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Dennis Hatt, Chamber President

Lethbridge Chamber – Your Business Advocate

On behalf of the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to announce **Honourable Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce** will be our guest speaker at a business supper on **January 22, 2009**. During this time of economic uncertainty, we are pleased Mr. Beatty has taken the time to come to Lethbridge and he will provide us with an insight of the crises and how it is impacting business across all of Canada. Please keep that date open on your calendar.

By the time you read this Newsletter, we may have a new Prime Minister if the Liberal, New Democrats and Bloc Quebecois go through with their plan to vote down the Conservative Government and form a Coalition Government. **The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is of course disappointed the political leaders are focusing on political posturing and not demonstrating leadership in putting forth a strategy to boost consumer confidence in the Canadian Economy.** Certainly, the very fact this is being discussed and the Conservatives will not act until Parliament resumes in late January has not had a very positive impact on our markets.

Because of the real threat of the aforementioned, the Canadian Chamber hosted an emergency teleconference with its' members on December 1. **Members of the Canadian Chamber believe now is the time for all parties to unite their efforts and focus their energies on identifying positive solutions to our current economic crises.** There of course will be more to follow after this Newsletter is written.

As advised in our last Newsletter, **our Chamber was well represented at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting held October 3 to 6 in Quebec City.** Our contingent included Past President Bruce Webster, President Elect Paul Pharo, General Manager Jody Nilsson and myself. Alberta had the third most representation with 34 delegates behind Ontario and British Columbia. There were a total of **233 delegates, representing Chambers from all over Canada including the Territories.**

Of the 67 resolutions presented, our Chamber proposed two resolutions;

- **Definition of the Precautionary Principle**
- **Grown in Canada Label – Marketing the Nation’s Agriculture & Agri-Foods Products**

The **“Definition of the Precautionary Principle”** was a renewal of an existing resolution. In essence, the resolution recommends the Federal Government use the definition agreed to internationally at the Rio Conference in June 1992 and apply the principle consistently across all Legislation, Acts and Treaties. Our Chamber believes it is very important for business confidence and for public credibility that throughout government there is a consistent approach to risk management.

As an example in the use of the Precautionary Principle, an agriculture supply company in Lethbridge might be able to sell new varieties of herbicide tolerant seed. This would reduce the farmers' use of other chemicals and the use of fuel and fertilizer by farmers to grow a crop. The sale of such seed occurs after long and extensive testing and government registration to prove the seed is safe. Use of the Precautionary Principle outside the context mentioned in the Resolution means a business would have to prove not only that a new technology is safe but also does not harm, without any sound reason to suspect the new technology will be harmful.

The second resolution, the **Grown in Canada Label**, mirrors our resolution from the Alberta Chambers 2008 Annual Meeting last spring. This resolution calls for the identification of products that are 100% or a large percentage Canadian made to allow for consumers to know where the product originated and provide an opportunity to support Canada's Ag industry. What this means to you is the opportunity to know which products are more than 50% grown/produced in Canada and an opportunity to support our farmers and ranchers, and agri-food companies.

Both of our resolutions passed with little or no debate and we wish to extend our thanks to our hard working committees for the development of these resolutions. A total of 56 Resolutions were approved and these resolutions captured the priorities that the business community considers critical and will be presented to the Federal Government.

On October 22, Jody and I hosted a News Conference to announce to the media our success at the Canadian Chambers. We found out later the **News Conference was picked up by the national wire services and all of the media monitoring the national farm products groups in Ottawa saw it.** According to Past President Bruce Webster who was in Ottawa at the time, the Precautionary Principle Resolution was welcome news because non-business lobby groups, on the basis of the broader definition of the Principle, are opposing many innovations in agriculture. **It is important for agriculture to have the support of an organization like the Lethbridge and Canadian Chambers so that environmentally responsible new technology can be brought in at the farm gate contributing to the bottom line on the farm.**

Also in the last Newsletter, I introduced you to a new team in town, "**Team Lethbridge**". Team Lethbridge is a group of 12 associations who traveled to Edmonton to meet with Government Ministers and MLAs for the purpose of:

- **Proactively elevate the assets, strengths and attributes of our City**
- **Generate enhanced awareness of and appreciation for the value our City possesses in the province**
- **Convey appreciation for the Governments recent investments in the City**

Initial feedback from Edmonton has been very positive. Again our **thanks to Cheryl Dick and Economic Development Lethbridge for planning such an important event.** Right now Team Lethbridge is considering options to keep the momentum going and ensuring the Provincial Government Ministers remember us.

If one trip to Edmonton wasn't enough, the following week, Jody and I traveled back to Edmonton for the Alberta Chamber Semi-Annual Meeting and Deputy Ministers Dinner. The Resolution entitled ***Preparing for Alberta's Growth by Securing Transportation/Utility Corridors*** was passed. This resolution, recommending the provincial government develop a province wide transportation/utility corridor plan and

secure rights of way, was reviewed by both our AITA and Governmental Affairs Committees.

The price of a barrel of oil has decreased significantly during the last few months and is now well below the amount the Alberta Government used in their budget. **Although the Government indicates they have other reserves and savings plans to meet their spending for the year, how much better off would the provincial government be, if they would of followed the Chamber's Vision 20/20 recommendations?** Again, the Alberta Chamber issued a letter to the Honourable Iris Evans, Minister of Finance and Enterprise recommending the need to save 30 to 40% of non-renewable resource revenues to help secure the future sustainability of our province, a position the Lethbridge Chamber wholeheartedly supports.

After Christmas, the work at the Lethbridge Chamber intensifies as we prepare Resolutions to be presented at the Annual Alberta Chamber Meetings in Grande Prairie in May. The Chamber is working on several issues and we will provide an update on our progress in our next Newsletter.

Please make a note of the upcoming chamber events outlined elsewhere in the Newsletter.

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President, Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce