



# *MEDIA RELEASE*

## **SOUTHGROW MEMBERS ELECT NEW BOARD AND MAKES MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS...**

***Lethbridge, May 31, 2012*** – SouthGrow Regional Initiative held its eighth Annual General Meeting at the Lethbridge Lodge on Wednesday, May 30, 2012 and elected a new Management Board.

The new Management Board, voted in by elected officials and community representatives are:

Chair, Sandra Nelson, Village of Stirling  
Vice-Chair, Mayor Ray Bryant, Town of Taber  
Vice-Chair, Councillor Ron Lagemaat, Town of Coalhurst  
Councillor Henry DeKok, Town of Picture Butte  
Councillor Magali Kronen, Town of Cardston  
Councillor Greg Robinson, Town of Raymond  
Councillor Sheldon Day Chief, Blood Tribe Council  
Councillor Roger Houghton, Cardston County  
Mayor Kym Nichols, Village of Carmangay  
Councillor Dannie Lien, Village of Warner

Prior to the elections, SouthGrow Chair Sandra Nelson presented the 2011-2012 Annual Report covering the initiatives and activities of SouthGrow's five committees (Alternative Energy, Productivity Improvement, Ensuring Rural Sustainability, Water for Economic Development and MLA Roundtable). Vice Chair Ron Lagemaat presented the 2012-2013 Operations Plan with new projects and initiatives to raise awareness of the area and attract opportunities and investment to the region. Upcoming projects include Renewable Energy Cluster Development, Water for Economic Development, Community Capacity Building and Strengthening Government Relations.

In addition, Ron McMullin, Executive Director of Alberta Irrigation Projects Association (AIPA) and Bob Dykstra, Chair of AIPA, shared the organization's "Statement in Support of SouthGrow's Water for Economic Development Initiative", assuring member municipalities that Districts have individually set aside specific volumes of water for a number of purposes, including water for economic development and water for communities in their locale. SouthGrow also made a major funding announcement of two separate grants received from Rural Alberta Development Fund for its Empowering Renewable Energy Clusters in the SouthGrow Region Using Renewable Energy Co-ops (\$480,000) and from Alberta Municipal Affairs for its Water for Economic Development Initiative (\$250,000) through its regional collaboration program.

Chair Sandra Nelson was pleased with the support received from communities as well as granting agencies. *"SouthGrow is a strong regional economic development alliance and has planned key initiatives over the next two years that are valuable to our members as well as the south central region. The major funding we have received for our multi-year projects in the key areas of water and renewable energy and the support we receive from key stakeholders such as Alberta Irrigation Projects Association show that SouthGrow is progressive and is working on priorities that will ensure this region is unified, prosperous and sustainable."*

**For more information, contact:**

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*About SouthGrow Regional Initiative:*

SouthGrow Regional Initiative was formed in 2003 and is a member-driven, non-profit regional economic development alliance for south central Alberta, encompassing twenty-two communities with a total population of about 50,000. SouthGrow's mission is to encourage regional collaboration, focus on regional economic development issues and ensure the southwest region has equal opportunity for growth and development within Alberta's global possibilities. The Chair of SouthGrow Regional Initiative is Sandra Nelson.

*About Empowering Renewable Energy Clusters in the SouthGrow Region:*

Rural Development Alberta Fund (RADF) Funding for **"Empowering Renewable Energy Clusters in the SouthGrow Region Using Renewable Energy Co-ops"** – This initiative will build on the outcomes of the Community Renewable Energy Assessments conducted by Lethbridge College's International Wind Energy Academy (IWEA) in each of the 22 SouthGrow member communities. The multi-year project will result in building community capacity to develop municipal/community driven renewable energy initiatives through the development of rural renewable energy clusters and the development of a rural renewable energy co-ops based on these clusters. One of the project objectives is to create the governance, processes and information that will allow rural communities to analyze and develop their own Co-op's for renewable energy generation. These Co-op's bring new jobs and revenue generation opportunities to rural communities thus creating sustainability and expanded economic and capacity development. Communities identified for cluster development will be educated using training seminars and workshops. Communities ready for the development of renewable energy Co-op(s) will be trained using a Co-op toolkit. Ultimately, a strategy will be created for replication and sharing of best practices in Co-op development.

*About Water for Economic Development in the SouthGrow Region:*

Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA) Regional Collaboration Program Funding for Water for Economic Development in the SouthGrow region – This initiative will result in an analysis of existing water/waste water systems, status of the ability to deliver 'safe' water and determine preliminary additional capacity requirements to support expansion and attraction for potential industry / business development as well as research and recommendations for innovative water/waste water systems for communities to consider in their planning. SouthGrow will also participate in the Oldman River Operational Modelling Project to develop plausible and sustainable scenarios for protecting the health of the river throughout the basin and meeting the needs of water users, particularly for economic development. The modelling project will help SouthGrow guide communities on what controlled and measured growth from an economic development perspective can look like given water treatment and waste water options as well as the health of the Oldman River. The initiative will result in an awareness campaign positioning the SouthGrow region as environmentally responsible and progressive in terms of water for economic development.

*AIPA's Statement in Support of SouthGrow's "Water for Economic Development" Initiative*

Alberta's irrigation districts affirm that water is available for development in southern Alberta, including the SouthGrow region. Districts individually have set aside specific volumes of water for a number of purposes, including water for economic development and water for communities in their locale. Historically, districts have played a vital role in southern Alberta in delivering water to communities, businesses, livestock operations, and habitat projects, and will continue to do so within the bounds of legislation and government policy.

AIPA Executive Committee  
May 2, 2012