



APRI Announcement: Dr. Peter Hackett

> June 17, 2009

> Location: University of Alberta

Thank you. Minister Horner and colleagues from Alberta and across Canada, it's a pleasure to be here this morning to say a few words about Alberta's emerging strength in prion research.

It's really quite remarkable to think about when we started in 2005. There was not a great deal of prion research in Alberta because there was not a great deal of prion research in Canada.

But from a devastating economic crisis and out of the severe damage to the farm community emerged a commitment from the Government of Alberta and from the federal government to create an ability to investigate and understand the strange and complex world of prion diseases.

And this we have done. From a standing start in early 2005 we have created a team of prion researchers in Canada that stands equal with the best in the world. And the heart of that team beats strongly right here in Alberta.

We have done this by aligning our efforts and integrating them towards the goals set by both levels of government. We have done this in mutually supportive partnerships.

You know, when you head up a research foundation backed by an endowment of seven hundred million dollars you get a lot of offers to partner. Let me tell you what we look for in a partner. We look for shared goals and a common strategic intent. We look for operational excellence and we look for people with a passion for the cause. Only when we find all that do we part with our money.

The people at PrioNet, the people at the Alberta Prion Research Institute and the people at Alberta Ingenuity come to work every day determined to make a difference in prion disease.

And it is the researchers that we fund that give us that passion.

That's why Alberta Ingenuity and the Alberta Prion Research Institute have pooled their funding to bring Professor Judd Aiken to the University of Alberta.

That's why APRI, PrioNet, the National Institute for Nanotechnology, Alberta's NanoWorks program and a local biotechnology company ChemRoutes, have joined forces to develop a nanotechnology approach to discover drugs for neurodegenerative diseases like ALS and Alzheimer's.

One of the key researchers in this project is a young man Michael Woodside who way back when used to be a summer student with Bob Wolkow in my research group in Ottawa. Bob and I were cruel. We gave the impossible projects to Michael. He leaned to endure. Yesterday Michael received a very prestigious Alberta Ingenuity New Faculty Award. Congratulations Michael. No one knows this so you are all sworn to secrecy.

That is also the reason that Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and APRI have joined together with Sanimax to find new uses for specified risk materials.

That's why APRI and PrioNet and the AHFMR co-fund the many excellent researchers who have been brought to Alberta. Researchers like David Westaway, Valerie Sim and Judd Aiken here at the University of Alberta; researchers like Markus Czub at the University of Calgary; and researchers like Stephanie Czub at the CFIA labs in Lethbridge.

Researchers who already had the spirit to achieve