

# THE POTATO MINUTE

March 2024

Growing Healthy Potatoes Together



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein



It's been almost two years to the day, since we moved out of the old PGA office building. In those two short years, many things have changed in the potato world here in Alberta and across North America. We are now a year into the new office in Taber and so far this building has more than met our expected needs. One of the most used rooms in the building, outside of the Boardroom, is the classroom. There is hardly a week that goes by where there isn't a grower meeting or class being taught in this room. In most cases we have been able to utilize our own building rather than having to rent a facility in town. I think, that in the long run, it was money well invested for the betterment of our industry.

The size of the Alberta industry has increased by over 17% in the last two years. The growth will continue in the near future as McCain's brings their new plant online in CY 25. The 600 million dollar investment was deemed their single largest global expenditure to date. The Alberta industry has, once again, proven that they are able to produce world class potatoes to supply this investment. Another factor in the growth of the industry is the evolution of the Shearer chip plant in Airdrie. This inevitable surge will provide an opportunity for new growers to enter into the industry as well. The successful Alberta seed potato industry has quietly continued its calculated expansion to accommodate the growth in our province, as well as, their ever advancing international market.

Calculated growth is always a good thing in any industry, but one must never remain blind to what the entire North American industry is experiencing. For the last three years, it's been in a shortage position when it comes to raw product. CY 23 drastically changed this state in a negative way. Almost every growing area west of the Mississippi produced a large crop, coupled with a large number of uncontracted acres planted in various areas, leading to a major oversupply in potatoes. This oversupply will bring a drastic cut in CY 24 acres, as well as some crop from CY 23 being abandoned and turned back. In the past, this has always led to a down year in contract pricing and acres. Maybe some day, the industry will realize that in a supply and demand situation, oversupply leads to downward pressure on prices.

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One topic that is on everyone's mind right now in Alberta is the drought and lack of snowfall that the province has received this year. The potato industry, like everyone else is concerned, but as a few wise people have said, we have never lost a crop in the middle of winter. This is not the first time that the province has experienced droughts, and it won't be the last time. Weather is cyclical and will always remain that way. A positive outcome is that the conversation is being had by all sectors of the province and there will

be plans put in place so that everyone will have some water to use. This is a good exercise for everyone to look at their efficiencies of a finite resource that sometimes gets taken for granted.

On the contract front the Alberta growers have reached agreement with their three respective fry processors and are buttoning up their chip contracts in the next few weeks. A few details remain to be worked through and the hard work should be behind everyone. Outside of Washington and Alberta, all other growing areas are still in their discussions with the local processors.

With March, brings our upcoming spring area meetings. The March board meeting and North Area Grower meeting will be held on March 12th in Nisku. The South Area Grower meeting will be held March 19th in Taber. Once again, industry members are welcome to attend the meetings. More details and the agenda can be found on page 6 in this month's edition of the Potato Minute.

Until next month,

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## SEED COORDINATOR - Stacey Bajema



The PGA North office has been quite busy lately. A lot of planning and development for the upcoming growing season comes into play at this time of year. We look forward to meeting with growers at local area meetings and getting them up to speed with work that has been going on in the industry over these winter months.

The Alberta seed region has experienced some milder temperatures for many of these winter weeks, which has been conducive to moving some product early. Most seed farms across the province have either completed or are just wrapping up their lab testing programs to ensure customers have all the information they need before the heavy shipping season begins. Alberta does the bulk of our shipping seed potatoes over a one-month period, beginning in early to mid March. We are blessed with an efficient transportation

network in our province that allows hundreds of trucks to be loaded and dispersed across Canada and the US. With many moving parts across the North American market right now, it will be interesting to see where the season ends up when everything is said and done.

As growers begin to ship product, we wish all our farm operations, inspection staff and transportation partners a safe and successful season.

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## BLAST FROM THE PAST



*The Royal Winter Fair was a very prestigious event that seen growers from all over the country showcase their produce in an effort to be the top winner. Our potato growers in the early 60's began attending the event, and soon found that their hard work was acknowledged and numerous accolades brought the Alberta potato industry to the highest regard for the seed and fresh market. Top: Alberta Potato Commission display at the 1966 Toronto Royal Winter Fair. Left: Tona Ohama in 1967 winning top honours. Right: 1968 Triple Crown winner T. Fugimoto & Sons.*



## AGRI-PROCESSING INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT Empowering food and ag processors to grow



Agriculture is Alberta's oldest industry and continues to be a strong contributor to economic growth and diversification. In 2023, Alberta produced more potatoes than any other province in Canada. On an annual basis, potato production contributes more than \$2 billion to Alberta's economy.

To help further grow and diversify the agriculture industry, Alberta's government introduced the Agri-Processing Investment Tax Credit program in spring 2023 and it is already attracting large-scale investment in value-added agricultural manufacturing. The Little Potato Company is building a new \$39.5-million project in Nisku to double its processing capacity and produce more packaged potatoes with seasonings that can be quickly roasted, microwaved or grilled.

"Our government developed Alberta's Agri-Processing Investment Tax Credit program with corporations like The Little Potato Company in mind. The program is providing the right conditions for food and ag processors to invest in our province, grow their business and create more jobs for Albertans. Through incentives like this tax credit, we're building on Alberta's competitive advantages and continuing to drive economic growth and diversification."

*RJ Sigurdson, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation*



The Little Potato Company's new facility currently employs 224 Albertans. The 240,000-square-foot facility in Nisku will be able to process about 125 million pounds of potatoes, up from 65 million pounds at the former Edmonton location.

"We are honoured and grateful for this generous tax credit from the Government of Alberta. The investment elevates our efforts to grow, pack and bring more convenient, nourishing and flavourful Little Potatoes to busy families. We share our heartfelt thanks for this funding as we open our new Nisku packaging facility, which allows us to better serve our family farmers, communities, customers, consumers, climate, soil and water – and all of us."

