



# THE POTATO MINUTE

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Terence Hochstein

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Like in life, things change over time, technology changes, situations change. The "Spud Notes" newsletter began in the 60's when our organization started. It was a way to keep our growers and industry informed on what our commission was working on and what was happening in the potato world. In the mid to late 80's it was replaced with the "Commontater", followed by the "Tater Times" in the early 90's. The Fresh & Processing Minute edition followed for a few years. In 1996, the "Potato Minute" became the voice of the organization, with its monthly newsletter lasting close to 30 years. Today will mark another change in communications where we will be introducing a six edition, bi-monthly publication of the "Potato Minute". With social media taking a bigger role in how the world communicates, we have decided that publishing a more comprehensive PM every two months will bring greater value moving forward. Welcome to our March/April edition of the relaunched Potato Minute. Hope you enjoy the reading.

held March 6th in Nisku and the South Area grower meeting on March 25th in Taber. Both well attended by growers and industry members alike. These meetings are always an opportunity for everyone to get together before the busy planting season starts.



*Full house for our south-area spring meeting in Taber*

The PGA growers and staff would like to thank Rebecca Wieler for the past 2 ½ years of dedication to our organization. Rebecca has moved on to a new roll with the MD of Taber in an economic development position. We wish her luck in her new endeavor. The search is now on to fill the position with an individual that will take the work that has been started in the research management space and move it to the next level. In the interim, Stacey and I will backfill the position on top of our regular duties.

As growers are busy in their fields with spring work, the PGA office has begun planning our annual golf tournament slated for July 10th. This year marks the 35th Anniversary of the APIA and they are busy planning a special evening for all to enjoy during their Burgers and Beans family BBQ. The date is set for July 9th. Stay tuned for more details as they become available.

Spring is here and in the words of Margaret Atwood:

***"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."***

Until next month,

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As growers continue to bring seed in and prepare to start planting, many of the growing areas in the central and eastern part of the continent are still working through their contract negotiations. This year has been a very difficult process for everyone. The umbrella of political unrest and confusion around trade agreements across the globe has added another layer of complexity to an already difficult situation. In the end, it is the growers, the ones that have absolutely no influence on the global situation that pay the price. Once again, the low hanging fruit bears the brunt of the situation. The margin gains of the last few years quickly disappear as the global potato industry goes through a reset.

The 103rd AGM and Conference of the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada was held from March 10-13th in beautiful Quebec City, Quebec. A number of Alberta delegates attended the 4-day event. We always look forward to the opportunity to network with producers and peers from across Canada. The hot topic this year focused on the potential tariffs that may be levied against Canadian products and how it would affect the fruit and vegetable industry here in Canada.

March is also the time when the PGA hosts their annual spring grower meetings. The North Area grower meeting was

# GOV'T RELATIONS - POLICY / SEED UPDATE - Stacey Bajema



## ADVOCACY UPDATE: ALBERTA GROWERS DELIVER CLEAR MESSAGE TO GOVERNMENT - RECAP FROM MARCH 19-20 LOBBY DAYS

### Team Alberta Crops Advocates for Competitiveness, Sustainability, Regulatory Efficiency, and Market Access



March 19–20, representatives from Alberta's potato, grain, canola, pulse, bee, seed, and sugar beet sectors united in Edmonton for Team Alberta

Crops' annual Lobby Days. Farmers and commission staff met with MLAs, policymakers, and senior officials to ensure the voice of Alberta growers was heard loud and clear.

### Competitiveness Through Innovation

Alberta growers underscored the importance of continued investment in agronomic and genetic research to maintain global competitiveness. With \$15.5 million in levy dollars invested annually, we urged long-term funding for research infrastructure, plant breeding, bee health, and extension services.

### Environmental Sustainability

Alberta farmers are global leaders in sustainability, adopting BMPs and advanced technologies to protect our land, water, and air. We called for policy reviews to enable better water management tools, modernization of the Alberta Wetland Policy, and planning strategies to prevent further loss of prime farmland. Expanding and modernizing irrigation remains a key priority to unlock new crop potential.

