

Midterm Convention Resolutions & Responses

Matters Pertaining to SARM

Resolution No. 1-05M RM of Fertile Belt No. 183 Website Business Feedback

WHEREAS, rural municipalities engage in contracts with contractors and businesses in order to conduct business for the municipality; and

WHEREAS, some businesses and contractors may not function at an ethical standard that is acceptable;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM provide a section on their website for municipalities to post businesses that they have dealt with and leave feedback on the level of satisfaction of work done.

Response from SARM:

The website is scheduled to be redesigned in 2006. A page will be created to facilitate this type of communication between municipalities. It will likely consist of a list of business names (submitted by RMs) which links to the names of the RMs that have dealt with them. It will be up to the RM interested in checking the references on the business to phone the RMs that have dealt with the business to get the feedback.

Resolution No. 2-05M Division 2 Traffic Control for Bear Pit Session

BE IT RESOLVED, that a flag or light system be implemented at the SARM Conventions which would limit all speakers at the bear pit session to three minutes, thus eliminating unnecessary pre-ambles and providing opportunity for more questions.

Response from SARM:

SARM will utilize the screens at convention to indicate to speakers the amount of time they have to speak. Speakers will have three minutes, to talk. After two minutes, Speakers will receive a one minute warning, indicated by yellow slide. When their time is up, the screen will turn red.

Resolution No. 3-05M SARM Board of Directors Amendment to Bylaw No. 4

WHEREAS, due to the size of the SARM delegate body, facilities for conventions must be booked years in advance of the event; and

WHEREAS, it would be beneficial to SARM delegates to be able to quickly determine future convention dates;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Bylaw Number Four be amended as follows:

1. By deleting the words "An Annual Convention shall be held at such place as may be selected by the delegates attending the previous Convention and at such time as may be decided upon by the Board of Directors" in section 1 and by replacing them with the words "An Annual Convention shall be held each year on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the second week of March and that the Convention shall be held at such place as may be selected by the Board of Directors"; and

2. By deleting the words "A Mid-term Convention shall be held at such place and time as may be decided upon by the Board of Directors" in subsection 9(a) and by replacing them with the words: "A Midterm Convention shall be held each year at such place as may be selected by the Board of Directors. The Midterm Convention shall be held on Wednesday and Thursday of the second week of November, however;

(i) if one of these dates is Remembrance Day, then the following rules will apply:

(a) when Remembrance Day falls on a Wednesday, the Midterm

Convention will be held on Thursday and Friday of that week, and
(b) when Remembrance Day falls on a Thursday, the Midterm Convention will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday of that week.

(ii) if these dates conflict with a major event, then the convention may be held on such alternate dates as the Board of Directors may determine.

Response from SARM:

SARM Bylaw No. 4 has been amended.

Resolution No. 5-05M RM of Meeting Lake No. 466 Education Tax

WHEREAS, SARM has declined to act as directed by Resolution 8, March 2005 convention, to proceed with deliberations to reduce education tax on agriculture property immediately; and

WHEREAS, SARM amalgamated a resolution for six district meetings to seek further direction from member RMs with the June district meetings, which delayed further action; and

WHEREAS, SARM took the resolutions from these district meetings as direction to proceed to form a coalition that would support education tax reduction; and

WHEREAS, SARM included all organizations recommended at the district meetings except APAS to form a coalition to present a position to the Saskatchewan Government; and

WHEREAS, none of the other recommended organizations represent agricultural producers in rural Saskatchewan;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that APAS be immediately included to work in defense of rural agricultural producers to reduce education tax on agricultural property for 2006.

Response from SARM:

In November 2005, APAS was invited, but declined to join the Education Tax Coalition, consisting of SARM, SUMA, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, and the Saskatchewan Real Estate Association.

Resolution No. 6-05M

Division 3

Agriculture Support

WHEREAS, agriculture is in a crisis situation; and

WHEREAS, agriculture expenses are at record highs, debt is at high levels and commodity prices are nearing record lows relative to inflation; and

WHEREAS, a financial structure with the federal government underwriting agriculture long-term loans would add some stability to the situation; and

WHEREAS, this would allow lending institutions to lend at lower rates; and

WHEREAS, the financial institutions have stated that every 1% interest rate increase reflects over \$1 billion in the agriculture economy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM explore some of the current initiatives that are being proposed to have the federal government underwrite agriculture similar to what Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation does with residential financing.

