

Annual Convention Resolutions & Responses

Convention resolutions and responses are all posted on www.sarm.ca as they are received.

Matters Pertaining to SARM

Resolution No. 1-06A

Payment of Taxes by Credit Card

WHEREAS, the use of credit cards is getting more and more popular, from groceries to chemicals and fertilizers; and

WHEREAS, the Saskatchewan Municipal Hail Insurance Association is accepting credit card payments (for Additional Municipal Hail Insurance);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM investigate the possibility of using credit cards for the payment of land taxes.

Response from SARM:

The issue was researched and rates obtained from two payment

companies. This information was posted in the resolution section of the SARM website.

Resolution No. 2-06A

Set Aside Program

WHEREAS, there is an agricultural income crisis due to decreased grain prices; and

WHEREAS, input costs such as fertilizer and fuel are continuing to escalate; and

WHEREAS, farmers have few funds available to finance another crop; and

WHEREAS, a farm support program should be funded on a federal/provincial split of 80% federally and 20% provincially;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM develop a set aside program for Saskatchewan farmers in which farmers would

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receive \$40 per acre for seeded acreage taken out of production, for up to 40% of their total cultivated acres.

Response from SARM:

SARM sent letters to the federal and provincial governments outlining the program proposal. SARM met with Minister Wartman on the proposal and need for funds for producers for spring seeding. The Province showed interest in the proposal; however, the program was not formally adopted. SARM accompanied the Minister and a coalition group to Ottawa in April to request emergency spring funding for seeding.

**Resolution No. 4-06A
Disability Benefits Plan Coverage**

WHEREAS, the SARM Disability Benefits Plan went into effect January 1, 1967 to provide benefits to employees of rural municipalities; and

WHEREAS, group coverage is available for elected and appointed officials between the ages of 18 and 64; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of elected and appointed officials are over the age of 64, making them ineligible for coverage; and

WHEREAS, the first line of the SARM Vision Statement states, "SARM will increasingly address the needs of its members";

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM provide coverage for all elected and appointed officials over the age of 18.

Response from SARM:

The SARM Benefits Plan regulations were amended, effective January 1, 2007, by removing the age limit of 65.

Saskatchewan Government Relations

**Resolution No. 5-06A
Taxation of Forest Grazing Permits**

WHEREAS, we understand there is a move to have the Province exempt forest grazing permit areas from property tax; and

WHEREAS, all other occupants of Crown Land are subject to property tax; and

WHEREAS, all other pastures are subject to property tax;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM go on record as opposing any move to exempt forest grazing permit areas from property tax.

Response from Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Government Relations:

- Currently, one of the requirements of a rural municipality's (RM) assessor under *The Municipalities Act (MA)* is to assess the occupant of land that is exempt from taxation where the occupant is the holder of a lease, licence or permit. This requirement would include the holder of a grazing permit issued by Saskatchewan Environment.
- The decision to tax the occupant of land that is exempt from taxation, where the occupant is the holder of a grazing permit issued by Saskatchewan Environment, is made by the RM council, not the Government of Saskatchewan. An RM may, under the MA, cancel or prorate the taxes levied on a grazing permit holder, if it feels taxes based on the full year are not appropriate. RM councils may also choose to exempt grazing permit holders by bylaw.
- By virtue of the vote on this resolution, RMs have indicated their view that municipal authority in this matter should remain unchanged.
- The government will respect the views of SARM and RMs on this matter; we will not be proposing any changes to the legislation pertaining to this issue.

**Resolution No. 6-06A
Seismic Exploration Compensation**

WHEREAS, seismic exploration is a common occurrence in rural municipalities; and

WHEREAS, seismic exploration may be undertaken on public rights-of-way without compensation to anyone, unless for damage attributable to the seismic operation; and

WHEREAS, seismic exploration on public rights-of-way expedites projects, as no visits to landowners, negotiations, consents or compensation for access are necessary; and

WHEREAS, benefits of undertaking seismic work on public rather than private land, are substantial for seismic operators; and

WHEREAS, municipalities incur costs to provide inspections and generally monitor seismic exploration on public-rights-of-way;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the province be urged to enact legislation enabling municipalities to be compensated for seismic exploration on public rights-of-way.

Response from Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Government Relations:

- The authority for conducting seismic exploration is provided for in *The Mineral Resources Act, 1985* and in the corresponding regulations to that Act. Saskatchewan Industry and Resources

(SIR) is responsible for administering and overseeing the legislation and regulations.