### Reducing Regulatory Hurdles

Farmers face high-risk operations with thin margins, made more challenging by regulatory delays and red tape. We pushed for provincial development of right-to-repair policy, faster land title processing, and voiced strong opposition to the PMRA fee hike—proposed without proper consultation and threatening future innovation.

### Securing Market Access

With \$6.9 billion in crop and honey exports in 2024, Alberta's farmers rely on open, reliable access to global markets. We advocated for trade diversification, updated agri-food growth strategies, and improved infrastructure. Timely rail and trucking services are vital, as strong transportation corridors are key to market success.

### What's Next?

Growers know the challenges we're facing, and Lobby Days is about creating solutions. Team Alberta Crops is committed to ongoing advocacy. These meetings build critical momentum, but follow-up is essential. We'll continue working to turn conversations into action to ensure Alberta's crop sector remains competitive, resilient, and future-ready.

### Stronger Together: Collaboration Across Crop Commissions

Alberta's potato sector is proud to work alongside other crop commissions through Team Alberta Crops. Our industry understands that the health and productivity of all crops in rotation are mutually beneficial. A strong, collaborative approach to crop sector advocacy will support strong economic viability and long-term profitability for Alberta producers. Alberta Potatoes is committed to building a thriving, resilient cropping sector together.



Alison Davie - PGA Chair along with other TAC reps touring the Alberta Legislature with Minister of Agriculture & Irrigation, Honourable R.J. Sigurdson during TAC Lobby Days



Alison Davie - PGA Chair, Stacey Bajema - PGA Staff, Tony Kirkland - PGA Vice-Chair, Matt Visser - PGA Director in attendance at the March Lobby Days evening social in Edmonton

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS OF CANADA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Earlier in March, FVGC held its annual general meeting, which brought together producers, commission staff, and industry stakeholders for a week of discussion and collaboration. Developing national priorities and voicing concerns over cross-border trade took centre stage.

This year's AGM marked the first official gathering with Executive Director, Massimo Bergamini at the helm, bringing new energy and leadership to the organization. Massimo's commitment to building stronger cross-sector relationships were well received, as growers engaged in meaningful conversations on policy, trade, and innovation.



*Massimo Bergamini addressing AGM attendees*

The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada Board of Directors now includes representation from the potato sector—a significant step forward for growers across the country. Until recently, the board did not have dedicated voices from one of Canada's largest horticultural crops. That changed this year with the election of John Visser, a potato grower from Prince Edward Island, and Alberta's own Russ Van Boom, who bring valuable experience from the seed and commercial sectors. Their appointments ensure that potato growers will have a stronger role in shaping policy priorities at the national level.

### CANADIAN POTATO COUNCIL

As part of the weeklong FVGC meetings in Quebec City, the Canadian Potato Council met for its winter meetings to discuss strategic priorities for the upcoming year. This included updates on key priority areas of the CPC like crop protection, the Potato Sustainability Alliance, Seed Potato Regulation Modernization, grade standards and various research objectives. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency joined the meeting to give key industry updates on plant health and government programming. With Caleigh Hallink-Irwin completing her first six months as general manager, the Canadian Potato Council is looking to strengthen its governance structure and implement a new strategic vision.

## SEED POTATO UPDATE: NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY, LOOKING AHEAD

Alberta's seed potato growers are hard at work this spring, shipping products to customers and preparing for planting in the coming weeks. However, this season has brought its share of uncertainty.



The recent threat of U.S.-imposed tariffs caused significant concern across the industry. Alberta seed growers work in close partnership with fresh, processing and seed producers across the border to ensure consistent access to clean, high-quality seed. While the tariff implementation was ultimately paused, many seed growers rushed to fulfill early shipments to help their customers avoid potential added costs. Their commitment during this uncertain time reflects the strength and reliability of Alberta's seed sector.

A more immediate challenge now is the dramatic reduction in contracted volumes from the processing industry—both in Alberta and across North America. For seed growers, nothing is more difficult than receiving last-minute order cuts for product that's already been harvested and stored. With processors continuing to adjust commercial volumes, this year's shipping season will likely overlap with the planting of the new crop.

