

# *The AgCoalition in Review*

An Update from the Alberta Agriculture Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition

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## ***This Update: The AgCoalition Journey...How We Started***

### **Introducing the Sustainability Imperative**

Alberta is a resource blessed province, which provided an opportunity for the growth of major industries that worked to supply society with metals, minerals and fuels while providing an economic engine for Canada. Over time companies operating in this arena lived out their commitment to societal values by looking beyond economics towards protecting the environment, building community capacity and working safely. These elements of so-called sustainability continue as imperatives for companies that strive to meet societal expectations for performance.

### **The Sustainability Imperative and Agriculture**

In Alberta, agriculture represents a vast number of distinct farming and ranching operations that collectively provide sustenance from the land to feed an increasing population and export markets abroad, with agriculture also developing into a major industry for this province. Additionally it was an industry characterized by hard work and supporting family values, a strong sense of independence, and a tremendous diversity in the sector to grow and raise the many agricultural products that society requires and values.

Along with other industries, the agricultural sector also worked successfully to advance various elements related to so-called sustainability, an effort challenged by the significant complexity and diversity within the industry, and resulting in various collaborations and initiatives which were progressed independently in parts of the sector. While not necessarily known to society at large, this included good work to improve safety performance in various operations and producer segments within the sector.



*Agriculture producers employ new technologies and techniques to improve operations. It is a history of innovation and change leading to better safety and efficiency, two hallmarks for sustainable industries.*

### **Safety and Agriculture**

Improved farm and ranch safety has been a focus area for some time in the agricultural sector, with some of the more recent work initiated in 2009. In this work various groups of producers have

collaborated to propose a coordinated and comprehensive approach to safety that made sense at the farm and ranch level. It was the staged process that progressively moved from data gathering and analysis, to communication, education, to assessment and certification of best practice broadly applied across the sector.

A key component, inherent to most of the various approaches and initiatives related to safety improvement, was the proposed establishment of a province-wide coordinating effort to support a Farm and Ranch Safety Association for the agricultural industry. The strategy to improve farm and ranch safety relied heavily on meaningful engagement of farm/ranch businesses, and consultation with those who live and work within them.

Interestingly, efforts to engage the governments of the day in progressing agricultural safety did not meet with the required support to achieve a coordinated province wide safety effort in agriculture. As cited previously, this would be an effort grounded in the extensive consultation necessary to practically achieve safety improvements given the uniqueness and diversity of application in the sector.

### **Responding to Challenge**

In late 2015, Bill 6 or The Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act was introduced in the Legislature with limited consultation, resulting in significant upheaval at the grassroots level that in turn prompted significant amendments to the Bill.

In response to the challenges associated with Bill 6 legislation, and in support of agricultural industry sustainability, it was agreed to form an industry led coalition; an unprecedented collaboration between almost all the producer groups that form the agricultural industry in Alberta. On January 22, 2016, the Alberta Agriculture Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition (or the so-called AgCoalition) was formed. The AgCoalition was founded with the vision for improved safety cultures across the entire Alberta agricultural industry, consistent with previous work done in the agricultural sector.

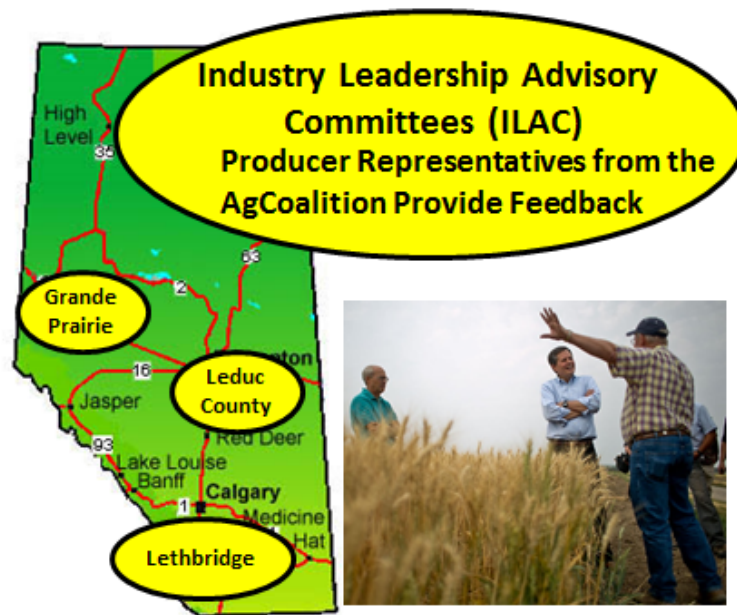


*Shown above, the agricultural producers from across Alberta met early this year in Red Deer to form the Alberta Agricultural Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition.*

### **The Alberta Agriculture Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition in Action**

Of immediate concern for the AgCoalition was addressing a newly announced government consultation process, where the AgCoalition responded with appropriate sector representation and staffing required to inform these upcoming sessions. While this proved a consuming process that required extensive time and effort, where the overall government process was fragmented and did not have balanced sector representation, and it included topics outside of safety; the AgCoalition has persisted in its resolve to participate and in parallel develop a coordinated province wide approach for safety improvement.

