



# TEAM ALBERTA FOCUSES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND INDUSTRY CHALLENGES IN MINISTER LETTERS



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A wetland on an Ardrossan farm.

Towards the end of May, Alberta Agriculture Minister RJ Sigurdson wrote two letters to Team Alberta Crops requesting information. The first asked us to summarize sustainability efforts, and the second was to outline challenges facing Alberta’s primary agriculture sector.

Our partnership of the Alberta Beekeepers Commission, Alberta Canola, Alberta Grains, Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta-BC Seed Growers, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers and the Potato Growers of Alberta is always appreciative of the Minister reaching out to ask for our farmer-led feedback.

### Sustainability

Sustainability efforts utilized within primary crop and honey production are not well understood nor appreciated outside of the ag community. Unfortunately, this often manifests in conversations around reducing carbon where agriculture

is targeted and even villainized for its purported carbon footprint. Parts of the world like the European Union and Sri Lanka have brought forward damaging policies that have or could devastate productivity and prosperity on the farm. All too recently Canadian farmers saw their livelihoods threatened when the government began discussing a 30% fertilizer emission reduction target.

Environmentally driven policies that harm primary food production exemplify the need for agriculture to do a better job sharing the incredible technologies and practices already being utilized and the great strides that have been made that promote sustainability and productivity.

Political pressure and the long-term success of the industry require agriculture to do a better job communicating the widespread uptake of practices and technologies.

This includes zero and minimum tillage, environmental farm plans, the Farm Sustainability Readiness Tool, cover and inter-cropping, including pulse crops in rotations and life cycle assessments that can gauge the environmental impact throughout all stages of food production. We must champion the adoption of technologies and practices such as 4R (right source, right rate, right time, and right place), sectional rate control, variable rate technology, soil health practices and the advancements in energy and water-use efficiency to name a few. Projects like the Alberta Wetland Stewardship Project have clearly proven that farmer stewardship practices keep wetlands healthy.

As the leading advocate for Alberta agriculture, Minister Sigurdson now has the information he needs to share the plethora of good news stories that will help protect Alberta farmers from potentially damaging policies.

### Challenges faced by Alberta's primary agriculture sector

The second letter invited Team Alberta Crops to highlight specific challenges that are frustrating for producers and areas where the provincial government should focus its efforts that will help lower the cost of production as well as support growth and a thriving agriculture sector. This includes federal policy challenges, of which there are many, where the province can lobby and work collaboratively with their provincial counterparts to effect positive change.

Policies like the increase to the capital gains inclusion rate will have a profoundly negative impact on long-term farm viability affecting farm succession and new entrants to the industry. We also highlighted issues related to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the importance of farmers having access to the

necessary chemistries and tools. There are also concerns regarding other federal initiatives such as the Right to Repair, primary produce packaging regulations, National Biodiversity Strategy and a strategy for National Data Management to reduce survey fatigue and ensure data quality and security.

Other concerns included environmental requirements with Business Risk Management programs, high energy costs, slow wait times for land-title transfers and making sure farmers have access to labour and transportation, which of course include rail and port access.

Looking forward for growth, Team Alberta Crops highlighted the importance of a provincial water management strategy to better manage challenges related to drought and excess water. Likewise, it's very difficult to grow the

agriculture industry as agricultural lands continue to be converted into renewable energy and urban uses. Additional efforts to attract value added investment will be another key driver of success and prosperity for agricultural producers.

Team Alberta Crops was created to share collaborative input to policy makers that helps to ensure the long-term success and prosperity of the crop sector through the grass-roots advocacy by the farmer members and their participation in the commissions. Minister Sigurdson has proven himself as a willing and very capable champion of our industry and we are grateful for the opportunity to provide this direct feedback that will help guide and inform his work as the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

The full letters can be found on the Team Alberta Crops website at [www.TeamAlbertaCrops.com](http://www.TeamAlbertaCrops.com)

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