

# THE POTATO MINUTE

MAY 2024



Growing Healthy Potatoes Together

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein



In the search of a topic for this month's article I came upon a very descriptive definition of a "Farmer".

***"Farmer – a person who pays a fixed sum for some privilege or source of income with no guaranteed return."***

The article continues on to say that this calling is not for the weak of heart or mind. Farming requires a special calling, a profound faith and the appreciation of the small things that life has to offer. It requires a tremendous support system and a willingness to accept humility, all the while knowing that they are making a difference in the world. It is knowing and accepting that you are a price taker, not having a say in what your toils are worth.

It concludes with the declaration that if you are willing to proceed knowing all of this, then you have chosen one of the noblest callings in life.

These wise words were taken from an article that I found from an interview with a farmer during the great depression. Over 90 years later and every word still rings true. *"History does repeat itself, and yet farming still continues to play its part in society."*

As the province moves forward with the knowledge of the impending drought, agriculture will figure it out, we will do our part to share our crucial limited resource – water. At the end of the day, no one will go hungry, everyone will tighten their belts and hopefully we all learn valuable lessons from this.

In talking to some of our seed growers, this year seems

to be extra hectic and chaotic. Export seed shipments and local shipments are happening all at once. By the second week of May, most planters in the south will be finishing up and our seed crop will be going into the ground a couple weeks later. With today's technology and the reduction in overall commercial acres this year, it only takes a few weeks to get the crop in. More than one commercial grower has said that they would gladly take a rain delay or two during planting this year. It's been a couple of years since we have had days off during planting.

After some unforeseen delays, preliminary work continues on the twinning of Highway 3 between Taber and Burdett. Right now, the completion date is set for the end of 2025. This stage is one of eight phases needed to twin the highway from Medicine Hat to the BC border. As the province continues to enjoy the expansion of Canada's Premier Food Corridor in Southern Alberta the twinning of Highway 3 is critical to its success. With a population of only 4.8 million people, Alberta's ag industry heavily relies on the export of its production in agriculture, oil and gas and other commodities.

As we are about to enter one of the busiest times of the year, please remember to take your time and be safe on the road and in the field.

Until next month,

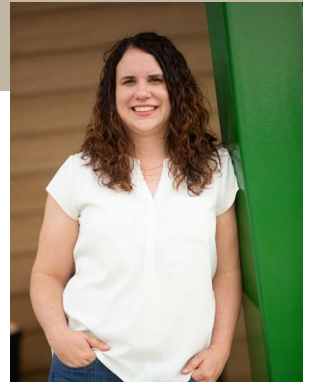
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## GOV'T RELATIONS-POLICY-SEED DIRECTOR - Stacey Bajema



Shipping season has finally started to slow down. It was extremely busy for the seed growers this year. With cool weather and uncertain processing volumes, the shipping season condensed into larger amounts of seed leaving the farm in a shorter timeframe. These logistical challenges are a part of any seed farm, but there may be no other place in North America where it is as extreme as seed potato farms in Alberta. Alberta seed potato farmers, especially as we continue to grow and supply seed to more areas around North America, are constantly adapting and modernizing their equipment and on-farm practices to ensure high quality product can leave the farm in the most efficient ways possible. Once again, this year we will see growers shipping off the farm at the same time they are in the field planting.

Planting conditions in Northern Alberta are decent for now albeit a little on the dry side. No area in Alberta had a great snowpack on the field but that can all be overcome by some good and timely spring rains. South Edmonton and the Lacombe regions seem to be the driest at this point. In Southern Alberta we also have some seed potato growers who will also be impacted by lowered water allocations in

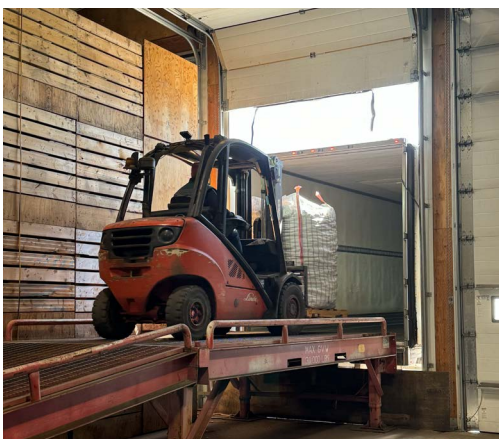
the irrigated districts. We expect water to be top of mind for all potato growers in Alberta and will hope for the best despite current drought forecasts for the upcoming year. Last year was a clear example of how fickle mother nature can be with some of our growers getting over 20 inches of rain and others barely a few inches.