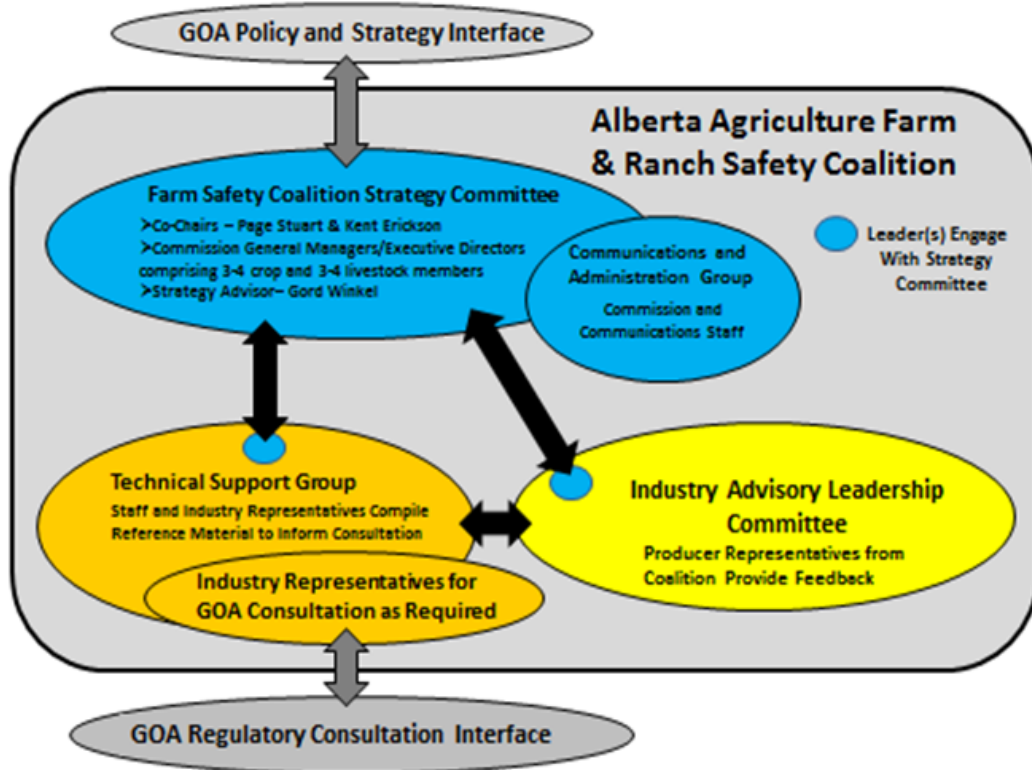
Under the auspices of the AgCoalition, the Industry Leadership Advisory Committee (ILAC) was formed to engage producers in three locations across the province to provide guidance for nominees negotiating at the government consultation tables on behalf of the agricultural industry. It is important to highlight that while these ILAC sessions were front ended with work to influence the government consultation processes, integral to these ILAC sessions was also the preliminary development work to advance safety cultures for farms and ranches in a coordinated manner across Alberta. This included the leveraging of best practices, strategies for Incident reporting and safety performance measurement, and the identification of sector subgroups where practical consistent application of safety frameworks could be applied.



*The AgCoalition held three sessions across the province to gather producer feedback that was then used in government consultation table sessions. ILAC participants also set the groundwork for practically advancing safety cultures in Alberta agriculture.*

In parallel to both the preliminary development work to improve safety cultures in agriculture and the efforts to effectively respond to the government consultation table process, the AgCoalition was challenged with setting up an organization that could provide both leadership and technical resource to this work. Setting terms of reference, engaging the wider producer membership on the organization structure and leadership strategy in Red Deer on March 2, 2016, participating in numerous government

leadership sessions at the ministerial level, communications, business process development and budgeting were integral to the process. As shown following, this included the formation of a Strategy Committee, the Industry Leadership Advisory Committee (ILAC) described earlier, a Technical Support Group to provide information to the consultation process and an Administrative Team supporting this work on all fronts.



*The AgCoalition was formed on January 22, 2016. Since it was established, the AgCoalition organized to communicate directly with Government on industry positions and set groups in motion to deal with a government initiated table consultation process. Industry Advisory Leadership Committee (ILAC) meetings across Alberta provided industry feedback to the Technical Support Group which in turn prepared information for AgCoalition nominees participating in the table consultations.*

**Next Update: What’s Happening with the Government Consultation Tables**