- Government will continue to work with seismic companies and Rural Municipalities (RM) to clarify the provincial objectives and work to ensure that municipal bylaws and provincial regulations provide a balanced approach to the competing interests. Currently, the regulations do provide for compensation to be paid to a land owner or the municipality if any damage occurs during seismic testing.
- SIR has suggested that RMs provide details to that department to outline the costs incurred for providing inspections and monitoring the programs related to seismic exploration. This would give SIR a better understanding of the financial impact seismic exploration has on RMs.
- The Department of Government Relations, if requested, would be willing to participate in any discussions that take place on seismic exploration.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Resolution No. 7-06A Stray Elk and Buffalo

WHEREAS, Section 2(b) of *The Stray Animals Act* includes domestic elk and buffalo; and

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

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food regulates game farms and has Provincial Game Farm Investigators on staff;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food take full responsibility for stray domestic elk and buffalo; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any reference to elk and buffalo be removed from *The Stray Animals Act*.

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

The Stray Animals Act and The Stray Animals Regulations, 1999, are in place providing authorities to municipalities for dealing with stray animals, including domestic game farm animals. The authorities, in part provide rural municipalities the power to address a range of issues including minimum fencing requirements, a process and circumstances for which dangerous or valueless strays may be destroyed, provisions for pound keepers and provisions outlining associated fees and penalties. If SARM has any specific observations or recommendations regarding improving The Stray Animals Act, we would welcome the comments.

POP6-06A

The Veterinarians Act

WHEREAS, proposed changes to *The Veterinarians Act, 1987* will increase the scope of veterinarian practice and decrease the options that livestock owners will have to manage their herds; and

WHEREAS, such changes are not in the best interest of the economies of rural Saskatchewan livestock producers and/or the welfare of the livestock;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the SARM board immediately lobby the necessary government officials to ensure Bill No.28 of 2005 is held up until it can be amended to contain the scope of veterinarian practice at the existing range of activities as defined in *The Veterinarians Act, 1987*.

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

As you know, amendments to The Veterinarians Act, 1987 are currently before the House. Extensive consultation has been undertaken regarding the proposed changes. Concerns regarding the scope of veterinary practice have been noted, and a decision will be made shortly regarding them.

Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation

Resolution No. 9-06A Winter Weights

WHEREAS, B-Train truck and trailer units are permitted to haul primary weights during the winter weight season on primary and secondary highways but not on municipal roads; and

WHEREAS, B-Train truck and trailer units are an important method of grain transportation during the winter season in Saskatchewan;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the Provincial Government to amend *The Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations, 1999* to permit B-Train truck and trailer units to haul primary winter weights on municipal roads during winter weight season.

Response from Honourable Eldon Lautermilch, Minister of Highways and Transportation:

It is my understanding that from discussions between the department and SARM with respect to the municipal bridge infrastructure, the SARM Board of Directors has indicated that their membership may be reconsidering this resolution. While the resolution would be positive, I sympathize with rural municipalities who face the same dilemma the province faces in balancing the benefits of expanding access to primary weights with infrastructure sustainability.

It is my understanding that a study to develop a strategic plan for the management of the municipal bridge infrastructure is being undertaken jointly by the department, SARM and the Prairie Grain Roads Program. The results of the study should provide a framework of how to go forward with implementing this resolution.

POP3-06A

Closure or Reduction of Saskatchewan Highways Services in Rural Saskatchewan

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation continues to work toward the closure or reduction of services at Kelvington, Stockholm, Watrous, Wakaw, Estin, Lucky Lake, Kerrobert, Churchbridge and Porcupine Plain; and

WHEREAS, the safety and vitality of these communities is dependent on prompt and adequate highway maintenance, snow clearing and salting for ambulance, school bus, business and personal purposes; and

WHEREAS, the employees and their families are vital to the health of the respective communities; and

WHEREAS, this move by Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation runs counter to the promotion of rural Saskatchewan by other government departments;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Minister of Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation immediately confer with his senior staff and instruct that this centralized planning be immediately abandoned.

Response from Honourable Eldon Lautermilch, Minister of Highways and Transportation:

The department has no plans to close any maintenance sections at the present time and despite rumours to the contrary, has no approved plan to eliminate maintenance sections over the medium or long-term.

Saskatchewan Environment

Resolution No. 10-06A

Recycling Costs

WHEREAS, many rural municipalities are involved with recycling of paper and other goods in their areas; and

WHEREAS, the cost of gathering and shipping paper bales is more than the value of the product; and

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan Environment has been aware of this problem since its Paper Product Stewardship Report, of 2001;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM petition the government of Saskatchewan to institute a method of compensating the municipalities for at least their costs of handling paper products.

Response from Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister of Environment:

Saskatchewan Environment promotes recycling where there is a benefit to the environment. Recycling of the materials identified in this resolution is not a legislated requirement; the decision to recycle these waste streams has been left to the regional authority or municipality. The department believes that recycling must make sense from environmental, economic and social standpoints. The evaluation of these factors is often best made at the community level.

Saskatchewan Environment provided one-time grant supporting regional waste management totaling \$700,000 during 2005-06 to help sustain recycling operations and retire debt accumulated during the 2004-05 fiscal year. The department is not in a position to provide further interim support; however, solid waste management continues to be a priority for the provincial government and is an important component of the Green Strategy. Saskatchewan Environment is working with all stakeholders to develop a province-wide solid waste management strategy, which will include a multi-material recycling program.

Decisions surrounding recycling should be made with economic responsibility in mind, as well as other benefits that recycling provides. Recycling reduces the amount of materials going to the landfill and provides jobs to the community. There is an economic benefit to the community because the need to invest in development of landfills and costs of operation of landfills is reduced. In addition, recycling operations create jobs in the community, in many cases for physically and socially challenged individuals. These benefits should be taken into account when communities are determining whether recycling programs are a financial burden or a benefit to their residents.

Resolution No. 11-06A

Protection of Livestock

WHEREAS, ratepayers in the northern RM areas have experienced an increase in torn, maimed and killed livestock over the past several years; and

WHEREAS, ratepayers have not been taken seriously or appropriately regarding their losses; and

WHEREAS, Saskatchewan Environment (SE) has not provided adequate assistance or compensation; and

WHEREAS, SE has insisted on inadequate methods of protection, e.g. sheep development board personnel being sent out who are incompetent and forbidding snares that would work; and

WHEREAS, SE should cover the costs of control of these dangerous animals because they have protected them in various ways;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we defend our ratepayers who are threatened with the loss and danger by coyotes, wolves, cougars, bears, wild boars, and ravens; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SE remove all restrictions immediately so farmers and ranchers or their agents are allowed to protect their property; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the said farmers, ranchers or their agents not incur any further costs for permits, etc.

Response from Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister of Environment:

For the purpose of protecting property or livestock, the owner or occupant of any land may kill any coyote, wolf, cougar, or bear on his or her own land without a license. The killing of cougar or bear must be reported to Saskatchewan Environment (SE).

A special permit from SE is required to kill ravens as this species is protected because of its spiritual value to First Nations people.

Wild boars are domestic animals and regulations pertaining to them come under The Stray Animals Act, which is administered by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. The Stray Animal Act gives municipalities and, in some cases individuals, the ability to destroy wild boar that are dangerous or causing harm to property, livestock or wildlife.

Predators threatening property or livestock may be killed by any legal means, including shooting or using leghold traps and foot snares. Mechanically activated neck snares may be used to kill coyotes if the person obtains a special permit from SE. SE is in the process of amending regulations to allow the use of power neck snares for wolves. This type of snare was not previously allowed because of concerns that non-targeted species, including livestock and wild ungulates, may be accidentally captured.

There is no cost for producers who access assistance from predator control specialists under the Saskatchewan Livestock Predation Program as administered by the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board. Any special permits that may be required to remove predators are also provided to producers at no cost. A producer is required to purchase a fur license to sell the pelts of any fur-bearing animal taken.

The provincial government is committed to working with livestock producers and rural municipalities in protecting livestock. There are a number of programs currently in place to assist with these efforts.

Saskatchewan Justice

Resolution No. 13-06A

RCMP Levy

WHEREAS, there was no police levy for RCMP services in rural municipalities prior to 1999 and the levy has nearly doubled since its inception; and

WHEREAS, the increases in police levies have been relentless, exorbitant and without substantiation or justification; and

WHEREAS, the levy was imposed on rural municipalities by senior governments from a purely downloading motive; and

WHEREAS, the national and provincial economies are now stronger than several years ago; and

WHEREAS, rural municipalities cannot in right conscience simply pass on the increase to rural landowners who are already stressed by the current agricultural economy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the SARM Board approach the applicable senior government officials to obtain a return to no policing levy for rural municipalities for RCMP services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the case that senior governments do not respond in the affirmative by reversing

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the downloading of policing levies or, as a minimum, provide some significant reversal from the current situation, the SARM Board promote a province-wide corrective action that can be supported by all rural municipalities in 2006 and beyond.

Response from Honourable Frank Quenell, Q.C., Minister of Justice and Attorney General:

In 1995, the government, in partnership with representatives from SUMA and SARM, formed the SUMA/SARM Task Force on Policing and the Administration of Justice. The formation of the Task Force was a direct result of many municipalities asking for changes in the way police costs were recovered. The method at that time was viewed by many as unfair because urban municipalities with populations over 500 were faced with high policing costs while urban municipalities under 500 and rural municipalities were not required to pay for policing.

The objective of the Task Force was to find an equitable and fair way to allocate RCMP municipal polic costs to relieve the financial burden some communities were facing. Over the following three years, the Task Force considered many options and agreed on the formula that was adopted by the government in 1999. In establishing the pool, it was understood that the contributions from the participants would pay the entire costs for policing the communities in the pool.