Response from SARM:

SARM is aware of the existence of a federal government program currently offered through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) called the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act (FIMCLA) Guarantee Program. This program was established in 1988 and will remain available to individual farmers and farmer cooperatives until March 31, 2006.

Much like the CHMC Loans, loans under the FIMCLA program are guaranteed by the Federal Government allowing applicants to access better interest rates and are available to assist farmers with their financial needs by increasing the availability of credit. Under the program, the government guarantees 80% of each loan made and AAFC is liable to pay to the lender 95% of a loss sustained as a result of a loan made, provided that all the requirements of the program have been met.

The maximum repayment term on these loans is 10 years with the exception of a loan for additional land, which has a repayment term of 15 years. Interest rates can either be established as a floating rate of prime plus 1% or at a fixed term rate of a lender's residential mortgage rate plus 1%.

AAFC has stated that they recognize that the difficult financial situation faced by Canadian producers remains, therefore in 2006 they will be exploring a successor program to FIMCLA that takes into consideration the improvements identified.

An article on this subject was written in the December 2005/January 2006 edition of the Rural Councillor.

Resolution No. 7-05M

RM of The Gap No. 39

Rural Municipal Signage System

WHEREAS, providing directions to emergency services including police, ambulance and fire service, the trucking industry and tourist areas is often complicated due to the lack of municipal landmarks within a municipality; and

WHEREAS, those not familiar with legal land locations may have difficulty in finding specific locations without proper municipal signage; and

WHEREAS, roads in the province that are signed with "names" are not necessarily a meaningful reference point; and

WHEREAS, a uniform municipal signage system would help provide a common reference point for all municipal roads within the province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM adopt, promote and encourage the use of a uniform municipal signage system throughout the province by adopting the system used by the Province of Alberta and developed by Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan, which identifies township and range roads with a unique township numbering system.

Response from SARM:

A copy of the "Saskatchewan Provincial Standard System of Rural Addressing" developed by Information Services Corporation was forwarded to rural municipalities.

Saskatchewan Government Relations

Resolution No. 8-05M RM of Rudy No. 284 Municipal Tax System Review

WHEREAS, the hog industry in particular is consolidated into a few large companies, and they are currently not paying taxes in the municipalities where they are located; and

WHEREAS, rural municipalities are increasingly reluctant to approve new ILO development when the tax benefit and 80% of the economic benefit accrue to the province and large urban municipalities that house the processing facilities; and

WHEREAS, if we are to see progress in the “new rural economy”; it is necessary to overhaul the antiquated municipal tax system that does not respond to the current realities; and

WHEREAS, the provincial government seems confused by SARM resolutions as to the desire by the SARM membership to overhaul the tax system; and

WHEREAS, the increasing downloading of responsibility from the Province to the municipal level requires a broader tax base than simply the land base to address capital needs such as health and education requirements;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Province, led by the Department of Government Relations, in concert and co-operation with SARM and SUMA, move immediately to establish a process to address the need for change in the municipal tax regime.

Response from the Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations:

Government Relations has prepared a paper that reviews rural property tax exemptions and their consistency in the legislation for the various types of municipalities. Legislative amendments may be considered following consultation with the municipal and education sectors, and other interested parties.

Under present legislation, intensive livestock operations (ILOs) and large buildings such as those used for vegetable storage are exempt from property tax.

In the summer of 1998, the then Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing department established two committees to review property tax policies and to develop recommendations in separate reports to government. Both committees had representation from the local government associations representing the municipal and school sectors, as well some government departments.

The tax exemption committee acknowledged that there is a provincial interest in the statutory property tax exemptions for

unoccupied farm dwellings, greenhouses and agricultural improvements (including ILOs), based on the rationale that these exemptions support the agricultural sector in general. No recommendation for change was put forward by the committee.

There is presently a discrepancy between the rural and urban Acts in respect of agricultural improvements. During committee deliberations, SUMA stated it was not in favour of expanding exemptions for agricultural improvements in the urban Act and found it hard to rationalize it in the rural Act. SARM did not believe at the time that there were any problems with the current exemption regime in this regard.

The new Municipalities Act, which comes into force on January 1, 2006, carries forward the existing rural and urban provisions without any changes. There is no plan to change these provisions within The Municipalities Act in the immediate future.

