

Rural Reminder

Spring 2005

Diversity and trust – Keys to rural development

Rural communities need to understand the importance of cultural diversity and trust as keys to their future, former Red Deer Mayor Gail Surkan told delegates at the third National Rural Conference in Red Deer last October.

“Somewhere [during the conference], you will talk about the importance of immigration to rural communities,” said Surkan.

“If that, in fact, is a part of our future, the values that we develop around inclusiveness and respect for diversity will be one of the most powerful economic and social development tools that we can have.”

Surkan noted that rural communities have always been inclusive, but they’ve also been largely homogeneous.

“They (rural communities) have not really dealt with true diversity, and yet, the future of our rural communities will depend on being inclusive of many cultures, languages and values that may not be as familiar as those that we’ve historically had inside our communities,” she said.

The real challenge, said Surkan, is to be inclusive after being homogeneous for so long.

To do this, she said, a community needs to understand itself at a much deeper level than just its physical form. It also has to understand its importance and to design and plan for its survival.

Surkan also pointed to the need to understand rural communities “as essential living environments where people feel they have a sense of a shared future, where they have influence, where they work together to build common value systems.”



Gail Surkan

This, she said, would provide more effective ways to support the process of community development and sustainability.

In addition to inclusiveness, Surkan spoke of the need for communities to re-establish and strengthen trust and collaboration.

“We have to be...collaborative rather than adversarial,” said Surkan. “Many of us, especially here, in the west, are only one generation away from when we actually knew how to gather together to raise each other’s barns, or to share our resources to build the first place of worship, or to find a way through our family and community networks to support those that were less fortunate in our communities.”

Surkan added that collaboration and cooperativeness are among the most important values that show the importance of rural communities.

“We know that in our communities, a lot of what we have done in the past has depended on our ability to trust one another. Trust is an enabler.” As an example, Surkan highlighted the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) comprising over 40 communities in central Alberta that banded together originally to work on economic development.

She said the partnership met the challenge of moving from a competitive environment to one where the future was seen as being shared. This is a good example, according to Surkan, of communities who understand that they aren’t in this alone. If they are to succeed, they need to recognize the importance of supporting the entire network.

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Mitchell stresses sustainability at Third National Rural Conference in Red Deer

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Andy Mitchell, delivered the keynote address to over 300 delegates attending the third National Rural Conference in Red Deer, Alberta last October, telling them that building sustainable communities throughout Canada is a key guiding principle in his new role as minister.

Mr. Mitchell told delegates that he believes that only sustainable communities can build the necessary community networks to support natural resource industries such as agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining.

Using agriculture as an example, Mr. Mitchell said sustainable communities and a strong agricultural sector are tightly linked.

"If you're going to have a strong agricultural sector," said Mr. Mitchell, "then you need strong rural communities that support it."

Many of the delegates who gathered in Red Deer, along with their issues, are well-known to Mr. Mitchell. In his role as Secretary of State for Rural Development, he was the guiding force behind the first National Rural Conference held in 2000 in Magog, Quebec. He led the rural file through a second National Rural Conference in Charlottetown in 2002 and organized the first-ever National Rural Youth Conference in Orillia, Ontario in 2003.

Mr. Mitchell told delegates that throughout this time, he enjoyed working with them "immensely" and that rural issues are still at the top of his radar screen.

"Those of you who have had a chance to work with me know how I feel about rural Canada and how I feel about the industries that support rural Canada," said Mr. Mitchell.

"It's a very special place. It's something that's in my heart. It's something that I truly believe in. It's inhabited by very special people."

Mr. Mitchell said that some of his proudest accomplishments included support for the development of the Community Futures Program, the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Program and a connectivity agenda that helped bring broadband services to many under-served sites throughout Canada.

He said he was also proud to see that the Government of Canada committed to the development of a northern strategy in the recent Speech From the Throne. Mr. Mitchell said the strategy will help in "understanding both its challenges and the immense possibilities that Canada's North presents to us as a nation."

He also praised the National Rural Policy Framework (NRPF), which is currently being developed between the provinces, territories and federal government to help co-ordinate approaches to rural policies throughout Canada.

"We need to have that vision," said Mr. Mitchell. "We need to have a common set of objectives in rural and remote Canada so that we can see governments at all levels, along with their communities and people, working together."

Mr. Mitchell said this will be a big factor in developing sustainable communities.

But he also pointed out the vision cannot be government-driven.

"I can't emphasize enough that this (the NRPF) has to be a bottom-up process," he said. "It needs to come from folks like yourselves and it needs to come from communities.

"Government has a role to play. Government will provide tools. Government will help build capacity. But how those tools will be used and how individual communities are to achieve sustainability needs to be up to those communities.

