



Honourable Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

BC's AGRI-FOOD & LANDS



UPDATE

Featuring British Columbia's Agriculture Sector

SEPTEMBER 2005

FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

From Abbotsford to Aldergrove, from Cowichan to Castlegar, summer fairs and exhibitions are something most British Columbians look forward to attending each year.

Most small cities have one. Many communities have been putting them on for decades and they have become the highlight of rural life throughout B.C.

Rural fairs and exhibitions are where city folks meet their country cousins. They're a great opportunity for people to re-connect with their rural roots and get a feel for where their food comes from.

That's why I plan to spend time visiting as many fairs and rural exhibitions throughout B.C. as I can. As the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Lands, I can't think of a better way to personally meet the many wonderful people who make up the agricultural sector in this great province.

I've already seen quite a large slice of B.C. as Minister of Agriculture and Lands. To date my travels have taken me to a blueberry farm in Abbotsford; greenhouses in Delta; a llama farm near Kamloops; a hundred-year-old sheep spread in Vavenby; vineyards in the Okanagan and ranches in Williams Lake and Prince George and many points in between.

One thing that I've discovered about the agricultural sector in British Columbia: It's full of great people!

I plan to keep travelling British Columbia, so keep an eye out for me. And if you do spot me at your local fall fair, don't be too shy to say hi!

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands



B.C. 4-H Club members from Kamloops area introduced their woolly friends, Aug. 3/05 to The Honourable Pat Bell (kneeling), Minister of Agriculture and Lands, on a farm near Kamloops. Kevin Krueger, MLA for Kamloops-North Thompson, was also on hand for the ceremony, presenting a \$95,000 cheque from the Government of B.C. to the B.C. 4-H Council, part of the organization's annual operating budget. Minister Bell and Glen Hershey, B.C. 4-H Council President, signed the renewal of a five-year memorandum of understanding that sets out the terms of the partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands with the provincial 4-H organization.

MINISTER BELL MEETS COLLEAGUES, DISCUSSES INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

KANANASKIS – One of my first official duties after being sworn in as Minister of Agriculture and Lands was to represent B.C. at the annual meeting of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Agriculture in Kananaskis, Alberta July 5-8. Being the "new guy," I was asked to tell the gathering a bit about myself and I explained that I certainly have big shoes to fill replacing former B.C. Agriculture Minister John van Dongen.

It was great getting to know the various agriculture ministers during the conference and I was very pleased to note there was a real sense of agreement between all the ministers in dealing with the challenges that we face, specifically around BSE. In fact, there was agreement about the entire agricultural sector in terms of building an industry where people choose to invest and spend their lives working in a vibrant and exciting environment. We spent quite a bit of time talking about building an industry that sees a reasonable level of profits, that can sustain itself, works in a variety of different ways, is innovative and uses appropriate technology to ensure long-term sustainability.

B.C.'s agricultural industry is moving in a positive direction. The opening of the New Zealand border to Canadian beef, announced on July 8, the last day of the conference, was certainly the kind of movement in the BSE situation that we were very pleased about. Japan's discussions about opening the border to Canadian beef were also very encouraging. And speaking of moving ahead, B.C. ranchers breathed a collective sigh of relief on July 14 when a U.S. appeal court overturned the injunction against importing Canadian cattle under 30 months of

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Production Insurance adds protection

Government is improving crop insurance to better help farmers manage risk. To comply with a new Agriculture Policy Framework replacing one signed with the federal government, July/02, the more comprehensive Production Insurance Program replaces the former Crop Insurance program.

The program's goal is to provide more coverage to more producers across more products at a more affordable cost. It also retains a low-cost disaster clause that allows as many producers as possible to participate. The new program will be well publicized so that producers are aware of the changes and can sign up by the appropriate deadline. Watch your mailbox for more details on the new Production Insurance plan.