Resolution No. 9-05M RM of Fertile Belt No. 183 Tax Enforcement

WHEREAS, the purpose of tax enforcement legislation is to create a balance between the need for enforcement of payment of taxes and the legitimate interest of landowners to be able to work through difficult financial periods preserving equity and the lands whenever possible; and

WHEREAS, the processes set forth for tax enforcement under the existing tax enforcement legislation are very procedural and do not really accomplish these purposes in any logical or efficient manner, thus adding additional costs to landowners at a time when they are already under financial pressure;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Province of Saskatchewan review tax enforcement legislation and procedures with a view to accomplishing the proper purposes in a logical, simple and efficient manner.

Response from the Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations:

The Tax Enforcement Act (TEA) provides municipalities with the authority to enforce the collection of tax arrears through the acquisition and sale of the property on which taxes are owed.

There are strict procedural guidelines that municipalities must follow when performing tax enforcement procedures under the TEA. The strict procedural guidelines have been instituted to provide an effective tool for municipalities to enforce the collection of tax arrears, while ensuring that the individual rights of the property owner are protected. The TEA represents a balance of interests between property owner and municipality in this respect.

While it is unclear what specific changes are sought by the RM of Fertile Belt No. 183, Government Relations has no plans for a formal review of this Act at this time. The department is open to discussing any issues

pertaining to the application, use and procedures under the TEA with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and with municipalities.

**Resolution No. 10-05M
RM of Fertile Belt No. 183
Requisition Deadline**

WHEREAS, rural municipalities are required by legislation to complete a budget as soon as possible within the current fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, rural municipalities are required to pay requisition amounts by various levels of government, (e.g. the RCMP requisition);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that these mandatory requisition amounts be made known to municipalities by February 1 of each fiscal year.

Response from the Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations:

Government Relations (GR) understands that, for budgeting purposes, it would be helpful if all requisition amounts payable by municipalities were known as early as possible in the fiscal year. However, the requisition amounts are submitted to municipalities by various organizations and agencies, and are therefore not under the direction or control of GR or any one government department.

Municipalities would presumably be most concerned with requisitions that they must pay by law; for example, those from the RCMP (Justice and/or federal legislation), Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and the Regional Library (Learning). However, some municipalities may also receive other sorts of requisitions or "annual funding requests" from organizations like Regional Economic Development Authorities or local Conservation Associations.

With that in mind, as the umbrella organization representing all rural municipalities, it would seem to be most practical for the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities to initiate dialogue with the organizations and agencies to see if a common date could be established.

The wording of the resolution is a bit confusing, insofar as it suggests that mandatory requisition amounts be submitted to municipalities by February 1 of each fiscal year. GR suspects the intent of the resolution is to have the mandatory requisition amounts for the next fiscal year be submitted to municipalities by February 1. This would allow municipalities time to take the requisition amounts into account as the budget is developed.

Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization

**Resolution No. 11-05M
Division 3
Noxious Weed Control**

WHEREAS, persistent noxious weeds have become a serious problem; and

WHEREAS, the spread of noxious weeds is a province-wide issue;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Provincial Government accept responsibility for at least 50% of the cost of clean up and eradication of persistent noxious weeds.

Response from the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food:

Land owners or occupants, including governments, are obliged under The Noxious Weeds Act, 1984, to control noxious weeds on their land. The cost of controlling noxious weeds is borne by the land owner or occupant, whether private or public and the land owner or occupant also benefits from that control. SAF contributes directly to noxious weed control through the Noxious Weed Program. SAF and other provincial government departments contribute to noxious weed control by controlling noxious weeds as land owners under Noxious Weeds Act.

Proactive ongoing noxious weed management incorporating monitoring and early eradication programs led by local weed inspectors are the most cost effective way to prevent and control noxious weeds.

**Resolution No. 12-05M
RM of Lacadena No. 228
Fuel Taxes**

WHEREAS, we the farmers of Saskatchewan produce cheap food for the country; and

WHEREAS, the fuel price inputs have skyrocketed to extreme amounts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we request the SARM Board to lobby the Government of Saskatchewan to support us in our production of cheap food by reducing the taxes charged on fuel used for producing food.

Response from the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food:

The province already exempts virtually all fuel taxes that are for agricultural purposes. Diesel fuel is completely exempt for farmers at an annual cost to the province of \$81 million. Gasoline used by farmers for agricultural purposes (about 80 per cent) is completely

tax free at a cost to the province of \$33 million. Gasoline used by farmers for personal use (estimated 20 per cent) is taxable.

Thus, the total cost to make fuel used for agricultural purposes free of tax is \$114 million annually. The tax paid by farmers for a portion of gasoline assumed to be for personal use is \$8 million annually.

