CHAIR'S REPORT

New Chair embracing the role to benefit fellow growers

BY WILL MULLER
APG Chair

Hello fellow producers,

If you would have told me years ago when I first joined the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission that I would be writing this as your provincial chair, I wouldn't have believed you. Back then, I was entirely intimidated by the organization and everyone involved. I certainly didn't grow up in a family that pushed me into agricultural commissions; I blame curiosity for ending up here, and I am trying to fully embrace it.

After accepting a chair position that my instincts begged me to reject, I found myself on a "wild ride" to India with Pulse Canada within weeks, holding out a sliver of hope that I'd at least get a glimpse of the Taj Mahal, which thankfully I did. While the sightseeing was secondary, the mission was huge: Witnessing firsthand how India desperately needs Canadian pulses to cover their four-month reserve shortfall while navigating one to 10-acre farms, wheat subsidy traps, and transit issues. I learned they don't want "fake meat." They want real, high quality Canadian protein, which we can supply with our pulses. Ultimately, the trip proved that while board chairs come and go, our real job is ensuring Canadian farmers remain India's go-to pulse partners so we can keep feeding 1.5 billion people.

Closer to home, we snagged our first ever invite to the Western Premiers' Conference. The networking window was so tight it took a bit of pure aggression just to get a short chat in with the premiers. The real highlight was staying up late talking shop with our new Minister of Agriculture, Tara Sawyer. Most of us already know Tara from her previous roles with Grain Growers of Canada, so I was very happy to see this new opportunity for her, and I think we can all agree we will be glad to work alongside her.

Of course, while I was handling things closer to home, the fear of missing out was still real as our Executive Director Leanne Fischbuch and Zone 4 Director Bev Wieben took off on a crucial mission to China. They were over there strengthening vital trade ties, navigating post tariff dynamics, and opening doors for Canadian peas and pulse ingredients. Between high level meetings with Chinese Customs and the Ministry of Commerce to push for access on lentils, faba beans, and chickpeas, and attending the China Pea Conference, they covered a lot of ground. The takeaway was clear: While Chinese fractionators genuinely value our pea quality, low-cost competition from Russia and Argentina is ramping up. It made it obvious that sustained market presence, product diversification, and strict adherence to quality standards like our "Keep It Clean" glyphosate messaging are essential to holding our ground.

But whether we are talking about India, China, or Edmonton, running APG is like a three-legged race with staff. As producers, our focus is naturally on our fields, so we rely heavily on our incredible staff to keep the wheels turning behind the scenes while we manage the madness of spray schedules and irrigation pivots. That partnership is exactly why grassroots representation matters. This year highlighted just how diverse our growing zones are. While those of us farming inside the Palliser Triangle were complaining over bone dry sandy soil, directors in the north were literally riding snowmobiles off their roofs. What keeps a farmer awake at night down south isn't even on the radar a few hours away. To ensure every unique corner of Alberta is represented equally, we need your voice. I strongly encourage everyone to attend our upcoming fall zone meetings. Take it from me, stepping up as a zone advisor is a rewarding way to put one foot in and help steer our industry.

To close, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to each of you for granting me the privilege to serve as your chair. Being in this role is a continuous learning curve. I certainly don't have all the answers, but it gives me an invaluable platform to learn and speak up directly on the real, day to day issues we all face on our own farms. It is a true honour to represent our collective voice, and I look forward to continuing our work together to push our industry forward. Thank you for your ongoing trust and support.