"That's what a National Rural Policy Framework is all about."

Mr. Mitchell also had praise for his successor to the rural file, Wayne Easter, the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food with special emphasis on Rural Development.

"I can't feel better or happier, knowing that Wayne Easter has taken over this file," said Mr. Mitchell. "Throughout his career he has been an advocate for rural Canada, whether as a producer or as a farm leader or a politician.

"He has been dedicated to rural Canada and rural Canadians and I'm pleased he has taken over this responsibility."



Andy Mitchell

Easter rallies conference delegates in Red Deer

Taking on the responsibility to lead the development of rural Canada sounds like an intimidating task.

Not only are there over nine million rural Canadians looking on across the country, but the job of helping to build strong rural communities requires both diligence and a knack for bringing people together.

Wayne Easter assured delegates to the third National Rural Conference in Red Deer, Alberta that he's the right man for the job.



Wayne Easter

Mr. Easter, who was asked last summer by the Prime Minister to take on the role of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, told delegates in the opening address to the conference, that despite challenges rural Canadians face, there is no doubt that strong, sustainable communities are the cornerstone of the success of Canada.

Mr. Easter said he sensed this view was not his alone.

"We're here because we feel strongly about the place of our rural communities within the Canadian mosaic," Mr. Easter told delegates, "and we're here hopefully to make this country and our communities a better place to reside, a better place to do work, a better place to contribute to the economy and a better place to raise families and participate in daily life."

He encouraged delegates to think of new and innovative ways to build strong communities, while also reminding them of past successes of the rural file.

For example, Mr. Easter told delegates he was proud of the fact that the Rural Secretariat organized the first National Rural Youth

Conference in Orillia, Ontario in 2003, which not only highlighted greater youth participation in all things rural, but also resulted in the Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards. Mr. Easter helped hand out these awards later in the conference.

Mr. Easter also cited the success of the Government of Canada's broadband initiative, which aims to bring the internet to rural communities across the country. He admitted work still needs to be done, even throughout his home province of Prince Edward Island, but that rural Canadians were "front and centre" in making it happen.

In that same high-tech vein, Mr. Easter called the \$155-million National Satellite Initiative launched in October 2003 as another rural success story. This initiative, he said, provides high-speed broadband Internet services via satellite to communities located in the far North and in other isolated and remote communities across the country.

The importance of communications at both the cyberspace and person-to-person levels was something Mr. Easter also emphasized.

From a purely face-to-face aspect, Mr. Easter told delegates that rural Canadians were getting an even greater say in how governments deal with rural issues through the Government of Canada's series of roundtables in rural areas of the country.

He also emphasized the importance of further developing the National Rural Policy Framework, to help governments at all levels work together for the benefit of rural Canadians.

He underlined that this Framework, along with all of the shared success stories, could not have happened without the advice and leadership of Canadians at the community level.

"There's one thing I know for sure," said Mr. Easter, "governments can have an idea but it takes people and communities to make it happen. Governments aren't going to create sustainable communities on their own. There is a shared responsibility between them. But it's the people at the end of the day who are on the ground that will make those policies and programs really happen. Together we will build on what we have, and we will take action for sustainable rural communities."

Taking action on women's issues

A group of women in Camrose have decided to address women's issues by coming together to explore perspectives and identify key issues they can take action on. To help them with this, the women were given facilitation training which provided skills they need to bring about change in their communities.

Spurred on by local champion, Barb Stroh, the group held a series of dialogue sessions and participated in a day-long workshop sponsored by Status of Women Canada. The dialogues were designed to identify issues for rural women in the Camrose region, increase understanding of rural women's issues, and motivate and help rural women create change in their communities.

Through the dialogues, participants found that the challenges could be grouped into three areas: economic, social, and those related to violence.

Topics of discussion included distance to work or training, lack of jobs, earning power, male dominated workplaces, perception that farm women are unskilled and not employable, lack of training programs, access to child care, family commitments, and health issues.

"This was a community-driven initiative where the women identified the issues, developed solutions and are working on implementing those solutions," stressed Rural Advisor Bev Uibel.

The group developed a labour market study and action plan based on the priorities and issues identified during the dialogues. Some of their key accomplishments to date include: initiating a women's mentorship program; partnering with the Camrose Exhibition Centre to increase the training programs offered, especially to women; developing a women's Web site to reduce isolation, connect with others and increase information sharing; and developing a communication approach to create awareness of their actions.

At the recent National Rural Conference in Red Deer, members of Rural Teams from across Canada heard of the efforts of the Camrose group to address issues related to their well-being, with support from the Rural Team Alberta (RTAB) and several other partners.