The province will take SARM's resolution No. 12 into consideration when reviewing these matters. The province recognizes that the large increases in the cost of fuel are causing difficulties for producers.

**Resolution No. 13-05M
RM of Eyebrow No. 193
Stray Animals Act**

WHEREAS, there is a problem in some areas of the province with some domesticated animals escaping from the premises of their owners; and

WHEREAS, these stray animals may cause damage to the property of people other than their owners, and also pose a hazard to motor vehicles traveling on rural highways, especially at night; and

WHEREAS, *The Stray Animals Act* does not provide a sufficient deterrent to irresponsible livestock owners to keep their fences in good condition to prevent their animals from roaming at large;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that *The Stray Animals Act* be amended to provide for higher pound fees, and a fine, which increases with each offence, for neglecting to keep their animals confined; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the RCMP be asked to investigate and lay charges for infractions of the Provincial law.

Response from the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food:

SAF has been developing options to address the need for higher fees and fines related to capture, impounding and disposal of valueless animals. When a full list of regulatory options has been completed, SAF will be able to meet with SARM representatives for their feedback. Following this meeting, SAF can proceed with the required regulatory drafting process.

**Resolution No. 14-05M
RM of Prince Albert No. 461
Control of Stray Wild Boar and Buffalo**

WHEREAS, stray animals cause damage and create safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, animal species such as wild boar and buffalo are difficult to restrain and contain without proper experience, equipment and fencing; and

WHEREAS, impounding wild boar or buffalo is virtually impossible without proper handling facilities which are not readily available; and

WHEREAS, the Provincial Government promoted these species as suitable for diversification without providing full information to prospective producers regarding the difficulty in containing the animals;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the Provincial Government to engage and appoint poundkeepers that possess the appropriate resources to restrain and contain wild boar and buffalo that would be made available province-wide to assist municipalities with the capture of these species.

Response from the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food:

SAF appreciates the challenges presented by escaped wild boar. The regulatory changes SARM proposes may improve regulatory framework and these changes are expected to be confirmed early in the new year. It should be noted that, The Stray Animals Act and The Stray Animals Regulations, 1999, do provide authority to municipalities for dealing with stray animals, including wild boar and bison. There is ample authority for engaging and appointing of poundkeepers by municipalities. If costs are a concern, there is also the option of increasing impounding fees and fines in order for municipalities to recover their costs. It should also be noted that local municipalities have a much greater ability than the province to monitor and enforce local issues such as land use and fencing.

Regardless of ownership, the Act allows for stray animals to be detained in pounds and the owners held responsible for the associated costs. The Act also contains provisions which allow a person to kill a stray animal where the stray is in the act of harming, endangering or pursuing any person or livestock. Proprietors may also kill strays if conditions, including approval from the rural municipality are obtained.

Saskatchewan Environment

**Resolution No. 15-05M
Division 1
Chemical Container Collection Program**

WHEREAS, the recycling of empty chemical containers was handled at the local municipal level and was abandoned in response to a promise by the industry to carry forward a better and industry-driven program; and

WHEREAS, the current recycling program does not seem to be adequate as demonstrated by the current reality wherein it appears a great many chemical containers which should be recycled, are in fact not; and

WHEREAS, empty chemical containers are presently being disposed of by practices that are not environmentally friendly;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that the industry adheres to its promise and that the industry makes available an effective and easily accessible program for the recycling of empty chemical containers which will be used to a degree that compares favourably to that of the previous program.

Response from Honourable David Forbes, Minister of Environment:

With respect to Resolution No. 15, regarding activities of the Pesticide Container Collection Program, this program is operated voluntarily by industry. This means that participation in the program is not mandated and the program is not support by legislation.

The rate of return for pesticide containers remains at or near 70%. That represents the benchmark that was established for this program. This rate of return is consistent with the rates of return we experienced when the containers were collected at municipal sites.

While we are always exploring ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our stewardship programs with the industry steward, we are generally satisfied with the rate of return for this program. A 70% rate of return is a significant achievement for this stewardship program, and is inline with the capture rates of other successful stewardship programs throughout Canada.

Crop Life Canada has established 479 dealer collection sites. In addition to these dealer return sites, there are 36 municipal areas where no dealer collection points exist. This represents an increase in the number of collection sites from when the containers were collected only at municipal sites.

We acknowledge that some areas have experienced a decrease in accessibility, however, overall access has been increased.

