



April 7, 2026

The Honourable Eleanor Olszewski, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience

Minister Responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada

By email: eleanor.olszewski@parl.gc.ca

Re: Lacombe Research and Development Centre – Community Resilience, Domestic Capacity, and Long-Term Competitiveness

Dear Minister Olszewski,

It was a pleasure for members of Lacombe County Council to briefly meet you during the Rural Municipalities of Alberta conference. We appreciated the opportunity to share, even in a very limited way, the local context surrounding the proposed closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre (LRDC).

We are writing to follow up more formally because we felt both of your portfolios align closely with the challenges our Central Alberta communities are facing and the broader implications of this decision across the Country.

For Lacombe and Lacombe County, the potential closure of the LRDC represents far more than the loss of a federal facility. For 119 years, this institution has served as a cornerstone of agricultural innovation, scientific advancement, and community identity in Central Alberta and indeed, across Canada. The decision to close a dedicated institution focused on independent, public-interest research is short-sighted and will have far-reaching consequences for food security, climate resilience, and agricultural productivity. This is particularly magnified at a time where our country is taking necessary steps to protect our economy through global diversification in the face of evolving tariffs.

While the immediate impacts are significant, we are particularly concerned that the full consequences will take years to fully materialize. Applied agricultural research does not operate on short cycles. The loss of long-term trials, uninterrupted datasets, infrastructure, and mentorship pipelines creates damage that unfolds slowly, what industry experts have described as a slow-motion economic and scientific collision. Course correction, if at all possible, takes equally long.

For a smaller labour market like ours, the loss of more than 100 stable, highly skilled positions represents an economic shock that will grow over time and be felt through reduced student opportunities, declining research capacity, and the erosion of the innovation ecosystem that supports producers on a national level.

We followed your recent announcements in Central Alberta related to the Regional Tariff Response Initiative with great interest. Many of the themes you highlighted publicly resonate very strongly with our experience:

- the need to strengthen domestic capacity,
- protect and secure supply chains, and
- ensure businesses and producers can remain competitive in an increasingly uncertain global trade environment.

The work undertaken at the LRDC directly supports these goals. **Independent, publicly delivered research in crop and livestock systems underpins Canada's ability to compete, adapt, and respond**, particularly for export-dependent sectors like agriculture. Weakening that capacity runs counter to efforts aimed at resilience and long-term economic strength across the Prairies and the country.

Canada is already experiencing growing pressure from trade instability, climate variability, and rising production risks. Several experts have noted that we are beginning to fall behind peer jurisdictions in publicly funded agricultural research, and reductions such as the closure of the LRDC, and the six other research stations across Canada, will accelerate that decline.

The closure of a centre like Lacombe is not in the best interests of Canada; it is a structural reduction that constrains future options at a time when flexibility and foresight are most needed.

We respectfully ask you to advocate at the federal level for reconsideration of the planned closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre, or, at a minimum, a pause to allow meaningful engagement with affected communities, research partners, and the agri-food sector.

As local governments, we are eager to be constructive partners in a conversation about how federal research infrastructure can continue to support regional resilience, competitiveness, and food security in alignment with national priorities.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide further details or host you in our communities, should your schedule allow. Thank you for your leadership and for considering the local and long-term impacts of this decision.

Sincerely,

Her Worship, Thalia Hibbs
Mayor of the City of Lacombe



John Ireland
Reeve, Lacombe County