This initiative has taken on momentum and is now seeking funds and resources from many sources, both governmental and non-governmental.

For more information on the Camrose Women's Dialogue, call Tania Kajner, at 780-495-5020, or toll-free 1-866-966-3640.



The Third National Rural Conference – Taking action for sustainable rural communities



It's important to get the community involved in youth projects, so youth feel supported by their community.



I believe in leaving here, that together we can make a difference and we can make things happen.



We're here because we feel strongly about the place of our rural communities within the Canadian mosaic.

What rural Canadians are saying

The third National Rural Conference, held in Red Deer, Alberta, focused on community capacity building, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, youth and northern issues. Conference delegates were asked the following questions: What activities are going on in your rural community? What's working well? What else could be done?

Here are just a few highlights of what they said.

Communities need to . . .

Cooperate, collaborate and form partnerships

- Cooperation is a key success factor in rural communities. This is true for cooperation both amongst and within communities.

Be inclusive

- Rural communities need to identify and develop potential leaders, including youth. They need to welcome diversity, practice inclusiveness, and involve all stakeholders in decision-making. They need to develop community pride and a sense of ownership.

Train people

- Regional organizations would benefit greatly from support and training opportunities to help build alliances both within communities and across their region, and also to build capacity within their organizations to deliver services and stay current on new programs and initiatives.

To read more about the National Rural Conference, including full transcripts of the main speeches, conference workbook containing useful information on community capacity building, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, youth and northern issues, and highlights of participants' comments go to:

www.rural.gc.ca/conference/04/index_e.phtml

Recognize the efforts of volunteers

- Communities need to recognize the value of what volunteers contribute, and support their efforts.

Recognize and use their assets

- Rural communities need to recognize and capitalize on their assets and advantages. Doing so will also help foster community pride.

Communities need . . .

Mentors

- Mentorship is important to people of all ages and to maintaining healthy relationships and attitudes within rural communities.

Leaders and vision

- Rural communities need inclusive leaders and conveners with long-term vision and the ability to develop and implement short-term actions and projects.

Communication

- Good communication between all stakeholders, at all levels, is a pre-requisite for any project.

Governments need to . . .

Keep in mind the differences between rural and urban Canada when they develop initiatives affecting rural Canada.

- For government programs to be successful and useful, they need to take a bottom-up, grassroots approach. Give rural communities the tools they need for success.
- Provide communities with tools like research, information and program funds and cooperate on initiatives for rural Canada.

What is Rural Team Alberta?

Rural Team Alberta was created and is supported by the federal government as part of the Canadian Rural Partnership. The purpose of the Canadian Rural Partnership is to support building sustainable rural communities by ensuring that government policies, programs and services are developed and delivered in a manner that will best serve rural Canadians.

The purpose of Rural Team Alberta is to build partnerships, networks and alliances among federal and provincial departments, along with other rural stakeholders to address important rural issues in Alberta.

The Team's membership is comprised of representatives from federal and provincial departments as well as provincial non-government organizations.

The Team also provides members with an opportunity to communicate, cooperate, coordinate and collaborate on rural priorities.

For more information on Rural Team Alberta and the Canadian Rural Partnership, visit www.rural.gc.ca.

Rural Team Alberta hosts seminar on *Aboriginal Participation in the Rural Economy*

Aboriginal people make up an increasingly large share of the population in the prairie provinces and are well positioned to make a substantial contribution to the provincial and national economies of Canada.

To examine this new reality, Rural Team Alberta hosted a learning seminar on January 14, 2005 in Edmonton to address *Aboriginal Participation in the Rural Economy*.

The one-day learning event attracted 85 participants from government and community-based organizations who learned about financial services and supports for aboriginal entrepreneurs, local examples of economic development initiatives, partnership approaches that are being used with success, and resource development and management practices.

Rural Team Alberta plans to host future learning seminars on rural issues.





Progress in repositioning the beef industry continues at a brisk pace

Canada's beef industry is an important part of Canada's economy, and the determination of cattle producers, their families and the communities which support them to help ensure their survival is truly inspiring.

The discovery of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada in May 2003, and the resulting border closures, has devastated cattle producers across the country. It has cost billions in lost revenues, and underlined the need to continue taking measures to protect the industry and to redefine Canada's trading relationship with beef markets around the world.

The *Repositioning the Livestock Industry Strategy*, announced on September 10 and developed in consultation with the industry and the provinces, is aimed at doing just that. It is helping Canada's beef and cattle industry reposition itself to become more viable in the long-term by helping increase slaughter capacity, by introducing measures to assist the industry until there is more capacity and by continuing efforts to increase access to export markets and to re-open the U.S. border. Over the past few months, significant progress has been made in moving forward with the strategy.