**Resolution No. 16-05M
RM of Prince Albert No. 461
Disposal of Asphalt Shingles**

WHEREAS, rural municipalities are experiencing an ongoing and in fact increasing level of contractors and homeowners dumping used shingles within the boundaries of the rural municipality; and

WHEREAS, petroleum base shingles pose a long term hazard to the environment and ground water; and

WHEREAS, handling fees at existing municipal waste management facilities are viewed as an onerous cost to contractors and homeowners; and

WHEREAS, the Province has adopted the slogan "Green Strategy - for a green and prosperous economy" within which all government initiatives are implemented;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the provincial government impose environmental handling surcharges on asphalt shingles at point of sale which can be included in provincial municipal grants, to encourage contractors and homeowners to dispose of shingles at approved waste management facilities at no additional cost after purchase.

No response at time of printing.

**Resolution No. 17-05M
RM of Whiska Creek No. 106
Scrap Tire Program**

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation will not remove tires from rural landfill sites on an on-going basis; and

WHEREAS, environmental fees continue to be assessed with credits being accumulated at retailers; and

WHEREAS, retaining possession of used tires for continued use in farming operations results in tires being disposed of at local landfill sites, rather than at retailers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that collection of tires at rural landfill sites continue after the initial pick-up as the environmental fee has been prepaid at the time of purchase.

Response from Honourable David Forbes, Minister of Environment:

With respect to Resolution No. 17, regarding activities of the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation (SSTC), the SSTC is the industry steward responsible for the recycling of scrap tires. They manage the day to day operations of the Scrap Tire Management Program.

As the industry steward, the SSTC has set up the program and logistics to suit its operating needs and to meet quality control and quality assurance requirements of the program.

Currently, scrap tires are picked up directly at the retail level. The intent is that the consumer exchanges a scrap tire for a new tire at the time of purchase. The scrap tire is then picked up and recycled.

My department is aware of the SSTC's landfill clean up program. In developing the program, special attention was placed on historically generated material. It was decided to deal with this material as funds permit. The program will deal with municipal owned stockpiles of scrap tires at our local landfills, at no cost to the community. After the community stockpiles have been dealt with, the program will move on to deal with privately generated stockpiles on farms and at other locations.

The Board of Directors of the SSTC has discussed the concept of using local landfills as marshalling yards for scrap tire collection in the past. The Board determined these marshalling yards were not feasible at the time due to concerns regarding redevelopment of stockpiles at the landfills, controlling the dropping off of scrap tires, increased costs

and the free rider effect as retailers may not support the program if they see their scrap tires can easily be disposed of at the landfill. The Board, however, remains open to the concept and will revisit the topic should the need arise.

Saskatchewan Environment supports the efforts of the SSTC to run an efficient and effective product management program. We are confident in their actions as an industry steward to deliver a program that is sensitive to the needs of the consumers who fund the program and its activities, relevant to the members who participate in the program and necessary for the protection of our natural environment.

Saskatchewan Learning

Resolution No. 18-05M

RM of Prince Albert No. 461

Post Secondary Education Cost Disparity

WHEREAS, access to post secondary education is critical to the economic well being of the province; and

WHEREAS, many Saskatchewan students reside outside of the centres where post secondary institutions are located; and

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan in a recent national survey ranked last in terms of accessibility to post secondary education; and

WHEREAS, all residents of Saskatchewan contribute to the provincial government revenue base; and

WHEREAS, provincial income tax regulations provide for post secondary students or their parents to claim an eleven per cent (11%) non-refundable tax credit, as per Saskatchewan Income and Tax Credits T1 General form SK428 - Line 33, for the student's living expenses; and

WHEREAS, students who must relocate from their home to another centre to attend a post secondary institution incur costs of \$6,000 to \$7,000 per year greater than urban students who are able to live at home while they attend post secondary studies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Provincial Government recognize this post secondary education cost disparity and undertake initiatives to address it to ensure that all families have equal opportunity of access.

Response from Bonnie Durnford, Deputy Minister of Learning:

Government recognizes the critical importance of post-secondary education for the province's economic and social development. As such, we are committed to ensuring that Saskatchewan people have access to post-secondary education in the province. Our government also recognizes that individuals from rural areas face increased financial costs associated with post-secondary study. We have

created additional financial allowances through the student financial assistance system to better support those lower-income students who must move or commute in order to access post-secondary study. These supports include a return transportation allowance that provides students with a maximum of \$1,200 for travel between their study and home locations each year. Students who relocate to study may also qualify for up to \$600 for relocation or moving expenses. Finally, a commuting allowance was created for those students who travel to their post-secondary studies, to help support this travel.

