

#potatoloversmonth



THE POTATO MINUTE

Jan / Feb 2026

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Terence Hochstein

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With the PGA making the decision to go to a bi-monthly (6 editions a year) Potato Minute there are a few things that we need to catch up on...

At our December 18th 2025 Board meeting Alison Davie was re-elected as Board Chair and Tony Kirkland as Vice Chair. This will be Alison's last year on the Board as her 2-3 year terms come

up for election this fall. Alison has served as our Board chair for the past 3 years.

The beginning of the year brings with it a very busy schedule for trade shows and meetings. January 6-9th, Potato Expo 2026 was held in Grapevine, Texas, just outside Dallas. Some of the PGA staff and over 25 of our growers attended the 4-day event that was packed with sessions, speakers, meetings and a busy tradeshow. In conjunction with Potato Expo, the Potato Sustainability Alliance held their annual AGM, as well as the Potato Business Summit hosted by UPGA/UPGC. PepsiCo Frito Lay also had their annual Potato Growers Summit just prior to the Expo this year. At the event, Perry Family Farm of Coaldale was awarded the "PepsiCo Global Farmer Award" for 2025. "They were recognized for their leadership in regenerative agriculture, renewable energy and sustainable food production." As well, the family took home the "North American Frito-Lay Grower of the Year" award.



Although extremely hectic at times, the opportunities to connect with all of the major players in the North American potato industry is well worth the attendance and chaos over the four days. The days begin early and end late for the entirety of the trip.

A few weeks later, January 27-29th, 2026, the Washington/Oregon conference in Kennewick was also a great place to meet and connect with the PNW potato industry. Stacey, Alison and myself including a number of Alberta growers and industry associates attended this great event. Over

2000 people attended the speaker sessions and tradeshow over the three days.

February 11th, Mark Miyanaga, Tony Bos and myself had the opportunity to attend the spring PMANA meeting in Las Vegas. All

processing growing areas across North America attend this annual meeting to discuss the upcoming season and where the potato industry is in general across the country.

Negotiations are well underway across North America right now and with the global economic and political uncertainty in many areas of the world, as well as an oversupply of potatoes in the world marketplace, this year's discussions will be interesting to say the least. The focus on regenerative practices and sustainability must also include the financial sustainability of the farms around the globe that are producing the potatoes. Farmers in general will adapt but they must remain financially stable to be able to continue providing food for the world. Without the producer none of the rest of the equation is possible or sustainable.

Our spring area meetings are coming up March 5th (North Area) and March 24th (South Area). See details on page 7. During these meetings, our corporate sponsor ATB will be having their Cyber Fraud Specialists present at both meetings. Every couple of weeks we are notified that someone within our circles has had their banking information or computer system hacked. It seems that no one is immune to this sort of attack anymore. Come learn and ask questions about some of the "do's and don'ts" when it comes to this unfortunate everyday occurrence.

I think everyone in the ag sector across the province is keeping an eye on the weather. We are in mid-February and what started out as a decent start to winter has been anything but normal since then. There have been many days of extreme, record setting temperatures with minimal to no snowfall. Let's hope that the next 6-8 weeks make up for what we haven't received this winter.

Until next month,

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SEED DIRECTOR/GOV'T RELATIONS & POLICY - Stacey Bajema



Seed Update: Storage, Testing & A Busy Start to 2026

Seed in Storage & Preparing for Shipping

As we move through the heart of winter, Alberta seed continues to rest in storage, with growers carefully monitoring temperature, airflow, and overall tuber quality. With harvest behind us, attention has shifted fully to post-harvest testing and preparing for the upcoming shipping season.

Many growers are now wrapping up their post-harvest testing programs—an essential step in maintaining phytosanitary standards, and ensuring buyers receive high-quality Alberta seed. The results from these programs provide valuable data as we finalize shipping plans and look toward both domestic and cross-border markets.

Hawaii Post Harvest Test Program

The Hawaii Post-Harvest Test Program has now been completed for another year. This long-standing program offers an opportunity to observe disease expression and varietal performance during the winter months before the spring shipping season.

A sincere thank you to all who contribute to making this program possible—from the growers who submit samples, to the inspectors, agronomists, and volunteers who coordinate the work behind the scenes



January: Travel & Industry Engagement

January is always a busy travel month for PGA staff and growers alike. It was great to join a large contingent of Alberta growers at the Washington Oregon Potato Conference this year. The conference remains a highlight on the calendar, offering a wealth of agronomic insight, emerging research, market intelligence, and strong networking opportunities.

For Alberta's seed sector—so closely tied to cross-border trade and collaboration—these connections matter. The exchange of information on disease management, storage innovation, regulatory developments, and market trends helps keep our industry competitive and informed.

