



Honourable Pat Bell  
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

# BC's AGRI-FOOD UPDATE



Featuring British Columbia's Agriculture Sector

OCTOBER 2005

## FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

It's all about making a silk purse from a sow's ear. It's about turning something negative into a positive . . . about finding something good amongst the bad. That's the vision we must take if we're to get over the challenges that the mountain pine beetle (MPB) puts in the way to economic success in British Columbia.

That's why I was particularly pleased on Sept 21 when my colleague, Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen, introduced amending legislation pumping in an additional \$50 million in provincial money to help communities fight the MPB infestation and to diversify the Northern B.C. economy. Two days earlier, on Sept, 19, a plan for the use of \$100 million in federal money aimed at helping B.C. respond to the epidemic was announced by Premier Gordon Campbell and Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman.

If you visit north-central B.C. these days, you'll be literally "seeing red" because of the MPB infestation. I'm speaking, of course, about the red colour that pine trees take on when they have been killed off by this natural disaster. But the real trick is to ensure that northern communities don't see red in their budgets when the full toll of MPB is tallied years from now. That's what Minister Hansen's amendment is all about.

In short, the Northern Development Initiative Trust Amendment Act provides the Northern Development Initiative Trust an additional \$50 million in investment funds. Thirty million dollars of the additional money will assist affected communities to help ensure a long-term and sustainable future in the forest sector. Twenty million dollars from the fund will be used to help the region leverage new investment and partnerships to develop economic strength.

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*The Abbotsford Agrifair was a great opportunity for Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell to meet people in the agricultural community. From left is Valerie Roddick, MLA for Delta South and John van Dongen, MLA for Abbotsford-Clayburn and former Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Minister Bell is sharing a laugh with a retailer.*

## B.C.'S AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY GIVES MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR

IT'S OCTOBER – There's a nip in the air and the frost is on the pumpkin. The legislature is back in session and soon we will be celebrating Thanksgiving.

Let me count some of the ways British Columbians can be thankful:

1. We can certainly be thankful for the fact that cattle are once again moving across the U.S. border after two and a half years. It was none too soon for British Columbia's beef producers but with the border opening, cattle prices are up and there's a renewed energy in our ranching sector. That sense of renewed energy was palpable when I spoke with people like Bill Freding during the Southern Plus Feedlot Tour I took in late summer.
2. We can be thankful for the promise of an exciting future for agriculture in British Columbia and the opportunities that will be available for young people. Many of those future farmers are members of 4-H Clubs that raise animals such as the sheep I had the opportunity to purchase from Abbotsford's Amanda Gilliland at a 4-H sale at the PNE a few weeks ago.
3. The fact that British Columbia produces a greater variety of agricultural products over a wide range of geographical and climatic conditions than any other place in Canada is something to be thankful for.

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One other very important thing Minister Hansen's amendment does is includes agriculture within the sectors eligible to receive Northern Development Initiative funds. As Minister of Agriculture and Lands, I see this as a very important factor in light of my Ministry's mandate to increase agricultural opportunities in British Columbia

Some of the land impacted by MPB is suitable for uses other than growing trees. There are pockets of land in areas affected by MPB with the potential to grow marketable crops. At the very least, there is an opportunity to significantly increase the land on which forage can be grown and beef cattle or sheep can be grazed.

Increasing the amount of rangeland available to cattle producers is a worthwhile goal in British Columbia and I was very pleased when I heard the B.C. Cattlemen's Association publicly endorse the idea of using pine-beetle infested lands to create more range capacity.

Of course, it's not the whole answer to the problems MPB will cause the economy of British Columbia. In the short term, additional logging and milling jobs will be available in areas where the annual allowable cut has been increased to deal with MPB. Long-term solutions will require some deep thinking. It's a challenge that I'm sure many minds will be put to work dealing with in the coming months and it won't be the first time that British Columbians have turned a negative into a positive.

### Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

## B.C. AG FACT

### You want tomatoes? We've got tomatoes!

In 2002, Dave and Sarah Ryall of Gipaanda Greenhouses Ltd. in Ladner set the world record for the largest amount of tomatoes produced in a square metre of greenhouse space. A square metre is approximately the size of the average bathtub. The weight of the tomatoes grown in that space? A whopping 74.25 kilograms (165 pounds)!

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**AL.MINISTER@GOV.BC.CA**



Ministry of  
Agriculture and Lands

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4. We can be thankful for the incredible growth in the wine industry in British Columbia – Vintners Quality Alliance sales from B.C. producers reached almost \$120 million in July of this year, a 22.5 per cent increase over the previous year.

5. Let's be thankful that the public is recognizing that safe, sustainable agriculture is vital to good health and that we should eat eat healthy, nutritious products produced right here in B.C.

6. We can be thankful that we are building new relationships in agriculture, land-use planning and aquaculture, and strengthening relationships with First Nations through recognition, respect and reconciliation.

7. And we should certainly be thankful that we have some of the best farmers and ranchers in the world growing a cornucopia of products – more than 225 different commodities at the last count.

8. Let's be thankful for the diversity of cultures that make up the incredible mosaic of agricultural endeavours in B.C. The ideas and energy various ethnic groups bring to the agricultural sector in B.C. helps create a vibrant industry second to none.

9. Let's be thankful for the more than \$22 billion worth of consumer products created each year by an industry that makes a great contribution to our thriving economy, providing jobs for more than 280,000 people.

10. Let's be thankful that agriculture will play a huge role in achieving the Five Great Goals for British Columbia as set out in the speech from the throne, in particular, the goal of leading the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness and leading the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management, bar none.

The list could keep on growing . . . there's just so much for British Columbians to be thankful for, and when many of us sit down to our traditional Thanksgiving dinner of B.C.-grown turkey, complete with all the B.C.-grown trimmings, including made-in-B.C. cranberry sauce and B.C.-grown pumpkin pie, let's all be thankful that we live in British Columbia, the best place on earth!



Amanda Gilliland, an 11-year-old 4-H member from Abbotsford, proudly shows off the lamb she raised and sold at the PNE's annual 4-H auction held Aug. 23 in Vancouver. She is joined by Larry Weymouht, an Abbotsford butcher who purchased the animal on behalf of Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell. The meat has been donated to a Lower Mainland transition house.