Costs associated with post-secondary study are an issue for some students, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds. As part of government's on-going commitment to post-secondary accessibility, Saskatchewan universities were provided with a Centennial Tuition Grant of \$6.7 million for 2005-06 to ensure that tuition fees would be kept at 2004-05 levels. According to Statistic Canada's Tuition and Living Accommodations Cost Survey, Saskatchewan's university tuition and compulsory fees are as of 2005-06 are lower than those charged in Ontario, Alberta, and Nova Scotia.

Although tuition fees are an important part of educational costs, they are not the only costs incurred. For those who must move from their homes to attend a post-secondary institution, there are costs associated with moving and living expenses. Though Saskatchewan students do benefit from the fact that living costs are lower in Saskatchewan than in many other provinces, we know that students moving away from their home communities face higher costs than those able to live at home while studying.

One of the ways government has worked to address the concern about living costs has been to expand the capacity of the regional colleges and establish funding for distance education through Campus Saskatchewan, in order to ensure that more individuals have greater access to post-secondary education where they live. In addition, individuals from lower and middle-income families may also have access to loan and grant funding through the Student Financial Assistance Program to facilitate their participation in post-secondary education. Government carefully monitors student borrowing, and is a partner with the federal government in several programs designed to ensure that graduates do not face undue hardship in repaying their loans.

In the recent provincial Budget, government announced a review of accessibility and student financial assistance designed to examine the situation in the province. The Accessibility and Student Financial Assistance Review is a consultative process lead by Saskatchewan Learning to access and evaluate the current state of accessibility and affordability in post-secondary education, how the current array of student financial assistance programs is meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people, what changes need to be made to these programs, and how those changes will be implemented.

In closing, I want to emphasize our commitment to ensuring Saskatchewan people have access to affordable post-secondary

education, both for their individual development and to support a strong society and economy benefiting all Saskatchewan people.

Saskatchewan Finance

Resolution No. 19-05M RM of Newcombe No. 260 Coloured Diesel for Municipalities

WHEREAS, municipal governments are required to pay a road tax when purchasing diesel fuel; and

WHEREAS, municipal governments are purchasing diesel to maintain their own road system; and

WHEREAS, custom sprayers are allowed to make application for a permit to use coloured diesel; and

WHEREAS, municipal governments should also be granted the opportunity to make application for a permit to use coloured diesel in municipal owned equipment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the provincial government to ensure that all municipal governments are allowed to purchase and use coloured diesel in municipal equipment when conducting maintenance on their road systems.

Response from the Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Finance:

We appreciate the reasons for the request to use tax-free marked diesel fuel in road maintenance equipment. Rural municipalities play an important role in ensuring we have a safe and reliable transportation system.

However, allowing rural municipalities to use tax-free marked diesel fuel in their equipment would not only reduce the Province's revenues, but it could also set a precedent for similar requests from other sectors. As a result, less money would be available to fund health care, education and other essential programs and services.

Point of Privilege Resolution No. 1 RM of Swift Current No. 137

WHEREAS, all retailers and suppliers of Pest Control products are required to charge PST on the sale of pest control supplies; and

WHEREAS, exemptions on PST already exist on other agriculturally related products; and

WHEREAS, the costs of the various pest control products are becoming excessive and thereby forcing the agriculture producer to eliminate or reduce the level of pest control on their farms or having the RM subsidize the sale of these products;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the Province of Saskatchewan to eliminate the PST on all pest control products being sold and distributed for rodent control so as to have these products become more affordable.

Response from the Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Finance:

The Province currently exempts a wide range of pest control products from the Provincial Sales Tax (PST). Insecticides, fungicides and herbicides purchased for use by a farmer or by a municipality for use on road allowances are all PST exempt.

As a category, the existing PST exemptions on fertilizers, pesticides and seeds cost the Province in excess of \$93 million annually.

While rodent control may be an important issue for some areas of the province, expanding the existing PST exemptions to include pest control products used for rodent control would reduce the funds available for other key programs such as roads, education and health care.

SARM responded to Minister Van Mulligen's letter and asked him to reconsider his decision not to eliminate the PST on all pest control products sold and distributed for rodent control.