Despite the hurdles, there's a sense of cautious optimism as attention turns to the growing season ahead. Most seed-producing regions have received some early spring moisture, and the last snow is melting from the tree lines. Growers are busy assessing new varieties, fine-tuning agronomic plans, and getting equipment field-ready.

***Alberta potato growers have long been recognized for their resilience, innovation, and adaptability—and 2025 will be no exception. Here's to a strong season ahead!***

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### More Team Alberta Crops Lobby Days photos





## THE STORY OF US: NEW VIDEO SERIES LAUNCHED

Embark on a journey of discovery with The Story of Us!

Get ready to dive deep into the heart of Alberta's potato industry with the highly anticipated video series, "The Story of Us: Alberta Potato Growers," launched by the Potato Growers of Alberta! This isn't just about potatoes; it's a captivating exploration of the lives, passions, and dedication of the farmers who bring this staple food to our tables.

For months, cameras have been rolling, capturing the essence of five potato farming families across the province. The series kicks off with "The Seed: Where It All Begins," promising an insightful look at the very foundation of potato cultivation.

But that's not all! A special feature highlighting the importance of water and the utilization of cutting-edge irrigation systems is also in store.

"The Story of Us" is more than just a series; it's a bridge connecting consumers to the source of their food. Through these engaging vignettes, viewers will gain a newfound appreciation for the hard work, technology, and challenges involved in potato farming.

Prepare to be amazed and inspired by the passion and commitment of Alberta's potato growers!

[Check out the trailer](#)

[Episode 1: The Seed - Where It All Begins](#)

**Stay tuned for the next episode coming soon!!**

## Spuds in Tubs - Alberta



The Spuds in Tubs program is in the 3rd stage of growing for the participating classes in the province. Some of the plants have flowered or beginning to flower. Students have been measuring and collecting data since February and the anticipation of harvesting their potato plants will be coming soon. In a couple of months, harvest parties will fill the rooms of all the schools involved and a better appreciation for growing food will benefit students along with connecting them to agriculture.



## Powering life in rural Alberta

Budget 2025 is helping rural Albertans access essential services like gas, electricity and water to grow their local economies.

Rural and remote Albertans play a crucial role in the province's prosperity, from feeding the world to producing raw materials and adding to Alberta's vibrant cultural landscape. They also face unique challenges when it comes to accessing affordable utilities and heating costs. By ensuring rural Albertans have affordable access to the utilities they need, Alberta's government is helping keep lights on, homes warm and businesses in operation, powering both livelihoods and success.

Budget 2025 provides \$8.5 million for the Rural Utilities Program – which consists of the Rural Electric Program, Rural Gas Program and Rural Water Program – and the Remote Area Heating Allowance. This will help communities access critical services like gas, power and water, as well as deliver direct financial relief to thousands of rural Albertans facing high utility bills so that they can continue their vital work.

*"Farmers, ranchers and rural communities are the backbone of Alberta, working hard to support us all. In return, we must ensure they can keep doing what they do best, and these grants do just that by ensuring they can access the utilities they need – at a reasonable cost."*

*Nathan Neudorf, Minister of Affordability and Utilities*

*"These grants are making a difference for Albertans across the province, ensuring that everyone, no matter where they live, has access to essential utilities. I'm proud of how this government continues to support and stand by the hard-working rural communities that help drive our province forward."*

*Chantelle de Jonge, parliamentary secretary for Affordability and Utilities*

A total of \$700,000 is allocated to the Rural Electric Program, recognizing the increasing role electricity plays in modern farming and ranching. Under this program, grants are administered by the Alberta Federation of Electrification Associations and support the construction of electrical services for farms and ranches.

*"Alberta's Rural Electric Grant Program is helping rural Albertans access the power they need to continue putting food on tables around the world. We're grateful for the government's ongoing support and commitment to rural electrification."*

*Steven Young, CEO, Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations*

When it comes to home heating, Budget 2025 commits \$5.7 million to the Natural Gas Program, to be administered by the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, to expand and update natural gas infrastructure. This funding will help provide more rural Albertans with reliable and affordable home heating options as well as help communities attract new businesses, create jobs and diversify the local economy.

