

AGLA Chairman's Address 2016 AGM

Good afternoon everyone, nice to see this kind of a turnout for our meeting. It's been a year since we formally reported to you and a lot has happened over that time. To quote Winston Churchill, "Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge".

It's a whole new world out there, not only has the political landscape changed but gone are the days when girls used to cook like their mothers. Now they drink like their fathers!

Today, for a change, I am going to give you a balanced view of things from someone who's been at this far too long. An old timer is a man who's had a lot of interesting experiences - -- some of them true. I'm not sure if I qualify in that category yet, but this year has certainly been a trying one from an AGLA perspective.

Last year we finally stepped up and took on a far more professional look and approach with the hiring of Lindsay Dunbar to manage our communication, our website, keep us from procrastinating and generally help us focus on the tasks at hand. I think she has improved our organization tremendously and has taken a load off many of us. Thank you Lindsay.

On the Rental Rate Framework discussion, I'm going to leave that to Amanda Miller from the department to give us an update on how that is going. We have been working towards getting this done for nearly 10 years.

In the spirit of Monty Python...now for something completely different!! We recognized there was a need to engage a batch of new people following the provincial election last spring and we had heard little snippets of cautionary tones from various sources about Crown Lands. We were not prepared for the onslaught of attention that came from the AG's report in July that really went viral. The media engaged and quoted all of the usual suspects who have little or no understanding of the complexity of the grazing lease instrument.

We responded emotionally, but in a thoughtful fashion to the AG in a meeting in Calgary, but the damage had been done. Bob Scammell was rubbing his hands with glee and particularly proud that his works of fiction had quickly become a best seller. About the same time we became aware of a draft report on different options for compensation to leaseholders from oil & gas activity from an organization called the Alberta Land Institute. We looked at the format of an invitation to present our perspective to them and thought we needed some professional help. We engaged Keith Wilson to accompany me to their meeting; I think we established some credibility by enlightening them on why compensation was paid, when it started etc.

Immediately following this we felt it was time to hire a well connected communication individual, enter Lee Funke, who is with us today and his firm, Torque Communications has been assisting us target the decision makers and focus the messaging to help articulate the positive role of leaseholders on Crown Lands in Alberta. We need to harness our frustration and anger into solutions, identity & image. Lee will help us do that.

In September we also met with Minister Phillips and many of her staff, some of which are here today, to make her aware of our concerns with the AG's report and help familiarize her with whom we were.

In October, many from our board and the WSGA met with the Wildrose caucus in Edmonton. We also travelled to Pollockville in numbers to give a "State of the Union" update to our constituents. They responded enthusiastically and generously. I think that the joint effort from WSGA & AGLA at this meeting re-invigorated both our membership and boards with a sense of purpose.

Following the federal election we saw the rollout of a series of 5 essays from the Fraser Institute called "Ranching Realities in the 21st Century". The authors examine various policy options from jurisdictions studied, (Alberta, Saskatchewan, USA and Australia), and identify what may work in our province. Some of the recommendations were to rely on those on the land for knowledge to formulate future policy, development of a feedback loop to ensure that agricultural interests are not compromised and development of market based approaches to effect outcomes. The Fraser Institute is a well-respected independent think tank that looks objectively at issues and offers solutions that meet today's needs for effectiveness and efficiency across a broad spectrum of values. There was significant media coverage of this endeavor, Mark Milke did an excellent job with the media and we hope that it will help lay the groundwork for future discussions on policy and regulation concerning Crown grazing leases in Alberta.

Just when we thought that things were slowing down a bit for the holiday season, Bill 6 came along, and many of us who were repeat offenders took our feet off the coffee table and fired up the tractor or the horse. From the outrage over the lack of meaningful consultation came the formation of a group called the Alberta Agricultural Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition (AgCoalition for short). It represents 95% of the agricultural industry in Alberta with one voice in trying to inject common sense into this debate. Never before have we seen an issue that could galvanize all sectors of the agricultural industry! That was a significant accomplishment that those responsible for it can be proud of! There is some optimism on this front now with the involvement of a senior Deputy and an ADM, whom we have good working relationships with and both are known to be good listeners. Apparently, education is constantly in need. We hope that a good ear washing has increased the understanding on the matter.

Early this month, four AGLA representatives travelled to Edmonton to present our case that compensation was not rent, nor was it revenue, nor an access fee, not welfare either, but indeed due for damage, loss of use and inconvenience, in order to make the leaseholder and his operation “whole” again. We met with a panel of MLA’s at the Public Accounts committee. Thanks to Lee Funke and Keith Wilson, our team was prepared, focused and effective in articulating not only the compensation message but one of responsible stewardship and leaseholder investment as well. Even the Auditor General, who sat beside me, commented, that he was glad we came and he learned more every time he sat down with us.... Education and awareness is a never-ending challenge, more so when the cast of characters keeps changing. We

cannot afford to be complacent and unengaged, all of us have an obligation to stay informed and get involved, contribute in any way you can. We must continue to build trust and credibility expressing:

Empathy & Caring for the resource

Competence & Expertise

Honesty & Openness

Commitment & Dedication to co-operative management

We must continue to show we are responsible stewards and do so with facts and examples. That is the only way to deal with those on the other side who broker only in fear mongering & emotion.

In conclusion, the board would like to thank all of you for both your encouragement and generosity. It is always nice to get feedback from the membership and I can assure you that it is very nearly all positive. Your confidence is reflected in the response we have had to be able to afford the tools to get the job done effectively.

**Thank you,
Larry Sears**