Response from Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Finance:

Thank you for your recent letter asking us to reconsider your request for a Provincial Sales Tax (PST) exemption for pest control products used to control rodents.

As you know, changes to the PST base cannot be made lightly. The decreased revenue associated with new tax exemptions must be balanced with the need to fund existing programs and services.

We receive many requests for new or expanded tax exemptions. While we would like to enact most of these exemptions, the Province's finances often limit our ability to do so. Consequently, as part of the annual budget process, the economic and social benefits of suggested exemptions are weighed against the Province's financial ability to forego the tax revenue associated with each proposed exemption.

Your request to establish an exemption for pest control products used for rodents will be reviewed and considered as part of that process and any changes to the taxation of rodent control products will be announced as part of a future provincial budget.

Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency

Resolution No. 20-05M

RM of Sarnia No. 221

Board of Revision Decisions

WHEREAS, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA) has a mandate to provide for a fair, equitable and defensible assessment of all properties in Saskatchewan; and

WHEREAS, legislation provides that the Secretary of a Municipal Board of Revision be appointed by council; and

WHEREAS, the local Board of Revision Secretary has the job of determining whether a submitted appeal is worthy (i.e. has a valid reason and supportive evidence) of being heard at a Board of Revision hearing in any year; and

WHEREAS, SAMA staff often contacts the appellant prior to the hearing process to discredit their appeal and promote SAMA's defense to the appeal in an effort to have the appellant withdraw their appeal prior to it being heard by the Board of Revision;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SAMA discontinue the practice of contacting appellants between the time of the filing of appeals and the Board of Revision hearing in order to discredit such appeals and promote a defense of the assessments being appealed, SAMA's goal being to have appellants withdraw their appeals prior to the hearing date, and that the decision of the local Board of Revision Secretary that an appeal be given a fair hearing before the Board of Revision, should the Secretary deem the appeal worthy, be upheld by SAMA without interference; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be forwarded to the next SAMA Annual Meeting by SARM for consideration.

Response from the Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations:

The ability to reach an agreement to adjust an assessment is intended to streamline and simplify the appeal process for appellants and reduce costs both for appellants and municipalities.

Current legislation enables and even encourages a property owner, the agency responsible for providing assessment and the municipal assessor to discuss the appeal of a property's assessment prior to a Board of Revision hearing, to enable the parties to reach an agreement to settle the matter in dispute without a hearing.

These provisions have been in legislation for some time and have been continued and clarified in the new Municipalities Act (MA) at the request of the municipal sector, who have also expressed concerns with requiring a Board of Revision to be convened even though agreement has been reached among all the parties to an appeal, to resolve the matter without a hearing.

An appellant is not obligated to discuss his or her appeal with an assessor or assessment service provider or to reach an agreement regarding the property's assessment. If no agreement can be reached, the appellant retains his/her right to continue with an appeal hearing.

Concerns with SAMA's policies and practices regarding contacting appellants, should be brought to the SAMA board of directors for consideration. SARM's resolution provides that this matter be forwarded to the next SAMA Annual Meeting for consideration. Government Relations concurs with this approach.

Resolution No. 21-05M

RM of Maple Creek No. 111

Use of Sub-classes

WHEREAS, the SAMA policy manual allows SAMA to designate sub-classes of property within rural municipalities; and

WHEREAS, legislation does not allow rural municipalities to address sub-classes of property like homogenous neighbourhoods or enhanced neighbourhoods such as SAMA has classed within rural municipalities; and

WHEREAS, SAMA's designation of sub-classes has resulted in tremendous and inequitable tax assessments increases within these neighbourhoods which rural municipalities are helpless to address by way of normal tax tool adjustments;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that rural municipalities be given the power and authority to implement sub-classes and neighbourhoods within their municipalities, so that tax tools may be applied to regulate and address assessment adjustments.

Response from the Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Government Relations:

The 1997 Reassessment Review Committee, which included representation from SARM, reported in 1999 with recommendations to support "the current property classes and recommend against the creation of new classes." Government continues to support the 1997 Reassessment Review Committee recommendation that was against the creation of new property classes.

Introducing additional local property tax tools is also in conflict with the Boughen Commission recommendations to create greater stability in tax policy.

In addition, introducing additional local property tax tools is also in conflict with the recent changes to local property tax tools that simplified the property tax system. Government made amendments to simplify the property tax system, effective January 2005, by removing the local seasonal residential property class. As of January 1, 2006, under The Municipalities Act, the authority to phase-in property assessments and taxes will be removed (as the provision was not used by RMs).