*Angela Santiago, co-founder and CEO,  
The Little Potato Company*

### Quick Facts:

Alberta potato growers planted 80,100 acres in 2023, up from 73,080 acres in 2022.

The Little Potato Company will export up to 70 per cent of the potato products they process to the United States, enhancing Alberta's reputation as the third-largest agri-food exporter in Canada.

*Source: alberta.ca*



## NATIONAL NEWS

### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS PROGRAM 2024-25



The intake for the 2024-2025 Youth Employment and Skills Program (YESP), delivered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, will be opening soon. Applications will be accepted between February 26, 2024 and March 25, 2024.

The Youth Employment and Skills Program helps support employers who hire youth (between the age of 15 and 30 inclusive) for agricultural jobs. Projects may start as early as April 1, 2024 and end no later than March 31, 2025.

Applications from Indigenous applicants will be prioritized for the 2024-2025 program year. The program will continue to encourage applicants to hire youth facing employment barriers, however, it is not a requirement for eligibility. The list of barriers is as follows:

- Indigenous
- Living with a disability (physical, mental health-related or learning disability)
- Racialized youth (formerly visible minority)
- Recent newcomer to Canada
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Person living in an Official Languages Minority Community (OLMC)
- Residing in a remote, northern and/or fly-in-community
- Living in a low-income household
- Single parent
- Individual who left high school

To apply, visit our [website](#) and complete and submit the application form with the required documents. Applications from Indigenous applicants will be prioritized for the 2024-2025 program year, followed by all other 1st applications. Approval of secondary applications will be dependent on available funding and program uptake. AAFC reserves the right to limit the number of approved projects per applicant so that funding can be equitably distributed.

**Application intake will close midnight EST on March 25, 2024.**

*Source: agriculture.canada.ca*

## FROM THE OFFICE

COME VISIT US...

SOUTHERN ALBERTA  
**HOME#####  
GARDEN &  
LEISURE**

PRESENTED BY  
**1<sup>st</sup>**  
Choice Savings®  
and Credit Union Ltd.

**March 14th - 16th  
Hall D, Booth #288**

[More Info](#)

**Agri-food Hub & Trade Centre  
3401 Parkside Dr S, Lethbridge**

*Still looking for volunteers  
to help at the booth*





## PGA GROWER PROFILE

- Farm Name: North Paddock Farms Ltd.  
Alison Davie, Current Board Chair
- 3rd Generation Farmer, farming with husband Michael
- Location: MD of Taber
- Crops Produced: Potatoes, Timothy Hay, Hybrid Seed Canola, Wheat, Flax, Fababeans, Garlic

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

I grew up on our family farm and we started growing potatoes for McCains in 2000. After university, the opportunity came to take over the farm from my parents, so in 2013 Michael and I moved back to Taber. We have since expanded to grow potatoes for Lamb Weston as well.

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

I love being outside and watching the crops grow. It's very rewarding to try new things and watch how your management practices can affect the crops you grow. Also, the potato industry is an exciting industry to be a part of. It's nice to work with peers who have the same passion and drive, and are optimistic about the future of agriculture.

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

Our farm began growing potatoes in 2000 so coming up on 24 years.

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

We have two young kids so their activities can keep me pretty busy when I'm not farming. We also enjoy getting to the mountains and travelling overseas.

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

Sustainability is something that encompasses the whole farm. From soil and plant health, to profitability, the sustainability of producing a crop and having a rewarding business is always front of mind. A lot of our sustainability practices stem from becoming more efficient. Whether it's more efficient usage and placement of inputs, utilizing data and forecasts

to determine pesticide applications, or re-nozzling pivots to use less water. In the past few years we have put more focus on cover cropping on our farm to prevent wind erosion.

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

Teaching others about farming and where their food comes from is a passion of mine. On our farms' social media pages, I share what is going on at our farm at any given time. I also share in schools as part of the Classroom Agriculture Program.

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

Don't forget to enjoy it. Farming can be very busy and stressful at times; it's also not one of those jobs you can easily step away from, so when I need a break I enjoy jumping on my motorbike and go crop scouting.

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

My immediate concerns for the future of farming is our water supply. Every aspect of our farm relies on water, and we need to be able to mitigate as many risks associated with that as possible. Another concern is labour. People don't tend to gravitate to farming, unless they have been raised on or around it. As more people move to urban centers it will be a greater challenge to attract them to work on farms.

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

I love that the possibilities are endless when it comes to farming. There are so many ideas when it comes to new practices on the farm, value-add opportunities, and advances in technology. If I've learned one thing in the last few years, it's the value of agriculture and how, no matter what, people have to eat, so it will always be an industry that is in need.

## FROM THE OFFICE

# PGA SPRING AREA MEETINGS

### NORTH AREA SUPPER MEETING

March 12 @ 6 PM  
Holiday Inn & Suites - 1100-4th St, Nisku

[Click here for agenda](#)

### SOUTH AREA BREAKFAST MEETING

March 19 @ 8 AM  
Heritage Inn - 4830-46 Ave, Taber

[Click here for agenda](#)

Hotel reservations @ Grey Eagle 1.844.719.8777,  
403.719.8777 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**  **November 19-21**  
Grey Eagle Resort & Casino - Calgary, Alberta



**Happy Easter**  
March 31st

March  
10



Spring Forward

### We're going digital!

We are upgrading our Annual License Application form to an electronic version. All Producer, Packer/Dealer, Greenhouse/Lab and Processors will be able to complete the form(s) electronically. We will be providing more information on this at the Spring Area Meetings, so stay tuned!

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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.