For more information, contact your nearest Production Insurance office toll free at: Abbotsford, 1-888-221-7141; Dawson Creek, 1-877-772-2200; Fort St. John, 1-888-822-1345; Kamloops, 1-888-823-3355; Kelowna, 1-888-332-3352; Oliver, 1-888-812-8811 or visit the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands website at: www.al.bc.ca

B.C. AG FACT

B.C.'s dairy farmers and their animals are among the most efficient in the world and they're getting better all the time. For example, milk production in B.C. was 350 million litres in 1965.

Thirty years later, in 1995, annual production had reached 500 million litres and in 2005, it's approaching 600 million litres per year. The amazing thing is that the number of dairy cows has remained virtually constant throughout that 40-year period. The improved yield is almost entirely due to increased efficiency.

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Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands



JULY 2005 — Minister Pat Bell (middle) toured Ken Randhawa's greenhouse in Abbotsford on July 28, 2005 with Val Roddick, MLA for Delta-South and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture. Minister Bell toured a broad range of farming operations on July 28, 29 in Abbotsford, Delta, Ladner & Richmond.

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age for slaughter in American beef plants. The first load of cattle from British Columbia moved across the border south of Osoyoos on August 3. If the border-opening ruling stands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is expected to release a proposed rule before the end of the year for trade to resume in Canadian breeding stock and cattle over 30 months of age. Of course, the big bullet to dodge will be an application by the U.S. ranchers group R-CALF seeking a permanent ban on Canadian beef. However the case, which was to be heard July 27 by Judge Richard Cebull, the same judge who made the original adverse ruling, has been delayed indefinitely pending a review of the written reasons for the appeal court's decision. In the meantime cattle are once again being shipped south to the slaughterhouses in the U.S. but many of our ranchers are hoping that more beef will remain in Canada for slaughtering and processing. In B.C. there are several groups of farmers and ranchers working hard to increase our own slaughter and processing capacity by building new abattoirs. Self-sufficiency in the slaughter and processing of Canadian beef is an extremely worthwhile goal, along with the ability to identify and trace livestock, something we're also diligently working on. We must learn from our past mistakes and ensure that we follow through on increasing slaughter capacity. My biggest fear is that we will be lulled into a false sense of confidence in the reliability of the American market.

I often tell people that I have the best job in all of B.C. and let me assure you, that's not hyperbole. It is the best job and I know that I'm part of a great team that is committed to achieving all of Premier Campbell's Five Great Goals for a Golden Decade. The commitment to 'lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management, bar none,' is something I will be working very hard on. I see the promise to 'create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada' as a personal challenge and the goal to 'lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness' speaks volumes to every Ministry of Agriculture and Lands staff member, including me. Getting up to speed on the issues that affect the safe, sustainable production of food in B.C. has been extremely interesting for me. The players involved are obviously very dedicated. You can be sure I'll be doing what I can to meet the needs of the agriculture sector to help B.C.'s economy become more robust and dynamic than it already is.

On the "lands" side of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the first month of the realignment has been spent on reorganizing the structure and things are going well. We're off to a flying start towards our goal of ensuring that we have a structure that is coherent and integrated and meets the needs of the province. The transfer of some of Land and Water BC's resources to the newly-structured Ministry and Integrated Land Management Bureau will certainly assist in implementing the Government's long-term plan to improve access to government services.

Front Counter BC -- Natural Resource Opportunity Centres (NROC) will streamline the application process for anyone trying to chase down permits from various ministries. These centres will be a single point of access into government. The first centre is in Kamloops and the doors opened Aug. 2 with the official opening set for early September. We will be working diligently to complete the strategic land-use planning that is underway throughout B.C. with First Nations. We look forward to developing the province's strategic direction on agriculture, aquaculture, broad-ranging species at risk, information management and Crown land policy. Fostering better business relationships in our agri-food industry to drive costs down and improve profit margins while maintaining customer satisfaction is also a priority, along with promoting B.C.'s bio-based economy and developing agri-tourism as we approach 2010.