In examining the costs for 2004, community leaders expressed the view that a community with a detachment receives more benefits than a community without a detachment and that rates should be based on that factor. We were also told that the 500-population threshold should be eliminated from the formula. In order to eliminate the 500 population threshold, the per capita rates were reduced from four to two and a \$20 differential between locations with detachments and those without was established in 2006. This change resulted in an increase to per capita rates for some locations and a reduction in others. With the 500-population threshold eliminated and the differential rate to now remain unchanged, I expect the per capita rate will increase only marginally in future years.

I have reviewed the 2006 RCMP per capita rates and I am satisfied that these amounts are fair and equitable. The following outlines various per capita amounts that were paid by municipalities over 5000 population in 2004 as outlined in the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics (Statistics Canada):

*Regina - \$221
Saskatoon - \$215
Prince Albert - \$213
Moose Jaw - \$185
Estevan - \$218
Weyburn - \$173
North Battleford - \$178
Yorkton - \$139
Lloydminster - \$115
Swift Current - \$95
Melfort - \$96
Humboldt - \$83*

The Police Act outlines that all municipalities provided policing services by the RCMP are required to pay for policing. The established pool of costs for redistribution in 2006 is approximately \$13.9 million.

Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation

Resolution No. 15-06A

Heritage Site Reviews

WHEREAS, many of the cost-shared road construction projects require a heritage site review by Heritage Resources Unit, Culture and Heritage Branch of Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation; and

WHEREAS, during many of these "Heritage Resource Impact Assessments" the Heritage Resources Unit and/or its assigns or agents can be found wandering areas far removed from the area to be impacted by the construction process;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that "Heritage Resource Impact Assessments" be restricted to the road allowance and back slope sites shown to be impacted by the process on the engineering profiles for the project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Heritage Resources Unit and/or its assigns and agents coordinate their review with the municipality in which the work is to be done.

Response from Honourable Glenn Hagel, Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation:

I note that is the same resolution as No. 20-05A from your 2005 convention, to which the Honorable Joan Beatty responded on April 26, 2005. Minister Beatty's letter was followed up by a letter from Culture, Youth and Recreation (CYR) to the RM of Piapot No. 110 on July 5, 2005, and again by letter from CYR to the RM on February 15, 2006.

The RM of Piapot appears to be concerned that contractors commissioned to study the potential impact of their proposed road re-development on heritage resources are:

- a) Not communicating their presence to the municipality at the time of the field work, and*
- b) Not confining themselves to the impact area of the development.*

In proposing resolution No. 15-06A, the RM again misunderstands the role of my Department in administering the heritage resource impact assessment (Hria) and development review process. In particular;

- CYR Heritage officials review development proposals to determine the need for and scope of Hria study, but do not conduct these studies;*

- Where required as a condition of project and/or funding approval, Hria studies are responsibility of the developer (the RM in this case);
- Hria studies must be carried out by qualified contractors that are selected and retained by the developer;
- Heritage contractors do not act as “agents” for the Department; and
- Hria studies required under The Heritage Property Act are always directed at the impact areas of proposed land development.

I appreciate that the landowners and the RM would like to be notified by heritage contractors prior to work being conducted. As heritage contractors are hired by the RM or its representative, directing all contractors and sub-contractors to communicate directly with the RM office and land owners concerning their work may well avoid this sort of communication problem in the future. The department can assist by continuing to remind permitted contractors to contact local municipalities and land owners prior to commencing their field investigations.

Saskatchewan Health

POP1-06A

Capital Cost Requirement for Municipalities on Health Care Facilities

WHEREAS, the cities of Regina and Saskatoon were not required to contribute any funds to the new hospital construction; and

WHEREAS, all other rural and urban communities are required to pay 35% of the cost of any new facility construction; and

WHEREAS, new construction costs have doubled since the inclement weather in the southern USA; and

WHEREAS, there are extra costs on top of the 35% for equipment and furniture, which further increases the costs of construction;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM petition the Provincial Government to reduce or remove the 35% requirement for new construction of health facilities in rural areas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this be made retroactive to January 1, 2006.

Response from Honourable Len Taylor, Minister of Health:

The provincial Capital Funding Policy for construction of health care facilities provides 100 per cent funding for eligible costs related to facilities where there is an expectation that they will provide care, not just for local needs, but also for residents from across the province. This includes the tertiary hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon, as well as Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. Facilities in the far north are also 100 per cent provincially funded in recognition of the unique challenges facing these communities.

Facilities that primarily serve a regions' local population, including those in Regina and Saskatoon, are cost-shared according to the provincial policy of 65 per cent provincial and 35 per cent local share.

Provincial expenditures on health care as a percentage of total government spending continues to grow each year. It is difficult to recommend further increases in spending to increase the provincial share of the cost-sharing ratio for health capital when the result may be that that spending will crowd out other non-health related provincial priorities.