For those who are unable to access the natural gas system, Budget 2025 also commits \$1.6 million for the Remote Area Heating Allowance program. Direct financial relief is provided to more than 2,000 households, the majority from Indigenous communities, to help with the high cost of alternative heating fuels, such as heating oil and propane.

*"With this funding, gas co-operatives can continue the ongoing expansion of our natural gas distribution system so that we can connect even more rural communities to affordable gas heating."*

*Tom Kee, executive director, Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops*

Equally as important as electricity and heat is access to safe, abundant water for residential, livestock and irrigation needs. Budget 2025 commits \$500,000 for the Rural Water Program, first introduced in 2024, to ensure rural water co-ops across the province have access to modern water treatment and distribution systems. Grants are administered by the Alberta Federation of Rural Water Co-operatives.

*"Access to clean water is non-negotiable for any home or farming operation. The Rural Water Program is providing support as we work to ensure rural Albertans have the modern water distribution systems they need."*

*Gary Houston, chair, Alberta Federation of Rural Water Co-operatives*

Budget 2025 is meeting the challenge faced by Alberta with continued investments in education and health, lower taxes for families and a focus on the economy.

[Read more](#)

Source: [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca)

### Ending unnecessary holdbacks to make more water available



Alberta's communities and economy are growing fast, and so does the demand for water. Traditionally, water transfers required 10 percent of the water be held back, often preventing readily available water from being safely used by irrigators, businesses and communities that need it.

Alberta's government has released three new policy directions so that water is only held back when absolutely needed. These new rules will make water transfers easier, free up more water in southern and central Alberta, and support economic growth for agriculture, industry and municipalities.

*“Alberta communities, irrigators, and industry have asked for a more flexible system. Removing unnecessary holdbacks will make it easier – and less costly – for water license users to get the water they need, when they need it most, without reducing their overall allocation.”*

*Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas*

Previously, 10 per cent holdbacks were taken for most licence transfers. Alberta's government recently engaged with water users across the province and heard repeatedly that unnecessary holdbacks are reducing water-sharing, adding unnecessary costs and limiting the potential water supply during droughts and shortages. For example, under the previous system, a southern Alberta irrigator transferring water to another farmer would have had to hold back 10 per cent of that amount, often meaning that thousands of

cubic meters of water cannot go to where they are desperately needed.

Now, water will only be held back as needed to prevent negatively affecting other water users or the environment, in line with the requirements under the Water Act. In Alberta, water licences are already issued with specific conditions designed to protect the aquatic environment, meaning most additional holdbacks are not needed. This change will also make the system more effective as water licence holders can now transfer unused water to others who need it.

The new guidance applies to all river basins where transfers are allowed, including the South Saskatchewan River, Battle River and Milk River. The new policy guidance will make sure that future decisions on transfer applications follow a consistent and common-sense approach across regions for determining if holdbacks are needed.

This is part of the province's ongoing work to maximize water availability in Alberta. The government engaged with Albertans in late 2024 and early 2025 to hear ideas about how to strengthen and modernize the water system. This is complex and nuanced work and government is working to identify which gaps and opportunities can be addressed in 2025, and which will require further engagement with Albertans to explore options and plans for implementation.

[Read full article](#)

*Source: alberta.ca*



### RDAR INVESTS OVER \$7.5M IN BOOST FOR AGRICULTURE RESEARCH IN WESTERN CANADA

Edmonton, AB, March 13, 2025 – RDAR, a leading sponsor of results-driven agriculture research in Canada, is excited to announce that, as a member organization of the Agriculture Funding Consortium (AFC), it will invest over \$7.5 million in research grants that will deliver high-impact outcomes to Alberta's producers.

The AFC is an 18-member body of agricultural organizations coordinating funding to support sustainability, diversification, and long-term growth in Western Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry.

The combined investment, including those by RDAR's

AFC partners, will amount to nearly \$12 million supporting 40 research projects. With representation from Alberta's major commodity groups, this investment in AFC research priorities ensures that the funded projects align with the industry's needs and will drive productivity, profitability, and competitiveness in our agriculture sector.

The approval of AFC funding for these projects will deliver positive outcomes for Alberta agriculture commodities such as livestock (bees, beef, dairy, pork, poultry); crops (wheat, canola, pulses, potatoes); and feed and forages.