February: Consultation & Reporting Season

February is shaping up to be a busy reporting month, with consultations underway on Seed Potato Regulatory Modernization and updated Bacterial Ring Rot (BRR) regulations. These discussions are important to the long-term strength, credibility, and competitiveness of Canada's seed system.

PGA will continue working closely with growers, CFIA, and national partners to ensure Alberta's voice is clearly represented. Regulatory modernization must balance strong phytosanitary protection with practical, workable approaches for growers and exporters.

Looking Ahead

From carefully managed storages, post-harvest testing, industry engagement and regulatory consultations, the winter months are anything but quiet for Alberta's seed sector.

As we prepare for shipping season, we do so with the confidence that comes from strong inspection systems, engaged growers, and active participation in shaping the regulatory environment that supports our industry.

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AG RELATIONS DIRECTOR - Ashley Wagenaar



A Month of Conferences, Collaboration, and Cutting Edge Potato Research

January always brings a flurry of conferences, expos, and meetings. While it can feel overwhelming, this concentrated learning season is one of the best opportunities for our industry to gather and share knowledge. Among the emerging events is the Agricultural Symposium on Potato Research, now in its second year at the University of Lethbridge.

The symposium showcases locally driven research from Agriculture and Agri Food Canada, Lethbridge Polytechnic, the University of Lethbridge, graduate students, and independent researchers. This year's program featured four research presentations and eight posters, providing a strong snapshot of innovation happening right here in our region.

For those interested in the progress of our local work, here is a summary of the presentations:

1. **Dr. Maria Munawar** opened the symposium with an in-depth look at the role of *Pratylenchus neglectus* in the Potato Early Die complex, particularly its interaction with *Verticillium*. With Early Die continuing to trouble growers across the region and with long rotations already in place, new systems-based approaches and studies are essential.



Her work demonstrates that disease development depends not simply on the presence of pathogens but on threshold levels and the specific interactions between root lesion nematodes,

potato roots, and *Verticillium*. Dr. Munawar conducts this research under Dr. Dmytro Yevtushenko at the University of Lethbridge.

2. Next, **Brent Puchalski**, Founder of Paramoria Ag Science, presented an ongoing project using molecular machine learning to better understand *Fusarium* dry rot in potato storage. Their goal is to analyze DNA swab samples from storage facilities to:



- Identify disease pressures present
- Understand how different wound types could influence infection
- Develop rapid monitoring tools for producers

This forward looking work continues to progress and may pave the way for predictive, storage-level diagnostics.

3. **Dr. Jonathan Neilson** of Agriculture and Agri Food Canada shared insights from his comprehensive literature review examining soil health practices in potato production across 55 global studies. The review focuses on:

- Carbon amendments
- Cover cropping
- Reduced tillage



The goal is to identify clear, evidence based trends that may guide future potato management strategies. With the project still underway, we look forward to the final synthesis and recommendations.

4. The final presentation came from **Dr. Sunday Olakanmi**, working with Dr. Chandra Singh at Lethbridge Polytechnic. Their research explores moisture loss (shrink) during long-term potato storage—a key quality factor that can be managed with the right strategies. The study aims to identify:



- Which management practices best reduce shrink
- Where in the pile shrink is most likely to occur
- How environmental and storage conditions influence moisture loss

This work will support growers in maintaining tuber quality throughout extended storage periods.

Along with the excellent poster presentations, it's amazing to see the depth of work our dedicated potato research community continues to contribute. Thank you to all who presented, participated, and supported this year's symposium. Here's to another year of innovation and discovery. If you want more information on any of these projects, check out www.albertapotatoes.ca/research

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PROVINCIAL NEWS

ALBERTA POTATO GROWERS INVITED TO SPEAK ON THEIR SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES AT PROVINCIAL AND GLOBAL EVENTS



Todd Bergen-Henengouwen of Diamond Butte Potato Company, Emily Ford with Quattro Farms, Alison Davie with North Paddock Farms share their sustainable on-farm practices

Todd Bergen-Henengouwen of Diamond Butte Potato Company, A mostly all-potato grower group shares their sustainability practices at the 2026 Irrigated Crop Production Update in January, during the Agronomy of Irrigated Specialty Crops Grower Panel. Todd Bergen-Henengouwen of Diamond Butte Potato Company, Emily Ford with Quattro Farms, and Alison Davie, of North Paddock Farms were invited to share their on-farm practices and professional experience on sustainability to a packed house.



Emily Ford speaking at the Crossroads Conference as well
Photo credit: Jeff Melchior

Emily was also invited to speak at the Crossroads Conference in Edmonton January 27th in the “Ask Me Anything” portion of the panel. She had many questions from managing employees to how technology and new advancements are being utilized on the farm.

Chris Perry from Perry Family Farm in the County of Coaldale was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland by PepsiCo Frito Lay to bring a farmer’s perspective into global conversations on the future of food, climate, and resilience.



