



March 25, 2020

Andre Tremblay
Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
3rd fl, JG O'Donoghue Building
7000 113 ST
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6
Via email: andre.tremblay@gov.ab.ca

Re: Cuts to AF's staffing and services

Dear Deputy Minister Tremblay:

On behalf of the over 20,000 barley, canola, pulse and wheat farmers in Alberta, we have a responsibility to our members to respond to the significant cuts that have been made to Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's (AF's) staffing and services. While we recognize the necessity to reduce government spending, we implore the ministry to reassess some of its recent decisions. We are requesting to meet* with you and your Assistant Deputy Ministers to better understand your rationale, and to share our perspectives on the people, positions and services deemed essential to the competitiveness, sustainability and profitability of Alberta's agriculture industry. (*virtual meeting due to COVID-19)

Loss of government knowledge and expertise – AF's decision to terminate key positions and provincial experts with years of internal, specialized and local knowledge of research and extension harms the future of Alberta's crop sector. The government scientists and specialists are integral for surveillance and monitoring that identifies and solves serious crop production challenges; for extending unbiased information about beneficial management practices and government programs and services; and for enhancing the competitiveness of the agriculture industry. We would like to discuss the following:

- Access to information – The strategy to provide access or transition the invaluable resources (documents, papers, factsheets, etc.) generated by AF staff to industry.
- Downloading of extension – Many agriculture organizations do not have the capacity or resources to take this over from government. To whom will this responsibility flow and who is responsible for funding?

Future of the Blue Book – The Alberta Crop Protection Guide known as "the Blue Book" is a key resource used widely across the industry. It contains essential product label information in an easy to use

TEAM ALBERTA

Team Alberta is a collaborative initiative led by four of the province's crop commissions. Our commissions are producer elected, directed and funded organizations established to represent the interests of our producers across the province.



format. It is invaluable as a decision guide and cross-referencing tool for applying chemicals to protect crop yields and quality. Crop Specialists assembled the Blue Book annually and screened label information for accuracy. As the details of chemical use, availability and regulation change frequently, yearly updates are required to ensure users are aware of the most up to date information. We would like to discuss and be able to communicate with our farmer members AF's plan for future editions of the Blue Book.

Future of the Agronomy Update – This annual event provides the latest information on agronomy, technology, and managing diseases, insects, weeds and soil. Many industry professionals rely on this event to earn Continuing Education Units for Certified Crop Advisors, Pesticide Applicators, and Certified Crop Science Consultants. The Ag-Info Centre Crop Specialists also coordinated this event, which advanced Alberta's agriculture industry to compete in the global market. What is the fate of this event? Who will fund and coordinate it going forward?

Major changes taking place within Alberta Agriculture and Forestry are having a profound impact on the crop sector. Alberta's farmers are prepared to make investments in the long-term success of our industry, but our commissions have limited financial and staffing resources. The Government of Alberta must remain a trusted and supportive partner in funding critical research, extension and program services. Please contact Ward Toma, General Manager of Alberta Canola at 780-454-0844 or ward@albertacanola.com to arrange a meeting to discuss this further with Team Alberta.

Sincerely,



Ward Toma
General Manager
Alberta Canola



Leanne Fischbuch
Executive Director
Alberta Pulse Growers



Tom Steve
General Manager
Alberta Wheat and Barley Commissions

Cc: Mr. Jamie Wuite, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister (AF)
Mr. Dave Burdek, Assistant Deputy Minister (AF)
Ms. Katrina Bluetchen, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister (AF)

TEAM ALBERTA

Team Alberta is a collaborative initiative led by four of the province's crop commissions. Our commissions are producer elected, directed and funded organizations established to represent the interests of our producers across the province.