[Read more](#)

*More information about the AFC and its work can be found at <https://www.fundingconsortium.ca/>*

*Source: rdar.ca*



## APRIL 2025 TOTAL HOLDINGS CANADA

(‘000 cwt)

Province	Apr-25	Apr-24	% Change	5 year average
PEI	12,462	11,691	6.6%	11,992
NB	7,381	4,779	54.5%	5,853
Quebec	5,095	4,783	6.5%	5,033
Ontario	2,842	2,985	-4.8%	2,789
Manitoba	10,599	12,252	-13.5%	9,914
Alberta	11,923	15,558	-23.4%	10,469
BC	226	364	-37.9%	263
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50,528</b>	<b>52,411</b>	<b>-3.6%</b>	<b>46,313</b>

### SEED SECTOR

Stocks in the seed sector in Canada were down by 6.7 %, a difference of 531 , 000 cwt. The majority of the decline was in Alberta, and a small decrease in Quebec and BC, but was offset by higher stocks in the other provinces. Ontario is showing the highest April stocks of seed potatoes on record; combined with very slow movement. This season, the province is sitting on stocks double the 5 year average for April. We should also note that planted acreage was down in Quebec over 700 acres this season so inventories could be considered relatively high for this time of year. The volume cuts in the frozen processing sector have reportedly resulted in growers returning contracted seed potatoes. With very little demand in the dehy sector, fresh packers are keeping an eye on the potential surplus.

### FRESH SECTOR

The Fresh sector shows a slight increase in holdings of 1.9% with 144,000 cwt more potatoes in stock as of April 1st 2025 vs. 2024. All provinces except New Brunswick and Manitoba reported lower stocks on hand in April vs. last year. Although this can be explained by a better crop this season, it might also be the impact of tariff uncertainty on two provinces with a great deal of fresh potato trade with the US. Inventory continues to move well in both BC and Alberta, with both areas reporting they will likely finish storages of yellows and reds earlier than planned. In total, fresh holdings are slightly higher than the 5-year average but most growers we have spoken with feel comfortable with current inventory levels and transition to new crop.

April is reflecting as imilar situation to March for total storage holdings in Canada which were down 3.6 % compared to April of 2024 . Most of that decrease reported in the west, including Ontario, due to increased movement in processing in Manitoba and Ontario and greater disappearance in Fresh and Seed in Alberta, but also due to a smaller crop to start in Manitoba and Alberta processing sectors when compared to last year. In the east the largest difference i s still in New Brunswick with the province reporting the highest April inventory s ince 2016 due to much improved growing conditions and a lower cull rate in russets this season but also due to lower disappearance in all three sectors in the province for the month of March. The tariff situation continues to have an impact in the east in the fresh sector with some growers / packers reporting decreased US demand. There have been decreases in holdings in the Fresh and Processing sectors for April versus last year, however we can see the impact on the Seed sector of the tariff uncertainty as well as the volume cuts in the processing sector, causing seed inventories to be higher in most regions, with only Quebec and Alberta having greater seed disappearance in March.

### PROCESS SECTOR

Inventories in the processing sector are down this April compared to last, however we are comparing to one of the highest production years in Manitoba and Alberta in 2024 . Similar to last month New Brunswick, PEI and Quebec all show higher stocks in April starting with higher inventories than last year but also a s lower pace of movement this March compared to the 5 year average, with the exception of Quebec who did report s lightly greater disappearance for the month. Alberta’ s disappearance was down in March compared to March of last year, but their overall inventories are down 17 %. Frozen processing contract negotiations have been completed in Alberta and are reported to be at a decrease, they are still underway in the other provinces. The biggest impact in the processing sector were the volume cuts announced across the country by the large fry processors, leading to serious questions about planting intentions for the upcoming season.