Adding subclass authority for RMs would introduce a complexity to the property tax system, which would go against these changes.

Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Resolution No. 22-05M RM of Emerald No. 277 Government Advertising

WHEREAS, gambling in Saskatchewan ruins more families and individuals than alcohol and cigarettes combined; and

WHEREAS, every second or third advertisement on television or radio is a casino or lottery advertisement;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the provincial government allow advertising of all of society's vices or none.

No response at time of printing.

Health Canada

Resolution No. 23-05M RM of Weyburn No. 67 Gopher Poison

WHEREAS, the gopher population needs to be better controlled; and

WHEREAS, the current pre-mixed products are ineffective; and

WHEREAS, liquid strychnine has proved to be the most effective gopher control product;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM continue to lobby to have liquid strychnine made available until such time as there is a better product on the market.

Response from Karen L. Dodds, Ph.D, Executive Director, Pest Management Regulatory Agency:

Before 1993, strychnine was available as a 2% concentrate that users mixed with grain prior to use. The 2% liquid strychnine was very toxic and a number of poisonings to dogs and wildlife occurred. There is no effective antidote available for poisoning from strychnine.

"Fresh" 0.4% strychnine baits are now commercially available in Canada, which are effective and safer for farmers to handle than the 2% strychnine liquid concentrate. The governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan are supportive of these commercially available "fresh" strychnine baits.

Most OECD countries are moving away from strychnine use in any form. EU countries will not be using strychnine for pest control by this

time next year. Above-ground uses of strychnine in the U.S. have been prohibited since 1988. The current Health Canada regulatory proposal only extends the use of strychnine for Richardson's ground squirrel control for the next three years, after which time the issues posed by strychnine will be reexamined. This reassessment will consider the availability of viable alternatives at that time.

We recognize the challenges faced by producers in controlling Richardson's ground squirrels, however reliance on strychnine is not sustainable in the long-term.

An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy is being developed to help producers better manage the ground squirrel problem, while offering a safer approach for the environment and for farmers handling strychnine-treated bait and other toxic substances. The IPM strategy input comes from a wide area of expertise: ranchers and crop producers; provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan; rural municipality associations; Health Canada's PMRA; the Canadian Wildlife Service; the University of Lethbridge; and chemical companies. Work done to date has already added to our knowledge.

Canadian Transportation Agency

Resolution No. 24-05M RM of Bengough No. 40 RM of Willow Bunch No. 42 Discontinuance of Rail Lines

WHEREAS, Section 146 of the *Canadian Transportation Act* states that a railway company may discontinue operating a rail line on providing notice thereof to the Agency; and

WHEREAS, municipalities are to be paid three annual payments of \$10,000 for each mile of rail line or portion in the municipality or district once discontinuance notice is filed; and

WHEREAS, municipalities affected are counting on this payment to provide for impact of loss of infrastructure within the regions of abandonment; and

WHEREAS, there is no statutory time frame for the railway company to file discontinuance with the Canadian Transportation Agency which triggers payment to municipalities experiencing discontinuance and may result in the rail way company practicing dilatory business patterns which strongly affect municipal regions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM request support from SUMA, FCM and the Provincial Government for support to lobby the Federal Government for a required time frame of no more than ninety days that a railway must file discontinuance notice with the Canadian Transportation Agency for section 146.1 of the *Canadian Transportation Act* to be effectual for municipalities involved.

Response from Honourable Jean-C. Lapierre, P.C., M.P, Minister of Transport:

I have noted the details of Resolution No. 24. The line transfer and discontinuance provisions of the Canada Transportation Act outline the process that a federal railway must follow before it can discontinue service on a line. The process is aimed at encouraging the commercial transfer of lines to other operators for a continued operation. In the event that the line is not transferred commercially, the railway must offer to sell it to governments at net salvage value. This provides an opportunity for governments to acquire the line for continued rail operations or other purposes if it is in the public interest. If there is no commercial or government interest in the rail line, the railway can proceed to discontinue service and must provide notice to the Agency to complete the formal process.

There is no time frame for the railway to give its notice to the Agency, since it is in the railway's interest to complete the process by providing the notice. Providing the notice terminates the railway's obligation under the Act, permits it to salvage the assets, and allows it to reduce its costs and risks by transferring the land. In the long run, this is more cost-effective for the railway than foregoing the notice in order to avoid the three annual \$10,000 per mile payments for grain-dependent branch lines.

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