Given that there is limited funding available for capital projects, if the province were to consider increasing its share of funding in the future, it follows that fewer capital projects could be undertaken province-wide.

Communities are encouraged to work with their respective Regional Health Authorities and Saskatchewan Health officials to communicate their concerns and suggestions regarding facility planning and capital project commitments.

I assure you that we continue to work with health regions to make certain that our system provides the best possible service, while keeping health care sustainable into the future.

Saskatchewan Learning

POP5-06A

RM Representation on School Division Boards

WHEREAS, ratepayers are ill-informed and ill-advised of school tax increases; and

WHEREAS, tax increases can be made at will by school divisions without accountability to individual municipalities; and

WHEREAS, a municipal perspective is needed on many issues; and

WHEREAS, RMs are responsible for collecting the taxes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the provincial government for adequate representation from involved RMs on school division boards.

No response was received at time of printing.

Office of the Premier

Resolution No. 16-06A

Child Care

WHEREAS, publicly funded daycare is an issue that is currently being discussed in Parliament; and

WHEREAS, parents that choose to stay at home are not being considered for additional funding for child rearing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this convention request equal funding and fair taxation for families thus allowing the option for parental child rearing or daycare services;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SARM lobby both levels of government in this regard.

Response from Kirk McGregor, Acting Minister of Finance:

Saskatchewan's personal taxes, including both the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and the personal income tax system, are designed to support families, particularly families with children. Family essentials like groceries, children's clothing, reading material and restaurant meals are currently exempt from PST.

In support of the family, the 2000-01 reform of our personal income tax system introduced:

- *a refundable Saskatchewan Sales Tax Credit, which offsets the PST paid by lower income families by as much as \$364 per year; and*
- *a universal dependant child tax credit that helps to offset the costs that all families face in raising their children. For 2006, the \$2,684 per child credit will assist in removing lower income families from the tax rolls and significantly reduce taxes for all Saskatchewan families.*

Response from Honourable Deb Higgins, Minister of Learning:

Providing support to our children in the first few years of their lives is an important investment in the future of our province. The Early Learning and Child Care Program in Saskatchewan facilitates the development of choices for families by promoting early childhood development for all children in the province. We believe that families offer an extremely important environment within which their children grow and learn. We also know that many parents today work outside the home, and they want the assurance that their children are safe, well cared for and challenged to develop and learn the skills that will help them as they mature.

Across Canada, government licensed child care services developed as a result of greater participation of woman in the workplace and the subsequent need for safe facilities for the care of children. In Saskatchewan over 70% of women with children up to six years of age are in the workforce. We support the participation of parents in employment or training by improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care services.

Providing early learning and child care options for families as a support to employment and training leading to labour market attachment will continue to be an important thrust of our work. At the same time, the importance of early childhood development for all children is receiving broad recognition and is a good investment of public dollars. Federal and provincial governments,

individually and working together, have heightened emphasis on the importance of the early years of childhood.

By working with the federal government, Saskatchewan will continue to improve early learning and child care opportunities for families with young children whether they are parents in the workforce, or those who choose to remain at home. We look forward to further contact with you as we move towards a system that supports families and the learning and care of our most valuable resources – our children.

SaskPower

**Resolution No. 17-06A
Compensation for Power Poles**

WHEREAS, more Saskatchewan farm land has underground power lines, while above ground lines still run across other farm land;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the farmers that have to farm around power poles be paid \$25 per power pole per year until the lines are buried and power poles removed.

Response from the Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister Responsible for SaskPower:

SaskPower takes reasonable measures to avoid installation of pole lines in fields; however, some transmission line routing cannot avoid placing poles in fields. In those cases, monetary compensation is provided to the land owner for the registered easement and additionally for each structure to compensate for land out of production.

For the past 25 years, the standard for installation of all new distribution overhead lines on poles has been to build in road allowances with appropriate clearances, and not in the fields. This avoids the majority of opportunity for contact with farming operations. Within the farm yard and related work area, all new rural services are installed by burying the primary (high voltage) or secondary (low voltage) service conductor.

Existing SaskPower policies already compensate land owners for pole lines in fields which serve only oilfield operations. The reason for this compensation is that these lines serve only the oilfield site and not customers in general.

Should a customer desire to have distribution lines in a field buried, SaskPower has existing cost sharing arrangements in its policies which can be applied. If a customer inadvertently damages SaskPower facilities situated in the field as a result of normal farming operations, SaskPower repairs its facilities at no cost to the customer.

At present, there are approximately 72,000 kilometres of overhead single phase rural distribution with the majority of these poles located in fields. The proposed compensation of \$25 per pole

represents almost \$18 million per year. Cost recovery through power rates would have considerable impact on SaskPower's customers.