It was great to be out over the last couple weeks and having some time to drop in on some farms. Everyone is excited for the upcoming season. The Crop Diversification Centre North is starting to buzz with more staff and researchers on site. The Plant Health Lab has some new seasonal people on site to work on various projects and Tina Lewis has a new assistant tech starting in May to help in the Alberta Seed Potato repository.

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*Top & bottom left: Hoogland Farms Ltd. loading seed potatoes for customers, Bottom right: Haenni Farms Greenhouse seed plants growing nicely*



# AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR - Rebecca Wieler



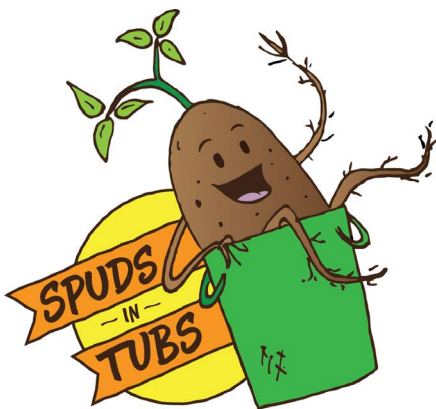
After a busy winter season of traveling, we are ready to get back into the fields. The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada AGM in March and a few days of meetings in Calgary wrapped up the winter travelling.

Once again, the PGA in partnership with Promax agronomy and the University of Lethbridge will be running the in-field surveillance program. Throughout the winter months, the program was reviewed and additional traps will be added around the province for stronger surveillance as the potato industry continues to grow. Along with the Spore Trapping & Insect Monitoring programs the PGA captures weather data from several public weather stations around the province. This data generates reports regarding the daily maximum and minimum temperatures, daily humidity, daily rainfall amounts, growing degree days, disease pressures, crop moisture values and spray recommendations. This data is used by growers on a daily basis to make informed decisions regarding best management practices to continuously improve the sustainability of the agriculture industry in the Province.

Variety Trials will be starting in the field again this Spring, which have been moved from Brooks to Lethbridge. Dr. Chandra Singh continues to lead this initiative under the National Cluster projects. Along with the variety trails, Jonathan Neilson will be working with Mario Tenuta on the Nitrogen Management project at AAFC under the Cluster 4 program.

Moving forward, we have four new potato research projects beginning this season. We look forward to continuous growth and innovation in the industry.

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## Spuds In Tubs Program

Projects across the province are about 1/3 of the way into the growing season for Spuds In Tubs. Plants are looking great and teachers have reported much enthusiasm so far with the learning outcomes and anticipation of their harvest.





## Major Water Sharing Agreements Ready For Alberta

April 19, 2024

After several dry years and El Niño producing a warm, dry winter across Canada, Alberta is at risk of severe droughts this year, especially in southern Alberta. Recent snowfall has helped, but the province's winter snowpack remains below average, many rivers are lower than normal and multiple reservoirs are below capacity.

To help, 38 of the largest and oldest water licensees in southern Alberta have voluntarily agreed to reduce the water they use if severe drought conditions develop this spring or summer. These groups represent up to 90 per cent of the water allocated in the Bow and Oldman basins and 70 per cent in the Red Deer River basin. The landmark agreements will let more Albertans access water in a drought and reduce the negative impacts on communities, the economy and the environment.

### Water use reductions and adjustments

These water-sharing agreements are at the centre of Alberta's drought response efforts. In 2001, agreements between southern irrigators and others played a key role in helping share water during that drought. This year's agreements, facilitated by the Alberta government, are even bigger in scale and scope.

There are *four water-sharing agreements*, one to cover each of the following sub-basins: the Red Deer River, the Bow River, the mainstem of the Oldman River and the upper tributaries of the Oldman River. Specific commitments are laid out in each individual Memorandum of Understanding, but generally speaking:

Participating municipalities will reduce water consumption by between five and 10 per cent. These are reasonable targets that can be achieved without affecting indoor water use.