"Since the September 10 announcement, various measures under the strategy are well underway and the initial federal funding of up to \$488 million has been increased by more than \$371 million in provincial contributions. It is clear that the

collaborative efforts between governments and industry are showing results," said Andy Mitchell, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Since the announcement, CFIA received two requests for approval of new beef slaughter establishments. Both of these establishments are now registered and operational. And, the Loan Loss Reserve Program is now in place and industry has already expressed considerable interest. The program is aimed at encouraging lenders to support projects to increase slaughter capacity, including expansion and construction of small and medium-sized facilities.

Alberta producers are also taking part in the Fed Cattle Set-Aside Program, where weekly auctions have been taking place since October 11. As of January 26, 152 producers from Alberta have registered as bidders, contributing to a total of 485 registered bidders across all participating provinces including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. For the Feeder Calf Set-Aside Program, more than 27,000 applications have been received across the country to set-aside more than 1.2 million feeder calves as of February 1, 2005.

The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program and the Transitional Industry Support Program (TISP) have also been important in sustaining producers during this difficult period. As of January 17, 2005, \$546.7 million has gone out to producers under CAIS through interim payments

for 2003 and 2004, final payments for 2003 and the recently announced 2004 CAIS Special Advance. In Alberta, \$242.6 million has gone to producers as of January 17 in final payments for 2003 and interims for 2003 and 2004. The province is also offering a special 2004 CAIS advance to its cattle and ruminant producers to help them deal with losses in equity due to low inventory prices. Through this initiative approximately \$102.3 million has been advanced in Alberta.

Under TISP, Alberta producers have received \$253.1 million through the TISP direct payment and \$54.2 million through the TISP general payment as of January 17, 2005. In all, TISP has now paid out more than \$822.8 million to producers across the country.

In the meantime, significant progress is being made to re-open the United States border. In August 2003, Canada became the first country affected by BSE to regain access to the U.S. market. On January 4, 2005, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published the US BSE minimal risk rule in the *Federal Register*. When implemented, the US rule will provide significant additional access to the US: it will permit the importation of live animals under 30 months of age for slaughter, as well as beef from animals of all ages. This development represents major progress towards normalizing trade between our two countries and brings closer an end to the hardship faced by the livestock industry since the detection of BSE in Canada in May 2003.

Other international markets are also beginning to show movement. Recently, Hong Kong agreed to resume trade in Canadian boneless beef from animals under 30 months. In addition, China announced the re-opening of its market for Canadian bovine semen and embryos. And Mexico has permitted the importation of boneless beef from animals under 30 months, and certain other ruminant products, since August 2003.

The development of the repositioning strategy, and the progress that is being made demonstrates the commitment by both government and industry to work together to address the issues facing the sector. Only by continuing this collaborative effort can we be successful in achieving the objectives of the strategy and help ensure the viability of the industry over the long-term. To date, the efforts of all involved have been remarkable.

"Canadian cattle producers have faced very significant challenges over the past few months, and they have met those challenges with the will and determination to overcome," said Minister Mitchell.

Call toll-free for information on BSE programs: 1-866-613-4800

Planting trees helps Canada cope with climate change

Canada launches Public Health Agency

Honouring a commitment to help protect the health and safety of Canadians, the Government of Canada launched the new Public Health Agency of Canada on September 24, 2004 where Prime Minister Paul Martin announced the nomination of Dr. David Butler-Jones as the country's first-ever Chief Public Health Officer.

If Canada is hit with another outbreak of SARS, avian flu or an as-yet-unforeseen illness, it will be up to the new chief public health officer to co-ordinate a national response from an operations centre in Winnipeg.

Dr. Butler-Jones has an extensive background in public health and has recently served as the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the Province of Saskatchewan and as a member of the national Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health, chaired by Dr. David Naylor.

Led by Dr. Butler-Jones, the Agency will now play a major role in a Canadian network of expertise and research in public health. It will coordinate federal efforts in identifying and reducing risks and threats, and support national readiness to respond to health crises.

Public health has always been a key component of Health Canada's mandate.

Now, the Agency will act as a hub for health surveillance, threat identification and disease prevention, as well as for control programs to create a more effective Canadian health system.

The Agency will continue to foster understanding about rural health issues of national concern and build consensus on how to address them; identify emerging trends; work with others to promote, encourage or influence action on rural health issues; and promote the involvement

of rural citizens, communities and health care providers.

The Agency will focus on more effective efforts to prevent chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, injuries and respond to health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks. They'll accomplish this by working closely with the provinces and territories to help reduce pressures on the health care system and help all Canadians live healthier lives.