In response to a letter sent by the SARM Board requesting a meeting, the Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister Responsible for SaskPower, replied:

The two resolutions have formed part of SARM's conventions in the past and encompass multi-faceted issues. We agree that a meeting with SaskPower to discuss these two issues would assist in a mutual understanding.

SARM is setting up this meeting.

**Resolution No. 18-06A
Fires on SaskPower ROW**

WHEREAS, there have been a number of fires in RMs that have been ignited by trees falling on power lines; and

WHEREAS, the farmer becomes responsible for costs and damages incurred when SaskPower determines the tree causing the fire was from outside of the right-of-way (ROW); and

WHEREAS, the height of common vegetation in areas of Saskatchewan is well over the currently allowed 10 metre SaskPower ROW;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SaskPower assume responsibility for costs and damages caused by vegetation contacting power lines or be required to adjust their ROW to accommodate a district's common vegetation height.

Response from the Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister Responsible for SaskPower:

SaskPower Damage Claim Guidelines indicate that SaskPower will provide compensation where SaskPower has been negligent in the construction, operation and maintenance of its facilities. SaskPower does not compensate customers when the cause of damage is for a reason beyond SaskPower's control. Tree contacts, weather, accidents, wildlife contacts, and equipment failure can cause power outages and fires, and are beyond SaskPower's control.

Any compensation is subject to restrictions on liability as outlines in *The Power Corporation Act*. This is not unlike the situation with utilities in other jurisdictions. SaskPower has discussed its guidelines with interested parties, including the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, while dealing with specific incidents. During these discussions, SaskPower regularly reminds these parties of the importance of insurance. If SaskPower was required to pay all fire fighting invoices, regardless of the cause of the fire, the cost would be significant to SaskPower.

SaskPower typically acquires 10 metre easements for overhead rural distribution lines (25kV or lower) and easement widths for electrical transmission lines (72kV or higher) are typically 30 – 40

metres. Where pole lines are constructed on road allowances, SaskPower has a statutory right to overhang adjacent lands.

The right to cut or trim trees on private property adjacent to a powerline, whether on or off the right of way, for safety related issues, also exists due to a recent change in the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Act. SaskPower is not liable for damage claims for trees contacting its line as it takes reasonable care in fulfilling its obligations to service power lines and trim trees along rights of way.

In response to a letter sent by the SARM Board requesting a meeting, the Honourable John T. Nilson, Q.C., Minister Responsible for SaskPower, replied:

The two resolutions have formed part of SARM's conventions in the past and encompass multi-faceted issues. We agree that a meeting with SaskPower to discuss these two issues would assist in a mutual understanding.

SARM is setting up this meeting.

Saskatchewan Finance

**Resolution No. 19-06A
Cattle Feeding Industry**

WHEREAS, a greater cattle feeding industry would benefit rural Saskatchewan; and

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WHEREAS, in order to grow the cattle feeding industry in Saskatchewan a more investor-friendly climate needs to be created; and

WHEREAS, preferential tax treatment is given to monies invested in the oil and mining sectors within Saskatchewan; and

WHEREAS, there is a large pool of investors who will invest in the building of feedlots if the investment receives some form of preferential tax treatment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the SARM lobby the Provincial and Federal Governments to legislate preferential tax treatment of monies invested in the cattle feeding industry in Saskatchewan.

Response from Kirk McGregor, Acting Deputy Minister of Finance:

Saskatchewan has followed a strategy of offering targeted tax incentives to key sectors of the provincial economy in order to improve the competitiveness of these sectors while ensuring the sustainability of public funding in support of priority public services. Targeted tax incentives in support of agriculture activity currently include fuel and 80 per cent of bulk gasoline purchased for use in primary production activities. These exemptions provided primary producers with more than \$280 million in tax exemptions in 2006.

While the targeted tax incentive strategy has proven to be successful for the targeted sectors, a consequence of the strategy has been that Saskatchewan's statutory general business tax rates on capital and income have become competitive with the tax rate of neighboring jurisdictions. This growing disparity has impaired Saskatchewan's ability to attract new investments and employment.

To address this situation in 2006-07 Saskatchewan Budget introduced a major multi-year reform of the provincial business tax system, including the phased elimination of the general corporate capital tax and a significant reduction in the general corporate income tax rate. This reform will help to create an improved business climate in the province, promote sustainable economic development and expand employment opportunities for all Saskatchewan residents.

**Resolution No. 20-06A
PST Exemption**

WHEREAS, the Federal Government has made the decision to refund 100 per cent of the GST paid by municipalities; and

WHEREAS, municipalities of the Province of Saskatchewan are expending considerable amounts of money on the provincial sales tax to provide essential local services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the provincial government to exempt municipalities from paying provincial sales tax.