Participating industries will use only the minimum volume of water practical to maintain safe, reliable operations. They will also look for additional water conservation opportunities. Participating irrigation districts will use less water and allow other users to get their water first, then use the remaining water available for licenced use.

These collaborative agreements are voluntary. They are

designed to be proactive, risk-based and agile enough to be adjusted in real time as conditions change.

The actual water amounts under the agreements will be updated every two weeks based on the latest water supply forecast. WaterSMART Solutions conducted advanced and highly technical drought modelling that provided a variety of hypothetical river flow scenarios and conditions. Using this information and current conditions, exact water use for the following two-week period will be adjusted as needed to ensure that water use doesn't outpace supply.

### Supporting the water-sharing agreement

The ultimate success of Alberta's drought response will require everyone to do their part, including smaller licence holders and all Albertans.

To support the commitments made by the province's largest water users, the Alberta government will also be working with smaller licence holders in these basins to request that they implement drought response measures and make similar water conservation commitments.

The Alberta government will play an active role implementing these agreements in the coming months. Specifically, the government will:

Monitor conditions and alert water users if a signed agreement needs to take effect in a basin.

Produce bi-weekly water supply forecasts that will be used to adjust the agreements as needed.

Optimize operations at provincially owned infrastructure, including the Waterton, St. Mary, Oldman and Dickson reservoirs, to ensure that every drop is used.

Optimize water storage in the Ghost Reservoir and Kananaskis-area reservoirs for flood and drought mitigation, as outlined in the Alberta government's Water Management Services Agreement with TransAlta.

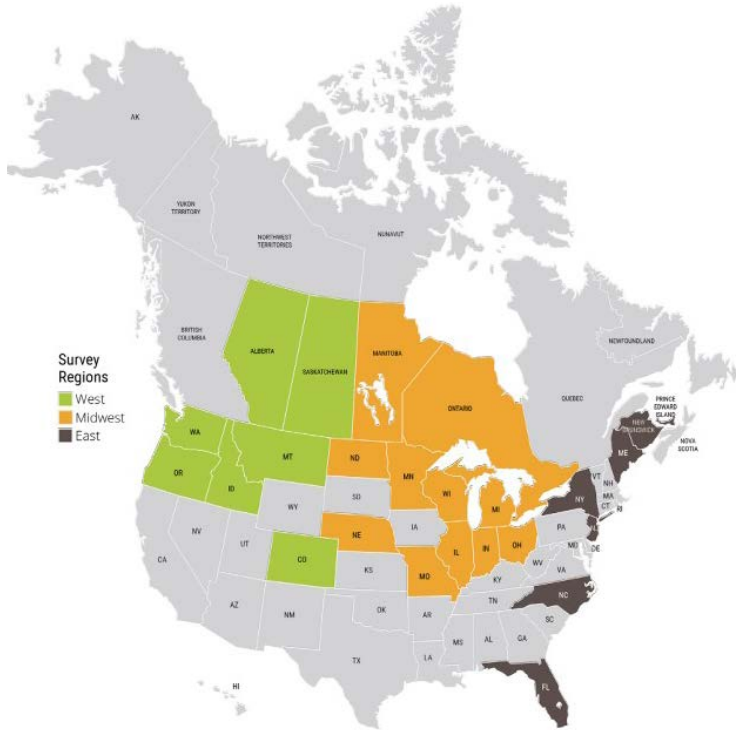
[Full news release](#)

Source: alberta.ca



## POTATO SUSTAINABILITY ALLIANCE RELEASES NORTH AMERICAN POTATO SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

The objective of this report is to communicate the North American sustainability results and insights gathered from the pSA Program annual on-farm assessment, providing PSA members and participating growers with a valuable benchmark for evaluating their own reports. Participating areas include:

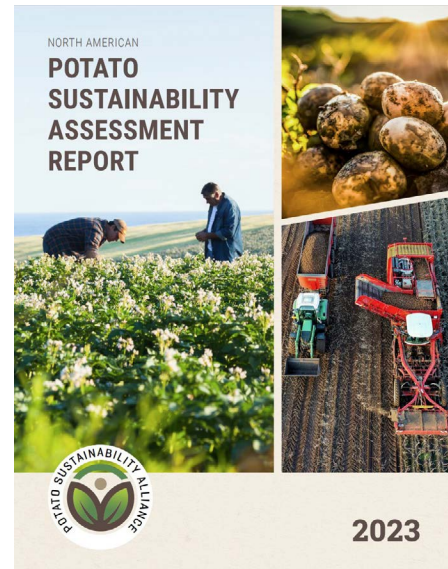


REGION	WEST	MIDWEST	EAST
Canada Growers	47	47	129
Canada Potato Acres	58,346	62,080	86,114
U.S. Growers	100	57	40
U.S. Potato Acres	231,515	115,508	35,557
<b>Total Growers</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Total Potato Acres</b>	<b>289,861</b>	<b>177,588</b>	<b>121,671</b>

### PSA PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

SOA STANDARD	GHG EMISSIONS	WATER STEWARDSHIP	FOOD WASTE	SOIL HEALTH	FARMER PROSPERITY	BIO-DIVERSITY	INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT
Optimal Production	X	X	X	X	X		X
Water Impact	X	X		X			
Soil Health	X	X		X			X
Biodiversity & Habitat						X	
Human & Animal Health		X		X			X
Community Leadership					X	X	
Specific Management Practices	X	X		X	X	X	X

Table 2. Each row in this table corresponds to specific SOA Standard criteria aligned with PSA Program focus areas. The alignment represents management strategies, practices, and technologies contributing to sustainability across Program focus areas.



## How to Interpret the Scores

Performance in the SOA Standard is a measure of potato growers' leadership in adopting beneficial management strategies, practices, and technologies across four distinct levels of leadership used to measure, communicate, and benchmark performance (Figure 3).

1	Essential	Fully compliant with regulatory requirements.
2	Basic	Beneficial management practices are well established in the operation and consistent with meeting the industry standard. Engaged in education and learning with awareness of barriers to adoption of new crop management and conservation practices.
3	Medium	Beneficial management practices are well established in the operation informed by data collected and experts. New practices and technologies are being implemented consistent with improving the industry standard. Barriers to adoption of practices that benefit conservation are being overcome.
4	High	Whole farm management and optimization for long-term profitability, risk reduction and the conservation of natural resources. Collaboration and influence beyond the farm provide benefits for the operation as well as for the broader community.

Figure 3. The sustainable attributes associated with adopting on-farm strategies, practices, and technologies across

## PERFORMANCE SCORES AND INSIGHTS

### HUMAN & ANIMAL HEALTH

Growers achieved an overall leadership level of **High** in this outcome.

This score reflects the adoption of beneficial management practices that encompass product selection, worker and neighbor protections, pest related health management, waste management, and hazardous material management. Performance insights and opportunities for improvement identified in this outcome will be used to inform PSA Program activities in the IPM, water stewardship and soil health focus areas.

**99%**

of growers actively communicate in response to questions/complaints concerning operations and product selection (e.g., drift, dust, odor, visual PPE).

**56%**

of growers conduct residue and health risk testing and/or audits and share results with supply chain partners, and others.

[Click here for the full report](#)



## PGA GROWER PROFILE

- Farm Name: Chin Coulee Spud Farms
- 2nd Generation Farmer - Delbert Vossebelt farming with brother Dwayne and father John
- Location: County of Lethbridge/MD of Taber
- Crops Produced: Potatoes, Seed Canola, Dry Beans & Cereals

### Q1. How did you get into potato farming?

We started farming potatoes in 1997, after swapping sugar beet land for spud land with the Tsukishima family in 1996. We found it very interesting how the whole potato farming business was carried out and we were looking for a high value crop to grow. We partnered up with the Tsukishima's for the first couple years then branched out on our own

### Q2. What do you love about potato farming?

I love the challenge of it! Every year we get the opportunity to learn from what we did and apply our learnings to the next year. Farming is constantly evolving and growing potatoes enables us to stay at the forefront of a lot of these changes

### Q3. How long have you been growing potatoes?

Since 1997

### Q4. What other activities are you involved in (outside the farm or organization work)?

We are involved in our Christian Reformed Church. My wife is a school teacher at Taber Christian. We love to travel with family and friends.

### Q5. What types of on-farm sustainability practices do you employ?

For years we have put more focus on cover cropping to prevent wind erosion. We also use a lot of natural fertilizers to help with our soil health. Thanks to industry advances and a highly educated advisory team, we only apply the right amount of fertilizer and chemicals to grow the best potato crop possible.