Chris Perry on the right sharing and listening to fellow panel guests

“It included a PepsiCo-hosted breakfast panel alongside fellow farmers from Brazil and France, sharing real, on-the-ground experience and discussing what it actually takes to build resilient food systems at scale”.

“At the heart of it all is a simple belief: farmers must be central partners in shaping the future of food”..not passive endpoints at the end of the value chain” - Chris Perry

The five themes he brought into the conversation:

- Soil health as the foundation of everything
- Aligning risk, reward, and responsibility across the food system
- Building trusted, ethical, farmer-first data ecosystems
- Circular biogas and RNG pathways for Scope 3 transport
- Tokenized verification of regenerative outcomes”

“When farmers are invited into the conversation, regenerative agriculture becomes investable, not aspirational! - Chris Perry

Minister MacDonald launches consultations for the Next Agricultural Policy Framework



Government of Canada

News release

January 20, 2026 – Ottawa, Ontario – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

The Honourable Heath MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, hosted an in-person roundtable with sector stakeholders to mark the launch of consultations that will inform the development of the Next Policy Framework (NPF).

The NPF will succeed the 2023-2028 Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) as the main federal, provincial and territorial mechanism for supporting Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector from 2028-2033.

During the roundtable, the Minister engaged with representatives from across the sector to discuss current and emerging challenges and opportunities facing Canadian agriculture and agri-food.

The Minister's leadership in launching consultations underscores the Government of Canada's commitment to working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to shape a forward-looking framework that supports a competitive, resilient and sustainable sector.

Following the roundtable, Minister MacDonald will continue

to host roundtables across Canada to hear from regional associations, producers, and processors, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will organize national online consultations through the NPF webpage. These consultations will focus on gathering feedback on current and emerging challenges as well as opportunities facing the sector, and they provide Canadians and stakeholders further opportunities to share their perspectives and help shape the future direction of the Framework.

"Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector is a cornerstone of our economy and our food security. Meaningful engagement is essential in developing policy, and these consultations will help ensure the Next Policy Framework is grounded in the experiences and perspectives of those who know the sector best. We are committed to working directly with farmers, producers, processors and partners to provide support that reflects their realities, tackles new issues, and guarantees the sector's long-term success."

- The Honourable Heath MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

[Read full news release](#)

Source: canada.ca





Potato Sustainability Alliance Approves Third-Party Verification to Strengthen Program Credibility

St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin – The Potato Sustainability Alliance (PSA) announced that its Board of Directors has formally approved the implementation of a third-party verification process for the PSA Program, marking an important step forward in strengthening the program’s integrity, credibility, and long-term value for growers and the broader potato industry.

This marks the first time PSA has implemented a formal, third-party verification process as part of the PSA Program. As sustainability expectations continue to rise across the supply chain, independent verification provides an added level of confidence in PSA’s on-farm assessment data – reinforcing PSA’s commitment to credible, data-driven sustainability and ensuring the program remains trusted, consistent, and representative of real on-farm practices as it evolves alongside grower needs.

“Verification reinforces the credibility of the PSA Program while staying true to our grower-focused approach,” said John Mesko, CEO of the Potato Sustainability Alliance. “This step demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement and to providing credible, reliable data that reflects what growers are doing in the field.”

The Potato Sustainability Alliance (PSA) has announced updates to its Board of Directors and Executive Committee, including the election of new leadership and the retirement of several long-serving directors.

Several new, incoming board members will lead heading into 2026.

Jane Canales (Basic American Foods), Kartika Charan (Sysco), JP Claassen (Canadian Grower, Claassen Farms), Tony Macklin (US Grower, Walther Farms), Lincoln Neufeld (Canadian Grower, WJ Siemens Farming Co.), and Ariel Wiegard (Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever) will join the PSA Board of Directors, bringing a diverse range of perspectives and experience from across the potato value chain. Their leadership will support PSA’s continued focus on collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement in sustainable potato production.

The Alliance also announced the election of its 2026 Executive Committee, which will help guide PSA’s strategic direction and governance in the coming year. The 2026 Executive Committee is:

- Tracy Shinnars-Carnelley, PSA Chair (Vice President of Research, Quality and Sustainability, Peak of the Market)
- Erika Wagner, PSA Vice Chair (Agronomy Solutions Manager, Yara North America)
- Ryan Vroegindewey (Senior Manager of Sustainable Agriculture, Campbell Soup Company)
- Mike Wenkel (Chief Operating Officer, National Potato Council)

The PSA board appointed Dan Duguay (Canadian Produce Marketing Association) to serve in an additional at-large board seat. Duguay’s appointment reflects the Alliance’s commitment to maintaining balanced representation and ensuring the board has the expertise needed to guide PSA’s strategic priorities as its programs, partnerships, and impact continue to grow.