Response from Kirk McGregor, Acting Deputy Minister of Finance:

The Government of Saskatchewan provides support for municipalities through a revenue sharing formula. This method of funding is a clear and accountable mechanism, designed to equalize local fiscal capacity and support basic infrastructure to meet the health and safety needs of the people of Saskatchewan. For 2006-07, the Province has committed in excess of \$146 million in direct provincial spending for municipalities.

Implementing the resolution in exempt municipalities from paying the PST would change the nature of the Province's support for municipalities while complicating the administration of PST.

Saskatchewan Finance and Canada Revenue Agency

**Resolution No. 21-06A
Fuel Cost Reduction**

WHEREAS, agriculture commodity prices are at an all time low; and

WHEREAS, the cost of fuel has escalated dramatically in the past few years; and

WHEREAS, a meaningful portion of the fuel costs are provincial and federal taxes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the provincial and federal governments to immediately further reduce fuel costs to agricultural producers.

Response from Kirk McGregor, Acting Deputy Minister of Finance:

In recognition of the value of primary production to the provincial economy and in an attempt to lower farm input costs, the Government of Saskatchewan provides our primary producers with a Fuel Tax exemption on all marked diesel fuel and 80 per cent of the bulk gasoline purchased for farm in farm and other primary production activities. For 2006, the Government provided approximately \$112 million in Fuel Tax exemptions to our primary producers.

As well, Saskatchewan provides these same producers with PST exemptions on major farm inputs, including implements, machinery and associated repairs, as well as on inputs such as seed, feed and fertilizer. These exemptions are estimated to have provided primary producers with an additional \$168 million in tax relief for 2006.

It should be noted that increases in retail motor fuel prices do not result in increased tax revenue for the Province of Saskatchewan. Our Fuel Tax rate of 15 cents per litre on gasoline and diesel remains the same regardless of the retail price and has not changed since 1993.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Resolution No. 22-06A Own-Use Importation

WHEREAS, Canadian agricultural producers are able to purchase agricultural products in the United States and bring them back to Canada without paying any duty or without any other restriction; and

WHEREAS, pressure is being brought to bear by some groups to eliminate this practice;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Federal and Provincial Governments oppose any attempt to remove the own-use importation status presently afforded to Canadian farmers and ranchers.

Response from Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food:

AAFC, as the lead department for pesticide regulation at that time, established in 1993, the Own Use Import (OUI) program as a means to ensure that agricultural producers in Canada have access to foreign-registered pesticides, which have lower process, but are equivalent in chemical composition and label requirements to pesticides registered in Canada.

The OUI program is achieving its original 1993 objective of imposing a proven discipline on domestically registered pesticides and making these products more affordable to Canadian growers.

A task force to review the OUI program was announced by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) on October 13, 2005. This forum allows input from a wide and balanced range of stakeholders, including grower organizations from various sectors who are the main beneficiaries of the OUI program.

In line with the environmental and safety objectives of the Agricultural Policy Framework and the Pest Control Products Act, possible adverse health, environmental and trade effects of the OUI program need to be considered. AAFC is working constructively with the PMRA and other task force members in order to find solutions that will maintain and enhance the economic benefits of the program for growers.

POP2-06A Support for the Canadian Wheat Board

WHEREAS, the federal government has negotiated the end of financial support of the Canadian Wheat Board under:

1. Guaranteed initial prices;
2. Guaranteed sales;
3. Government backed loans; and

WHEREAS, these benefits accrue directly to grain producers;

The Hudson Bay Route Association has been a proud supporter of SARM for many years. We have common goals - (To leave more money in farmers' pockets at the end of the day).

Best wishes for a successful Convention.

HUDSON BAY PORT IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

SOME ADVANTAGES ARE:

1. New sampling equipment installed.
2. Dredging completed.
3. Can now accommodate over 55,000 tonne Panamax class vessels.
4. Salt water port located much closer to your farm than any other port.
5. Plans for an extended season.
6. Faster turn around time than any other port.
7. Shorter distance to Atlantic destinations.
8. In terms of time and money - avoid the costly seaway option.
9. Do yourself a favour. Check out Churchill. It could be the smartest thing you ever did.
10. With the added marketing expertise of Louis Dreyfus, Churchill has a winning team.

*For more information or to join Hudson Bay Route Association
please call 204-725-2119.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM lobby the federal government to continue its financial support of the government guarantees and single desk selling of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Response from Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food:

The government is committed to allowing western Canadian wheat and barley farmers to choose whether to market their products through the CWB. However, the Board's marketing mandate is only one of a number of issues facing the grain industry. The implementation of such a significant change in the marketing structure for these grains in the domestic market and in the export market will require careful consideration. The federal government will be consulting affected stakeholders before making any changes to the CWB's marketing mandate. The Government's approach on this issue will be evolutionary, not revolutionary. Given that various policies and legislation that affect the grain industry are currently under review, the federal government sees a unique opportunity to develop a holistic approach to the grain policy, and changes to the CWB's marketing mandate will be considered in this context.

Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Transport Canada

**Resolution No. 23-06A
Fisheries and Navigation**

WHEREAS, there is conflicting jurisdiction between the Provincial Department of Environment, the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Transport Canada; and

WHEREAS, this conflicting jurisdiction between the Provincial and Federal Departments is making construction of municipal roads extremely difficult and in many cases extremely expensive; and

WHEREAS, in many of the watercourses in this province fish do not exist, in fact, many of these watercourses see water only in spring thaw or the occasional heavy summer rain; and

WHEREAS, many of the watercourses in this province have never seen and will never see a canoe or boat and therefore logically should not fall under the federal *Navigable Waters Act*;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Transport Canada be removed from the Province of Saskatchewan and that all approvals for road construction on, over or near waterways in the Province of Saskatchewan be under the sole jurisdiction of the province.

Response from Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities:

Transport Canada can only respond to those aspects that fall within the department's purview, such as navigation issues. I should

not that the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which includes navigability criteria, is guided by court decisions. However, I can assure you that the Navigable Waters Protection Program is continuously seeking, in cooperation with stakeholders, ways to expedite approval process for works on minor waterways.

Response from Loyola Hearn, PC, MP, Fisheries and Oceans Canada:

I appreciate the concerns raised by your membership, and I want to assure you that DFO is sensitive to the economic issues facing Rural Municipalities in Saskatchewan. DFO will continue to work with SARM in the coming years to address fish habitat issues in a cooperative and productive manner.

A key consideration of the fish habitat protection provisions of the Fisheries Act is to ensure the protection of fish migration routes - for example, by ensuring that road crossings are constructed to allow unimpeded fish passage to spawning and rearing area. All sectors of the economy involved in road building and maintenance are expected to carry out their activities in an environmentally responsible manner, and in accordance with applicable legislation, such as the Fisheries Act. The agriculture industry has long been considered a responsible steward of our natural resources and it is expected that road construction, to serve the agricultural community, will be carried out with appropriate environmental safeguards in place.

Additional costs are sometimes incurred by proponents to satisfy fish passage requirements under the federal Fisheries Act. These requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis by DFO fisheries biologists, and are based on the importance of the particular stream and the fish populations supported. Proponents may have access to federal assistance programs, such as the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, to offset some costs.

The Saskatchewan Transportation and Environment Committee, in which both SARM and DFO are active members, provides a proactive forum for discussion of the issues and resolutions associated with stream crossing in Saskatchewan. I encourage your association to continue to provide your feedback and participation through this avenue.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans

**Resolutions No. 24-06A
Cost of Oversized Culverts**

WHEREAS, the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has moved into the prairie provinces and expanded their mandate to protect fish habitat to include creeks, streams and rivers; and

WHEREAS, the various mitigation measures they insist upon, including but not limited to buying oversized culverts so

that a substantial portion of them can be submerged below the streambed, significantly increasing (in some cases nearly doubling) the cost of a culvert or bridge placement or replacement;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that, in those cases where municipal costs are increased due to fish habitat mitigation or streambed interventions, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans pay the incremental costs.

Response from Loyola Hearn, PC, MP, Fisheries and Oceans Canada:

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Transport Canada

POP4-06A

Finalizing the Transfer of the Federal Hopper Cars to the FRCC

WHEREAS, the federal government has negotiated a transfer of the federal hopper car fleet to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition (FRCC) representing 17 farm groups across the prairies; and

WHEREAS, the transfer process needs to be finalized; and

WHEREAS, the business plan for FRCC is time sensitive; and

WHEREAS, every month delay results in farmers paying the railways millions of dollars in excess freight charges; and

WHEREAS, the newly elected Conservative Party has said they will want to review most recent government transactions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that SARM ask the new federal transport minister and agriculture minister to expediently finalize the transfer of the federal hopper car fleet to the FRCC, representing 17 farm organizations.

Response from Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities:

As you may be aware, on May 4, 2006, the Government of Canada announces that it will retain ownership of the federal grain hopper car fleet, and tabled Bill C-11, an Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This bill contains an amendment that would allow the Canadian Transportation Agency to better align the maintenance costs embedded in revenue caps with the actual costs of maintaining the hopper cars. Estimates indicate that these measures would save farmers approximately \$2 per tonne of grain shipped, or \$50 million a year in total savings.

Taxpayers will also benefit from the decision to retain the cars, as the government will continue to collect between \$10 and \$15 million each year from the railways for non-regulated shipments. The decision to retain the cars will also ensure accountability and transparency for an efficient and effective grain transportation system.

The government will negotiate a new operating agreement and rail car refurbishment program with Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway to ensure that cars remain in good operating condition.