### Q6. What do you contribute to tell your "story" of agriculture to the public?

Our story is one that is not unique to our farm. Every farmer I've ever met has the same passion and drive to do the best they can with what they have. Farmers are a proud bunch, they take the responsibility of feeding the world healthy food very seriously! My "story" to the public would be: trust us, we got this. We are trying our best to feed you and all your loved ones. We would never serve a product we wouldn't let our own family consume. I want our farm, Chin Coulee Spud Farms, to be a generational farm where my children and their children can grow up and raise crops to feed the world, just as our forefathers have done in the past. To make this dream a reality we need the support of everyone we connect with, from family, staff, processors, fellow farmers and consumers. We all need each other to make our industry thrive.

### Q7. What is the best farming advice you've been given?

"Don't stress about what you can't change, focus on what you can."

### Q8. What are your concerns for the future of farming?

I worry that policies replace experience and detrimentally mandate how and what a farmer is able to do. As farmers I like to think that we have a good handle on our farms. Sometimes farmers are depicted as doing their job wrong or needing correction by outsiders, people that have no connection to ag whatsoever. It's very easy to criticize nowadays with social media, but my hope is that agriculture is celebrated for the important career choice it is. It's our job to showcase agriculture. I just hope our audience is receptive. .

### Q9. What excites you about the future of farming?

I'm excited to have the opportunity to farm with my children and extended family. It's very rewarding to see their enthusiasm, when it's time to plant or harvest a crop they had a hand in. We are entering a stage in agriculture where there will be a lot of transitioning. Farms are getting larger with more moving parts and more diversity. It is a fun time to be involved in ag.

## FROM THE OFFICE



**PGA**  
POTATO GROWERS OF ALBERTA

**SAVE THE DATE**  
JULY 4, 2024  
TABER GOLF CLUB

**ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**TWO STREAMS OF GOLF SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE:**

**MAIN TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIP** is handled by the PGA. Inquiries can be sent to Juanita at the PGA office at [juanita@albertapotatoes.ca](mailto:juanita@albertapotatoes.ca)

**HOLE SPONSORSHIPS** are handled by the APIA. The spots are currently filled but your name may be added to a standby list. Contact Jared at [jared.bell@availcpa.com](mailto:jared.bell@availcpa.com)

Registration opening soon!

May 12

**Happy Mother's Day!**

*"To the world, you are a mother, but to your family, you are the world."*



**UPDATE...HOTEL ROOMS AT THE GREY EAGLE ARE ALMOST FULL. BOOK NOW!**

Hotel reservations @ Grey Eagle 1.844.719.8777,  
403.719.8777 [reservations@greyeagle.ca](mailto:reservations@greyeagle.ca)  
Mention Group ID#66202 or Code PGADEL24 (only for this hotel).

**\*\*Hotel Option 2: Blackfoot Inn-Calgary**  
403.252.2253

**\*\*Mention Potato Growers of Alberta (only for this hotel).**  
Book by October 1, 2024



**2024**  
ALBERTA POTATO CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW

**PGA** **APIA**  
Alberta Potato Industry Association  
SINCE 1920

**November 19-21**

Grey Eagle Resort & Casino - Calgary, Alberta

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*When you think potatoes, think Alberta*





The following individuals are recognized for their long-standing contribution to the APIA and have been awarded a Lifetime Membership to our association.

Corah, Chuck	Jensen, Wayne	Nelis, Jacques
Gash, Brian	Kaiser, Dave	Oikawa, Tricky,
Gouw, Arie	Mitchell, Peter	Sandberg, Phil
Hacker, Bill	Mrak, Tony	

The following individuals are members in good standing of the APIA for the 2024 calendar year:

Andrews, Nathan	Duell, Gary	Iwan, Josh	Mackinnon, Kevin	Quiring, Cassidy	Trempler, Darren
Bareman, Kelsi	Duell, Michael	Janssens, Blayne	Marshall, Robin	Rattray, Desiree	Trottier, Donna
Barnes, Autumn	Duesing, Scott	Jennings, Mike	McBroom, Henry	Richard, Marc	Van Eedan Petersman, Lloyd
Bauman, Gerald	Durrin Gentry, Jenny	Jensen, Brad	Meier, Whitney	Ritchie, Mike	VanBerkel, Wim
Bell, Jared	Durnall, Simon	Jensen, Ryan	Menkveld, Andrew	Russell, Jessie	VandenDool, Ed
Bexte, Taylor	Dykstra, Ray	Kaiser, Dave	Michalezki, Brynn	Sawatzky, Kirby	Vermette, Brian
Bonertz, Terry	Engleson, Kristi	Keys, Scott	Michielsen, Frank	Scholing, Karlo	Visser, Darryl
Bos, Johan	Finch, Melanie	Kinniburgh, Shaun/Stacey	Miller, Alex	Schuppler, Steve	Vossepoel, Adam
Bos, Tim	Fletcher, Blake	Kirkham, George	Molenaar, Reegan	Schutter, Ehren	Walter, Greg
Boychuk, Sarah	Fletcher, Braden	Klassen, Greg	Morris, Patrick	Slingerland, Tim	Warkentin, Bruce
Brehaut, Randy	Fletcher, Bruce	Kleisinger, Chad	Mrak, Tony	Slomp, Harry	Waugh, Jeremy
Brewin, Lindsay	Fletcher, Derrick	Knitel, Georgina	Nagata, Cameron	Slomp, Jordan	West, TJ
Burton, Luke	Forbush, Todd	Konyonenbelt, Marlin	Nelis, Brian	Smienk, Susan	Wilson, Barb
Claassen, Chantal	Gallant, Dave	Kowalchuk, Nolan	Nelubowich, Adam	Smith, Kevin	Wind, Jeremy
Claassen, Lauren	Garos, Dirk	Krautkramer, Josh	Nicholson, Joe	Sorensen, Martin	Workman, Brodie
Coleman, Doug	Gash, Brian	Kruk, Adam	Nikles, Brendan	St. Laurent, Ed	Wynker, Sara
Collins, Collin	Gavin, Tim	Kuepfer, Edwin	Nyborg, Bruce	Stevenson, Kelly	Zarazun, Owen
Cousins, Trent	Gillespie, Scott	Kuizenga, Al	Olson, Darcy	Stewart, Craig	Zuber, Wojciech
Dahlen, Joe	Glas, Cobie	Kwiatkowski, Ryan	Orr, Bill	Stewart, Russ	
Day, Carol	Goertzen, Nathan	Lawson, Andrew	Pickles, Taunya	Stinnissen, Pat	
DeHaan, Jeff	Gouw, John	Lazar, Ioana	Pieters, Kristof	Stinson, Bryce	
Delisle, Mike	Gratton, Lawrence	Lewis, Kyla	Pluta, Denine	Stober, Brent	
Dilworth, Marty	Haacke, Aaron	Lyczewski, Laurie	Powers, Dan	Swanson, Charlotte	
Dok, Martin	Hanlon, Brendon	Lyon Blair	Quinn, Dean	Tavchandjian, Nico	
Draper, Derrick	Humble, Anthony	Mackenzie-Grieve, Rob	Quinton, Justin	Tetz, Andrew	

## MEMBERSHIP

The Alberta Potato Industry Association (APIA) is composed of 'individuals' from many different areas of businesses. All of these people work with, and alongside, the potato growers in Alberta. Formed in 1990, the APIA participates and leads in various activities, such as APIA Burgers N' Beans, Alberta Potato Conference Trade Show, and hole sponsorships for the Annual PGA Golf Tournament. In addition to these events, the APIA is also a proud supporter and sponsor of Spuds and Tubs Alberta, PGA Area Meetings and Nuffield Scholarships relevant to the Potato Industry in Alberta.

Membership into the APIA is \$55/year to 'individuals' of a business.

Membership benefits include: name exposure to growers and industry via the PGA's "Potato Minute", early access to events such as the Alberta Potato Conference Trade Show, an invitation to Burgers N Beans, and the opportunity to help out and meet growers and industry people involved in the Alberta Potato Industry.

Our industry, along with the APIA, has experienced much growth, in part, by combined efforts of many individuals who have taken the time to get involved. If you are interested in membership, please reach out to [geraldine@grattonmechanical.ca](mailto:geraldine@grattonmechanical.ca) with your contact information. She will work with you to get a membership set up.