PSA also extends its sincere appreciation to retiring board members Chad Berry (Canadian Grower, Under the Hill Farms), Andy Diercks (US Grower, Coloma Farms), Greg Nakamura (Canadian Grower, Nakamura Farms), and Shane Sampels (Sysco) for their dedicated years of service to sustainability.



Source: potatosustainability.org

UPCOMING SPRING AREA MEETINGS

North Area Meeting

**March 5, 2026
6:00 pm Supper**

Holiday Inn & Suites - Nisku
Agenda

South Area Meeting

**March 24, 2026
8:00 pm Breakfast**

Heritage Inn - Taber
Agenda



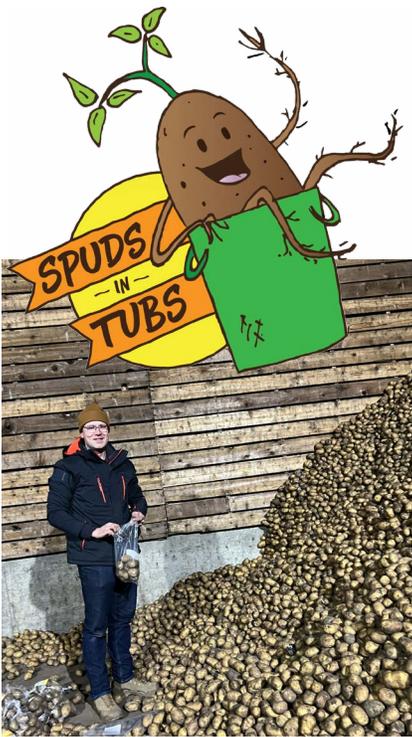
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FEBRUARY IS...

POTATO LOVERS MONTH

How are you celebrating?
Share on your socials #potatoloversmonth

FROM THE OFFICE



In January, PGA staff and Edmonton Potato Growers met at Norbest Farms Ltd. potato storage to collect over 100 bags of Columba seed potatoes to distribute to partnering greenhouses for the 2026 Spuds In Tubs Program. Teachers collected their complete kits to take back to their classrooms the first week of February and began planting the following week during a virtual tour with Farmer Ryan, potato grower from the Purple Springs area. He went through all the steps and answered several interesting questions from the students. There's much excitement and anticipation from all the students and teachers who will nurture their plants and watch it grow, collect data and look forward to harvest time in June.



Cody Van Driesten, Seed Sales Rep at Edmonton Potato Growers helps to bag seed potatoes at Norbest Farms Ltd. potato storage for the Spuds In Tubs Program. Last photo: Students in Edmonton school planting their seed potatoes

SOUTHERN ALBERTA HOME### GARDEN & LEISURE SHOW

MARCH 12-14

LETHBRIDGE TRADE & CONVENTION CENTRE

More info

Looking for hosts for our booth.
Contact Deb @ 403.892.4066



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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. 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 2026 calendar year:

Alcock, Tony
Aleman, Mike
Bateman, Dave
Bell, Jared
Blaine, Justin
Bos, Tim
Brehaut, Randy
Burns, Riley
Cann, Creed
Claassen, Chantal
Clark, Joe
Coker, Mike
Day, Carol
DeHaan, Jeff
Draper, Derrick
Dube, Kelly
Duell, Michael

Dykstra, Ray
Elser, Ryley
Fletcher, Blake
Fletcher, Bruce
Fletcher, Derrick
Forbush, Todd
Gallant, Dave
Glas, Cobie
Goertzen, Nathan
Gratton, Géraldine
Gratton, Lawrence
Haacke, Aaron
Haan, Hartger
Hanlon, Brendon
Iwan, Josh
Janssen, Tom
Joss, Jessica

Keys, Scott
Kinniburgh, Shaun/
Stacey
Klassen, Greg
Konynenbelt, Marlin
Kruk, Adam
Kuipers, Kianna
Kwiatkowski, Ryan
Leffers, Joel
Loman, Ryan
Lyczewski, Laurie
Mackinnon, Kevin
Marshall, Robin
Meier, Whitney
Menkveld, Andrew
Michielsen, Frank
Mykytiw, Murray

Nelis, Brian
Nelubowich, Adam
Neudorf, Ayrton
Nikles, Brendan
Peters, Abby
Pickles, Taunya
Pieters, Kristof
Pluta, Denine
Quinton, Justin
Quiring, Cassidy
Ratray, Desire
Reimer, Taylor
Ritchie, Mike
Russell, Jessie
Sawatzky, Kirby
Slomp, Harry
Sternberg, Ronald

Stewart, Craig
Stinnissen, Pat
Sydoryk, Terry
Visser, Daniel
Vossepoel, Adam
Warkentin, Bruce
West, TJ
Wielenga, Jorrit
Wilson, Barb