Source: Victoria Stamper, UPGC General Manager



# FROM THE OFFICE

SAVE THE DATE

May 30th - International Day Of The Potato

July 9th - APIA Burgers & Beans BBQ

July 10th - PGA Golf Tournament (Taber Golf Club)

November 18-20 - Alberta Potato Conference & Tradeshow (Red Deer Resort & Casino)

*Save the Date!*  
*July 9, 2025*



**BURGERS & BEANS IS GETTING AN UPGRADE**

**HELP US CELEBRATE 35 YEARS OF THE APIA**



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**30 May International Day of POTATO**

**#International DayOfPOTATO**



**Harvesting diversity, feeding hope**



[www.fao.org/international-potato-day](http://www.fao.org/international-potato-day)  
[#InternationalDayOfPotato](https://twitter.com/InternationalDayOfPotato)



Michiel from 845 Spud Farms Ltd. hosted 48 kids from Taber Christian School, March 15th. They learned all about seed cutting and potato farming



# Home Garden & Leisure Show - Lethbridge

• 190 Exhibitors • 12,321 Attendees



Top L-R: Deb Brewin, Cindy Fletcher, Terence Hochstein, Juanita Stange - PGA Staff behind the table, Mark Miyanaga from Triple M Farms having great conversations with attendees during March 13-15th HGL Show. Also thanks to Trina Gedney -PGA Staff and Dustin Monson from Serfas Farms. Bottom: South Area Meeting group



Wishing you and your family a Happy Easter!

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Growing Healthy Potatoes Together!





## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Alberta Potato Industry Association is composed of individuals from various areas of business, all of whom work with, and alongside, the potato growers in Alberta. Formed in 1990, the APIA facilitates in the networking with growers at events such as the Burgers N Beans, the Alberta Potato Conference Trade Show, and the Annual PGA Golf Tournament. We are very excited to be celebrating 35 years of partnership with the growers this year!

If you are interested in becoming a member, please send an email to [apiamemberships@gmail.com](mailto:apiamemberships@gmail.com). Memberships will be sent out at the end of the year to last years' members, as well as those interested this year.

### **LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP RECIPIENTS**

**The following individuals are recognized for their long-standing contribution to the APIA and have been awarded a Lifetime Membership to our association:**

Corah, Chuck  
Gash, Brian  
Gouw, Arie

Hacker, Bill  
Jensen, Wayne  
Kaiser, Dave

Mitchell, Peter  
Mrak, Tony  
Nelis, Jacques

Oikawa, Tricky  
Stewart, Russ  
Sandberg, Phil

**The following individuals are members in good standing of the APIA for the 2025 calendar year:**

Alcock, Tony  
Aleman, Mike  
Bauman, Gerald  
Blaine, Justin  
Bos, Tim  
Brehaut, Randy  
Cabernel, Courtney  
Coker, Mike  
Day, Carol  
DeHaan, Jeff  
Draper, Derrick  
Duell, Michael  
Dykstra, Ray  
Fletcher, Blake  
Fletcher, Bruce  
Fletcher, Derrick  
Garos, Dirk

Gallant, Dave  
Glas, Cobie  
Goertzen, Nathan  
Gratton, Geraldine  
Gratton, Lawrence  
Haacke, Aaron  
Haan, Hartger  
Hanlon, Brendon  
Iwan, Josh  
Janssen, Tom  
Keys, Scott  
Klassen, Greg  
Konynenbelt, Marlin  
Kwiatkowski, Ryan  
Laaveg, Chris  
Leffers, Joel  
Lyczewski, Laurie

MacDonald, Mike  
Mackinnon, Kevin  
Marshall, Robin  
Meier, Whit  
Menkveld, Andrew  
Michielsen, Frank  
Molenaar, Reegan  
Nelis, Brian  
Nelubowich, Adam  
Nikles, Brendan  
Nyborg, Bruce  
Pickles, Taunya  
Pieters, Kristof  
Pluta, Denine  
Quinn, Dean  
Quinton, Justin  
Quiring, Cassidy

Ritchie, Mike  
Russell, Jessie  
Schuppler, Steve  
Slomp, Harry  
Sorensen, Martin  
Steidley, Cory  
Sternberg, Ronald  
Stewart, Craig  
Sydoryk, Terry  
Van Eedan Petersman, Lloyd  
Visser, Daniel  
Vossepoel, Adam  
West, TJ  
Wilson, Barb  
Wynker, Sara

Sorry...we missed Dave Gallant, Craig Stewart and Ronald Sternberg last issue!