

Presentation by Pierre Lemieux
Parliamentary Secretary
to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Agricultural Institute of Canada Annual General Meeting
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- Bonjour à tous and good evening. Thank you for that kind introduction.
- On behalf of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and our Government, I'm very pleased to join you this evening for your inaugural Ottawa dinner.
- In my role as Parliamentary Secretary, since 2008, it has been my privilege to represent the Minister at important gatherings like this.
- And as Member of Parliament for the riding just east of the city, I'm proud to represent a dynamic agricultural region in Canada.
- In my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell we have a strong dairy industry, top-quality cheese makers, poultry producers, maple syrup producers, and many other impressive family-run enterprises.
- We can thank our farmers for the delicious food we are enjoying tonight – and, of course, the world-class agricultural science that is represented in this room this evening.

- I'm pleased to tell you that our Government appreciates the dedication of the Agricultural Institute of Canada to broadening society's knowledge and use of science as it relates to agriculture.
- By continuing to foster innovation in the area of crops, livestock and soil, your work goes a long way to helping Canadian farmers compete in national and global markets.
- Your journals have a wide readership that extends beyond Canada's borders to over forty (40) countries including the U.S., Japan, Australia, the U.K., and India.
- The world is looking to Canadian scientists for solutions and strategies to advance their own agricultural sectors.
- This is not a new phenomenon.
- Canada would not be one of the world's top producers and exporters of agricultural products without the knowledge and expertise of our scientists and research community.
- Thanks to you, Canadian agriculture is the modern, innovative and technologically-driven sector it is today.
- Today, farmers can produce two times the output with only half the resources they did a half a century ago.

- Our Government continues to look to science to bring real results for our farmers, consumers and the economy.
- Helping farmers succeed and prosper is the foundation of every decision we make on agriculture, and that includes science.
- This past month, in fact, at the standing committee on agriculture we focussed on innovation as a driver of competitiveness on the farm and throughout the value chain.
- We know that science is the key to what makes a productive, sustainable and competitive Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector.
- In fact, Canada has been in the agriculture research business for over one-and-a-quarter century (125 years).
- I'm proud to say we're in it for the long haul.
- Our Government's goal is to ensure our science resources are focused in areas where they can continue to have the most impact for farmers – areas that farmers and industry have identified as priorities.
- At Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – AAFC as its known – we have built strong partnerships to make the best use of expertise in the public and private sectors.

- And we are maintaining a strong network of world-class research centres and scientific expertise across the country.
- I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you how science at AAFC is evolving to ensure we continue to add value and adapt to the realities of today's agricultural sector.
- Core research at AAFC is focusing on areas where government has a clear role, where we add value and where we are not duplicating work already being done by industry and other research partners.
- The Department's long-term strategic direction for science supports all of Canada's major agricultural commodity groups with a sharpened focus on:
 - increasing productivity;
 - improving environmental sustainability;
 - enhancing attributes for food and non-food uses; and,
 - addressing threats to the agriculture and agri-food value chain.
- AAFC has a strong and unique advantage among the players in agricultural science and research.
- With extensive partnerships, networks, and new and larger investments, we are well-positioned to focus on our core science.

- Under the first Growing Forward policy framework, our one-hundred-and-fifteen million dollar (\$115M) investment in agricultural innovation leveraged forty-two million dollars (\$42M) from over two-hundred (200) industry partners and increased Canada's overall agricultural innovation capacity.

- Now we've taken it one step further.

- Growing Forward 2 expands our commitment to innovation by over forty per cent (41%), with almost seven-hundred-million dollars (\$700M) in investments and an even greater portion of science and innovation funds for partnerships and industry-led projects.

- Our research clusters are bringing together partners from all parts of a commodity group to work on shared priorities identified by industry for scientific research.

- Increased planning and coordination is reducing duplication, filling gaps and delivering results faster.

- For instance, the new fourteen-million-dollar (\$14M) beef research cluster brings together scientific expertise on key industry priorities such as:
 - improving beef quality and food safety;
 - animal health and welfare; and,
 - feed production and efficiency.

- Likewise, the twelve-million-dollar (\$12M) dairy cluster will focus on nutrition, sustainable milk production, and dairy genetics and genomics – priorities identified by the sector to help ensure future growth.
- Clusters have also been approved for canola, pulse, horticulture, barley, wheat, grains and pork, while others are still under consideration.
- We're delivering the right balance that will help us get the best return on our investment.
- While private sector investments focus on near-market testing, evaluation, and accelerated variety release, public funds are freed-up for longer-term germplasm development research with broader applicability for the sector.
- Here are just a few examples:
 - (1) A research team led by AAFC scientists is mapping the genetics of thousands of organisms and adding their DNA barcodes to national and international databases. This will allow for more rapid and accurate identification of organisms as native or invasive.

- (2) Our scientists at the Saskatoon Research Centre are working to improve Brassica oilseeds by increasing tolerance to cold, drought and salt stress, and increasing resistance to diseases and pests.
- (3) The Canadian Wheat Alliance is working to develop new traits, genomic and breeding tools contributing to varieties that are high-yielding and more resistant to disease, pests and weather.
- The Alliance is a partnership between AAFC, the National Research Council, the University of Saskatchewan, and the Province of Saskatchewan.
- (4) In addition, AAFC's Minor Use Pesticide program has partnered with the U.S., the provinces, pesticide manufacturers, and growers to deliver more than 1200 new minor use registrations.
- Since the program's inception, more than 220 biopesticide uses have been approved to date by the government. In addition, 15 action plans have been developed to reduce the risk of using pesticide products.
- (5) Furthermore, our Government's commitment of \$13 million is contributing to international efforts against the devastating wheat fungus Ug99.

- I'd also like to mention Bill C-18, *the Agricultural Growth Act*, which is currently before Parliament.
- This is one of the most important pieces of legislation that our Government has brought forward during my time as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture.
- We are bringing Canadian laws up to speed with modern science and technology, innovation and international practice in the industry.
- As new production techniques and new developments in science arrive, Canada's legislative tools must keep pace, especially since our international trading partners have modernized their approaches.
- From feeds to seeds, to animal health, to plant protection and giving our producers access to innovative new crop varieties, the measures in this Bill are critical to the strength of our farm gate.
- The proposed changes in this Bill will encourage investment in plant breeding in Canada, which will increase the choices our farmers have in accessing higher yielding varieties.
- Ladies and gentlemen, the *Agricultural Growth Act* is one of many examples of how our Government is laying the groundwork for a bright future for agricultural science in this country.

- Thanks to science and innovation, our agri-food sector is now the leading manufacturing employer in the country and an important driver of growth in our economy.
- Our agricultural exports – which have topped fifty-billion-dollars (\$50B) for the first time in Canada’s history – help contribute to Canada’s role as a major trading nation by providing safe and high-quality foods across the globe.
- The past has shown us that science, through its many discoveries, is invaluable to overcoming great challenges and creating new opportunities.
- Thanks to the talent and expertise of Canadian scientists, we can all look forward to more exciting agricultural advancements and a prosperous agriculture industry for generations to come.
- Once again, it was my pleasure to be here this evening, and thank you for your great work in building a culture of innovation throughout Canadian agriculture.