



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **For Immediate Release: Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies Convention Continues to Grow Attracting 120 Agriculture Societies**

The 61<sup>st</sup> annual convention of the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies (AAAS) was held in Red Deer where over 500 delegates and industry members attended representing 120 Agricultural Societies.

Agricultural societies are volunteer driven organizations that vary greatly from one another in size and programming, but all offer unique services required by their communities including operating facilities and programs that contribute to the growth and development of rural Alberta in the areas of leadership capacity building, health and well being and the support of agriculture.

The AAAS convention provides an opportunity for delegates to network and take in seminars that cover a broad range in topics. Sessions offered this year were Managing Business Records, Energy Efficiency, Funding Today to Grow a Strong Tomorrow, and Trends to Volunteer Commitment to name a few. Delegates were also provided the opportunity throughout the weekend to be entertained by artists showcasing themselves and their acts, and this year Red Deer Tourism and Westerner Park provided a Red Deer & Westerner Park Tour. During free time delegates were invited to visit the trade fair booths and the silent auction.

This years theme of the convention was "...into the future" so it was fitting that during the Cabinet Minister's/MLA Forum the Minister of Agriculture, Honorable George Groeneveld made the announcement of a one time only grant of \$5,000,000.00 to act as transitional funding in order to assist agricultural societies in meeting their objectives while work is being done to move toward a business plan based approach to funding. AAAS will be allocated \$250,000.00 to help move this process forward and the balance will be split equally between the agricultural societies.

The annual convention also provides an opportunity to recognize volunteers for their dedication and commitment towards agriculture and their communities. This year Mr. Don Stewart from the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede was presented the Award of Merit for being an outstanding supporter of agriculture and encouraging the growth and promotion of agricultural societies. Mary Ann Reed from the Redwater & District Agricultural Society and Dorothy O. Heiland from the Buffalo & District Agricultural Society were the recipients of a Honourary Life Membership in the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies in recognition of their services to their communities. Lastly, Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies Student Scholarships were awarded to Tammy Kulyk from the Buffalo & District Ag. Society and Devin Dreeshen from the Crossroads Ag. Society.

New Directors voted in during their regional meetings are Judy Dreeshen, and Jennifer Filip for Region 3, and Monica Bradley for Region 5. Newly elected executive board members are; Tim Carson – President; Mike Sidoryk – Past President; Mark Jensen – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Andre Charrois – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Monica Bradley – Treasurer.

A solid turn out is expected again in January of 2009 at the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual convention, which will again be hosted by Region 3 in Red Deer.

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