can lead to more palatable political outcomes and not necessarily finding solutions to ag policy dilemmas. Farm organizations by their nature, are intended to represent a collection or membership albeit by membership fees, legislation under the Farm Products Marketing Act and levies, larger national associations etc. In which areas farm organizations and commissions represent you is a playing field with very few rules, and one where the loudest voice, the first to the front page or the one providing testimony to a standing committee may indeed be THE voice of agriculture. Perhaps the perceived voice of agriculture, at least for a day.

Alberta Pulse Growers' Directors and staff tread lightly through the mine fields, the four C's of



effective collaboration so to speak. Communication is that critical first step. The success of Team Alberta has relied on staff of the four commissions being on speed dial, WhatsApp chats, group texts and impromptu phone conversations over countless issues. It has allowed Alberta's cropping sector to turn up the volume, on an agreed frequency, with consistent messaging with continued success. Other provincial partnerships such as Crop Sector Working Group have reached the Collaboration stage and continue to effectively use shared input, creativity and ultimately funding dollars to execute on projects. As the number of commissions and farm organizations increase, the frequency becomes harder to discern, and often times, true collaboration or even coordination is missed.

- **Communication:** The exchange of ideas and information.
- **Cooperation:** Independent goals with agreements not to interfere with each other.
- **Coordination:** Actions of users directed by a coordinator to achieve a common goal.
- **Collaboration:** The process of shared creation; collectively creating something new that could not have been created by the individual users.

Source: <https://convergelabs.com/blog/2018/01/the-four-cs-communication-coordination-cooperation-and-collaboration/>

So, what's the frequency? How do we turn up the volume? The old adage rings true. How do you get three farmers in a room to agree? You start by removing two

farmers. This reaching agreement business is hard work. Do we always get the messaging right? We certainly try to. Can we do better? Absolutely. The dirty work in the trenches, with late night phone calls between executive directors, elected commissions directors, policy and communications staff are what unifies our collective farm voice in Edmonton, Ottawa and beyond.

Without the ground work being laid, we cannot dial in the frequency and truly turn up the volume. When we do reach consensus, and execute the four C's of collaboration, the farm voice is one to be reconned with. Remember Bill 6?

How can you help? Find the Team Alberta voice, one that has been through the four C's and amplify that messaging.

Learn more about the issues Team Alberta works on at www.teamalbertacrops.com.