The Agency will have offices, management, staff and expertise across Canada and will work with a network of specialized centres across the country to address specific health issues in Canada.

Winnipeg, the location of Canada's only Level 4 microbiology lab for human health, will become the home of the International Centre for Infectious Diseases and is expected to be a world leader in research, training, commercialization and innovation in addressing the threat and impacts of infectious diseases.

To achieve these goals, the Government of Canada has committed \$665 million in initial funding to strengthen Canada's public health system from the 2004 Budget.

It will establish six National Collaborating Centres for Public Health and has also transferred \$404 million from the Population and Public Health Branch of Health Canada, which forms the backbone of the new Public Health Agency of Canada.

Health Canada is a member of the Rural Team Alberta.

Fast-growing tree plantations in Alberta are helping Canada deal with the possible impacts of climate change.

Trees can remove carbon from the atmosphere, and fast-growing trees do so at a higher rate. Carbon is a component of greenhouse gases, which are considered to be major contributors to global warming.

Up to 6,000 hectares of demonstration plantations are being established and studied across Canada; 400 of those hectares were planted in Alberta in 2004.

The experimental plantations are part of Natural Resources Canada's three-year, \$20 million Forest 2020 Plantation Demonstration and Assessment Initiative that started in late 2003.

"In Alberta, a mix of tree species was planted, including hybrid poplars and various conifers," said John Doornbos, Manager of Operational Programs with Natural Resources Canada's Canadian Forest Service in Edmonton.

"The target is to obtain tree growth that is several times the rate of growth in the natural forest.

"This would have two benefits. First, it would increase the rate at which carbon is taken out of the atmosphere. Secondly, these plantations will demonstrate that they can be used to increase the supply of wood for Canada's forest industry."

In Alberta, the Woodlot Association of Alberta, Western Boreal Aspen Corp., Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, and Millar Western were contracted to select and oversee planting of suitable land for the plantations. Under Forest 2020 the land can belong to individuals, groups of landowners, forest companies, or First Nations.

The Canadian Forest Service is coordinating and funding establishment of the plantations and is providing scientific and technical support.

Meeting Kyoto Protocol obligations

Forest 2020 tree plantations, which are located on land originally cleared for agriculture or other purposes, will qualify for carbon credits as defined by the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that sets targets for countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Although there has been much discussion about it, the Kyoto Protocol was only theoretical until Russia ratified it in November 2004. The Protocol had to be ratified by at least 55 countries covering at least 55 per cent of the emissions addressed by the Protocol before it became legally binding, which occurred on February 16, 2005.

Canada is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to six percent below 1990 levels by 2012. It recognized that fast-growing, high-yield forest plantations could increase the rate of carbon storage and in 2001 negotiated inclusion of afforestation as a potential carbon sink activity for meeting its climate change obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

Investment opportunities

The Canadian Forest Service is also looking at the potential for attracting investment in future plantations by private investors such as green investment funds, ethical funds, pension funds, and large industrial emitters.

It's working with the financial sector, the forest industry, and other partners to develop investment models that will attract private sector investment in tree plantations.

Natural Resources Canada is a member of the Rural Team Alberta.



Rural and Remote Canada Online

The information superhighway has proven itself to be a great resource tool. Just pop a word or two into a search engine these days, and up come thousands of potential sources of information on any subject. Rural Canada is no exception, it now boasts a special dedicated Web site designed to transfer information to individuals and communities interested in rural development.

Rural and Remote Canada Online (www.rural-canada.ca) is a single window to knowledge, information, programs and services for and about rural and remote Canada. The Web site, part of the Government Online initiative, offers one-stop access for an array of information specific to rural and remote communities.



There are tips for submitting successful funding proposals for government programs. Pathfinders are available with information on everything from pointing rural entrepreneurs in the right direction, to accessing microcredit, to assisting rural and remote communities in recruiting doctors and nurses. The site also hosts an online discussion on issues related to rural and remote Canada.

The Rural and Remote Canada Online site can also be found as a link off of the main Canadian Rural Partnership Web site at www.rural.gc.ca

What did you think of this issue of the Rural Reminder?

Spring 2005

Did you find this issue informative?

Yes _____ No _____

How could we have improved the issue?

What other topics would you like to see covered in future issues?

I would like to be kept informed on Government of Canada initiatives by:

- Community Radio
- Community Newspapers
- Mail to my home
- Internet

Name: _____

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Please mail, fax or email your comments to:

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For more information on the Rural Secretariat and the Canadian Rural Partnership, please visit the Web site: www.rural.gc.ca

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