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Federal budget renews commitment to trade and research

Calgary, AB (March 23, 2011) – A renewed commitment to supporting farmers’ priorities was one highlight of yesterday’s Federal budget.

“The new budget showed a real commitment to stronger trade relationships while also recognizing the importance of research and innovation in agriculture,” says Alberta Barley Commission Chair Matt Sawyer, who farms near Acme, Alberta. “Since both trade and research are key priorities for barley growers, it’s a relief to see that the government understands and supports our industry.”

The Conservative government released the budget on March 22 to strong resistance from the opposition parties. Ongoing debate will help determine if the government will find support amongst the opposition to pass the budget—or if Canada will be heading in to a spring election.

“Our focus is on supporting the growth and sustainability of the agriculture industry,” says Commission CEO Mike Leslie. “The work the government has been doing to strengthen trade with Europe, Japan and Morocco will only be enhanced by further growth of trade and business partnerships with India.”

The Federal budget also contained a commitment to spend \$50 million on research and innovation. This is \$25 million a year for two years, close to the \$26 million a year increase asked for by farmers.

“As Canadians, we are uniquely positioned to help feed the world,” says Leslie. “Our farmers’ commitment to cutting edge research is one way we’ll continue to grow varieties that work in the marketplace. That said, research funding in Canada is much lower than it is in other countries. To be truly competitive globally, we will need to continue to increase our investment in research.”

Canada’s only barley commission, the Alberta Barley Commission is a not-for-profit organization directed, funded, and controlled by the province’s 17,000 barley producers. The Commission coordinates and sponsors research, market development, technology transfer and policy development on behalf of its producers.

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